



Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee Minutes of Special Meeting

Date: Thursday, May 30, 2024

Location: Electronic Meeting (Zoom)

Members Present: Timothy Peterson, Chair
Laura Patrick, Local Trustee
Jamie Harris, Local Trustee

Staff Present: Chris Hutton, Regional Planning Manager (RPM)
Rob Pingle, Legislative Clerk
Lisa Millard, Recorder

Others Present: Bree Eagle, Agricultural Advisory Planning Committee Chair
Merv Wadle, Agricultural Alliance
Mike Lane, Agricultural Alliance
Sue Earle, Agricultural Alliance
Kevin Chipperfield, SSI Farmers Institute and Agricultural Alliance
Sheila Dobie, SSI Farmland Trust and Agricultural Alliance
Anne Macey, Island Natural Growers and Agricultural Alliance

There were 3 members of the public in attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER

"Please note, the order of agenda items may be modified during the meeting. Times are provided for convenience only and are subject to change."

Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. Chair Peterson welcomed staff and guests and acknowledged that the meeting is held in the territory of Coast Salish First Nations.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

By general consent, the agenda was adopted as presented.

3. DISCUSSION OF AGRICULTURAL PRIORITIES

Discussion ensued and the following comments, questions, and observations were noted:
Trustee Patrick

- The Islands Trust Draft Policy Statement talks about farming policy being consistent with the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) regulations which doesn't always fit the farming needs of Salt Spring Island and she would like the participant's views about that.

Jon Cooksey

- There is a concern of farms going by the wayside due to rising real estate prices;

- It is important to have more farms in order to prepare for future food needs;
- Water issues create urgency to make decisions from a climate change perspective; and
- We need to look ahead to ensure we are protecting farmland and keeping it in production.

Elsie Born

- She is an executive member of the Poultry Club and is invested in poultry farming on ALR land as well as farming on rural land that is zoned for farming.

Anne Macey

- Agriculture is more than just what is happening on ALR land;
- People need to be allowed to farm on any land that is farmable; and
- Regulations need to be consistent;

Sheila Dobie

- There is a matrix of food production on the island that is happening on rural, agricultural, and residential land;
- Farming is embraced and it is also a source of tension;
- Food production is a key component of community resilience;
- The island has established farms, food producers, food suppliers, and food consumers, and the economy is built in to all of that; and
- Food production is an important part of island culture.

Mike Land

- Agriculture has become an economic driver in the Gulf Islands as tourists are interested in the agriculture as part of their tourism experience.

Anne Macey

- Will the Local Trust Committee assess the agricultural community as part of the community assessment project?
 - Trustee Patrick stated that she would confirm which organizations are participating in the assessment workshops.
 - Regional Planning Manager Hutton indicated that the assessment project is primarily focussed on overall citizenry however there is space for agricultural groups to participate in the workshops, and that the intention is to collect data and bring it together for land use analysis to determine what the infrastructure potential is for a complete community.

Kevin Chipperfield

- The community assessment project should ask where agriculture can happen on the island.
 - Trustee Patrick noted that a provincial grant was received with the stipulation that it is used for a program that the province has created, and that the assessment will gather data that can be mapped to help inform the Official Community Plan process.

Ross McLeod

- He has farmed on the island for many years and offers an education program to teach youth about bees, fruit trees, growing food, and other farming activities; and
- He wants people to know where their food comes from and how to grow healthy food.

Sue Earle

- The farmer's market is the least expensive way to purchase locally farmed food; and
- People are paying attention to what it means to buy local and organic food and to support the eco-system.

Anne Macey

- The Official Community Plan (OCP) policy documents should emphasize the importance of agriculture and farming to the community and this might get lost with the focus on housing.
 - Trustee Patrick replied that the OCP Review Project is a public process, that the Local Trust Committee (LTC) will be listening to the community, and that agricultural groups have the opportunity to be part of the engagement process.

Merv Walde

- There appears to be a different set of rules for farming within the ALR and farming outside of the ALR.
 - Regional Planning Manager Hutton replied that the Islands Trust does engage with the Agricultural Land Commission but does not have significant influence on the ALC policies outside of land use zoning. The OCP and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) have some policy provisions for land within, and outside of, the ALR however most LUBs tend to follow the ALC Act.

Anne Macey

- Regulations regarding what you can, or can not do, on land outside of the ALR do not support agricultural groups;
- The current issue of allowing, or disallowing, roosters within a rural zone as opposed to an agricultural zone is an example; and
- There is a desire to be allowed to raise farm animals on land throughout the island however something like a large scale pig farm would not be acceptable.

Merv Walde

- The constraints associated with a small island reliant on ferries to bring in supplies and transport farm goods off island eliminate some of the concerns about scale.

Kevin Chipperfield

- Guidance is needed regarding what is allowed on ALR, and non ALR, land in terms of the expectations of people who want to farm and those living in areas where farming occurs;
- It is important to reassure people who want to farm by providing security for their activities through guidelines.

Trustee Harris

- The community probably does not need to worry about the scale of operations because the economics of shipping makes a large scale operation unfeasible; and
- He is unsure that more regulations are required.

Chair Peterson

- Guidelines could provide surety for people that want to farm and provide information on what fits in to the legislative and social framework.

Kevin Chipperfield

- More regulations are not needed but guidelines that allow better understanding are.

Elsie Born

- It is important to know what is allowed in order to minimize disputes;
- Currently agriculture zoned land allows for any number of farm animals based on a total specified weight in kilograms;
- There are examples of people that have bought property with intentions of farming and they come up against roadblocks.

Trustee Peterson

- One of the issues is the multiple jurisdictions that regulate the island including Islands Trust, the ALC, and the Capital Regional District (CRD).

Trustee Patrick

- Some of the issues people are experiencing are related to the demographic changes occurring on the island and people are moving here for different reasons; and
- The LTC can look at the OCP project through the lens of these different reasons.

Kevin Chipperfield

- Real estate agents should have a handout that states how important agriculture is to the island; and
- It is important to educate people about what it is like to live in a farming area.

Donna Saffel

- There is a lot of concern within the community about the current rooster issue; and
- There is an online petition with three thousand (3000) signatures supporting the right to raise chickens on a rural property.

Elsie Born

- Islands Trust zoning allows for poultry farming and hobby farming but the CRD issues tickets and demands removal of birds.
- The CRD is taking a member of the community to court to enforce the payment of fines received for having a rooster; and
- Does the LTC have any ability to help protect farming rights for people not on ALR land?
 - Trustee Patrick stated that she believes that the LTC must do a better job to protect agriculture and that the OCP review might provide an opportunity to improve and clarify bylaws. She noted that there is a joint meeting coming up with the CRD and this issue might be worthy of discussion.
 - Trustee Harris replied that if it is allowed within the bylaw he does not understand how the issue would hold up in court, and that part of the problem is that Islands Trust was found to be dysfunctional and in need of restructuring, and perhaps the community needs a municipality to deal with these types of issues.

Donna Saffel

- An amendment to the bylaw, or exception to the bylaw, protecting livestock noise is needed; and
- There needs to be protection of agricultural activity if it is allowed on a property.

Regional Planning Manager Hutton

- The extent of what the Local Trust Committee can do is based on land use regulations and he is unsure what they can do beyond allowing agriculture;
- Islands Trust does not have direct authority over what regulations the CRD puts into place;
- The current CRD enforcement is related to noise abatement; and
- The Islands Trust can say that farming is allowed however the CRD regulates noise.

Elsie Born

- If we want agriculture to continue on Salt Spring Island we need to attract younger farmers;
- Young families do not have the funds to purchase large farms but can purchase one (1) acre plots that allow farming; and
- People that want to start farming should be provided with some guidelines and protections.

Gillian McConnel

- The community discussion should include the issue of regenerative farming versus non regenerative practices.

Kevin Chipperfield

- The CRD should be at the table as they are fundamental to the discussion on how we go forward in the future.
 - Chair Peterson noted that the LTC will be meeting with the CRD and there is opportunity to advocate on behalf of farmers and to encourage dialogue.

Sheila Dobie

- There might be an opportunity through the community assessment process to gather information on how much food is being produced on these small lots and to capture information on the cultural part of the island's food system

Jon Cooksey

- People are moving to Salt Spring Island to grow their own food for a reason;
- They want to be able to grow their own food rather than depend on the system; and
- People should be allowed to grow food on what ever land that they have.

4. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Timothy Peterson, Chair

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Lisa Millard, Recorder