

District of Metchosin

Minutes

**Agriculture Advisory Select Committee Meeting
May 15, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**

Council Chambers
Metchosin Municipal Hall

Present: Shelly Donaldson, Robin Tunnicliffe (Chair), Brent Donaldson, Peter Chettleburgh, Matt Ashton, Andrew Penn, Sasha Kubicek, Alex Fletcher, Candace Lecompte (Recorder)

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m.

1. Agenda, Additions and Approval

Moved and Seconded by Brent and Candace that the Committee approve the agenda as presented.

Carried

Robin suggested Other Business – next steps for the Agricultural Plan.
Metchosin Producers' Association added to next steps by Sasha.

2. Presentations

None.

3. Adoption of Minutes

Alex requested updates to the March 25, 2024 minutes:

- 10 b) include other communities (bordering communities) may have resources to contribute
- 10 e) terms of reference need to be updated, not the bylaw
- 10 i) include in the AG Plan about having – not an action item but just included in the AG Plan.

Moved and Seconded by Alex and Sasha that the Committee approve the minutes as amended of the AASC meeting held on March 25, 2024

Carried

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

a) CRD Canada Goose Working Group

Robin reported that there was a lively meeting at PAAC with Glen Harris and CRD CEO, Ted Robbins. Geese are currently nesting so less active/visible. PACC remains skeptical of the program but in good faith they are working towards reduction.

b) Livestock/Wildlife conflict

Metchosin livestock loss in 2023 – 61 lives, 2024 – 30 lives lost: Highlands lost five sheep in recent cougar kills.

- Wild Wise presented points of coexistence of humans and wildlife at a Council meeting suggesting options for farmers to exist managing their farms with electric fencing, securing livestock in barns overnight, guardian dogs, etc. These tactics have been used and are not all attainable or feasible.
- Matt will create a document of points from a livestock farmers perspective, so the public/council understand the complexities of managing livestock herds/flocks. The cause and effect of increased populations of wildlife attacks on livestock farming is a complex issue. The Conservation Office has its own constraints of timely assessments and attendants working within the provincial regulations.
 - Urban encroachment, decimation of wildlife habitat and increased human visits to regional parks are added pressures on wildlife to seek food and shelter. Livestock is an easy target to hunt.
 - Reducing flocks will inhibit food security, local economy at risk, employment reduced.
- Council meeting scheduled with AASC/MEASC/COs and P. Pauwels. AASC members are encouraged to attend Council meetings sharing firsthand experience and concerns of the effects of wildlife on agriculture activities. Explore solutions, i.e., COs response times.

c) Night market

No appetite right now. Colwood is supportive of having a night market in Royal Bay area – key focus is food and food byproducts as opposed to “crafty” merchandise. Pop up market is worth exploring for farmers with abundant seasonal inventory. Andrew is starting a weekly event at Bilston Farm that would support local food sales.

5. New Business

None.

6. Reports

None.

7. Correspondence

a) Peninsula Area Agriculture Commission (PAAC), 2023 Annual Report

Robin noted that the Saanich Council allowed Galey Farm to store vehicles including RV storage in their barns which replaces farming activity as does dumping. These activities interfere with the intended purpose of ALR land. PAAC will host a workshop in November on this issue and recommend best practices about bylaws i.e., Surrey implemented a fill bylaw that requires the landowner to post where the fill is coming/going. PAAC is also lobbying for more housing on farmland – up to three residences being pushed through in Central Saanich.

8. Other Business

a) Agri-tourism

Andrew Penn mentioned that he has been working with Rebecca at Keating Farm. They are running into issues working their way through the regularity documents with ALC and Saanich.

They want to have an association of farms that wants to get their needs met with concepts with argi tourism. Need satellite farms providing produce and food. The provincial government is trying to create iconic trails so that people can learn about ways through the province. One came through this territory – but they are a bit short on content. There are not enough things to do/see for tourism yet. Bilston and Keating would like to tie into local producers to have farm to table with all local producers. Tent pads etc., could be coordinated through the main farm.

b) Agricultural Plan (AG) Plan - Next Steps

Alex mentioned that we missed some grants. Robin said that the AG plan wasn't adopted so we don't have anything to stand behind. Alex said we can still apply for a grant – we are finalizing our AG plan but can still apply. The deadline for one of the grants was today. But there is another grant FCC grant but they like tangible objects. There were no previously funded projects paying someone to do coordination type of work. There is another \$10,000 grant that you can apply for any time of year, and it is more general. We could put money into branding “Metchosin grown” type of stuff or the coordinator position. Alex is curious about the kitchen space and how it could possibly benefit farmers. Shelley said it's a food safe kitchen but not a commercial size kitchen. The Fire Chief is doing all the bookings right now. Robin would like to join the South Island Farmers Institute to help apply for grants. Another option would be to create another entity for Metchosin food and farms. “Metchosin Grown Society” Andrew would like to help with an initial contribution to help get the ball rolling. Would like to present the AG plan to the Metchosin Farmers institute.

c) Metchosin Producers Association (MPA)

Shelly would like to see the community tent engaged again as a means to encourage small seasonal farmers participation. Peter would like to join with another entity or form an entity to be able to access grants, i.e., Farmers Institute. Robin would like to proceed with forming another entity to access grants for the AG plan.

d) Farmers Group or Organization

Shelly reported that the Community Garden group needs to register as a society; a partnership with farmers, future farmers and gardeners in one society would be an asset. Shelly explained the steps for registry – choose a name, minimum five executives, bank account, insurance, bylaws/constitution, lease agreement (district) vision/mission, branding. Several grants are available that would support the community garden infrastructure, workshops, agricultural promotional activities, branding etc.

9. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date

Moved and Seconded by Alex and Sasha that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Carried

The next meeting will be at the call of the Chair.