



Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee Minutes of a Special Meeting

Date: Thursday, December 17, 2020

Location: Electronic Meeting
200-1627 Fort Street, Victoria

Members Present: Peter Luckham, Chair
Laura Patrick, Local Trustee
Peter Grove, Local Trustee

Staff Present: Stephan Cermak, Regional Planning Manager
Geordie Gordon, Planner 2
Kristine Mayes, Planner 1
Shayla Burnham, Administrative Assistant
Sarah Shugar, Recorder

Others Present: Brent Brochu-Ingram, Agricultural Advisory Planning Committee
Terry Clement, Agricultural Alliance
Bree Eagle, Agricultural Advisory Planning Committee
Jessica Harkema, Agricultural Alliance
Nick Jones, Agricultural Alliance
Anne Macey, Agricultural Alliance
Conrad Pilon, Agricultural Advisory Planning Committee
Jan Steinman, Agricultural Advisory Planning Committee
Margaret Thomson, Agricultural Alliance
Ruth Waldick, Agricultural Advisory Planning Committee
Brian Webster, Agricultural Alliance
Daria Zovi, Agricultural Alliance

These minutes follow the order of the agenda although the sequence may have varied.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Luckham called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone to an electronic meeting of the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee. Chair Luckham introduced himself, the Trustees and staff and acknowledged that the Local Trust Committee is meeting within Coast Salish Territory. Introductions were carried out.

R. Waldick joined the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

By general consent the agenda was approved.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

3.1. Local Trust Committee Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks

Chair Luckham reported this meeting is an opportunity for the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee to have a discussion with the members of the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission (AAPC) and representatives of the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance on agriculture related issues.

J. Harkema joined the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

3.2. Discussion of Agricultural Priorities

In discussion the following comments and questions were noted:

- Agricultural Alliance Chair Terry Clement reported Islands Trust policies often result in unforeseen consequences. He requested the Islands Trust refer new policies and/or bylaws to the Agricultural Alliance for review.
- SaAAPC Chair Bree Eagle reported farmworker housing is a recurring issue.
- The Agricultural Alliance has been working on the renewed Area Farm Plan and the Climate Action Plan 2.0. It was noted 30% of global emissions result from the global industrial food production system and there is an opportunity to reduce emissions related to food production by supporting a low carbon, local and regional food system. The Climate Action Plan 2.0 supports the adoption of farming methods that build soils to increase carbon sequestration and incorporating environmental stewardship. The COVID emergency has demonstrated that the farming community is both vulnerable and resilient and that there is potential for growth. The Response and Recovery Plan highlighted the need to complete agricultural infrastructure projects such as the Root as a centre to support educational programming and new farmers and processes. There is a need to support farming infrastructure such as the Salt Spring Island abattoir. The updated Area Farm Plan speaks to supporting farmers and farming infrastructure to increase local food production in a manner that protects the environment and reduces carbon emissions. The goals of the Area Farm Plan are to support long-term viability of food production on Salt Spring Island, responding to the climate emergency and engaging the public at all levels of government to protect land for farming and increasing food production. There are strategies and actions related to each goal. Farming and food production is a significant part of the economy and plays a significant role in responding to the climate emergency. The Agricultural Alliance would like to see agriculture and local food production as a Local Trust Committee (LTC) top priority. No net loss of agricultural land should refer to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) land and other productive land that is not in the ALR. 30% of farm production occurs on non-ALR land. It is important to consider what actions the LTC can take to support the Area Farm Plan and the Climate

Action Plan and make decisions that encourage and promote farm management practices.

- Small production farmers contribute greatly to preserving and protecting the environment and contribute to the local economy. The Islands Trust policies do not always support local food production and small-scale farming. Two of the most important areas in establishing our small-scale farm were to build soil by composting and clearing land to plant fruit trees. It is necessary to bring materials such as horse manure from off-island to produce compost and bylaws restrict bringing materials from off island onto farms. This is an example of how farmers are non-compliant with Islands Trust bylaws.
- Concern was expressed that the Protection of Coastal Douglas-Fir and Associated Ecosystems project may restrict the ability to clear trees for farming.
- Support was expressed for consulting with the farming community prior to making decisions that impact farming.
- Concern was expressed that the AAPC terms of reference is limited to land use decisions concerning the ALR. The AAPC has forwarded the following recommendations to the LTC:
 - Amend Bylaw No. 467 to expand the role of the AAPC beyond ALR land use proposals and for the AAPC to have a more proactive role regarding agricultural issues.
 - Request staff input on the best methods to link the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan No. 434 (OCP) and the Salt Spring Island Land Use Bylaw No. 355 (LUB).
 - Consult with the Agricultural Alliance regarding farming priorities on Salt Spring Island on an annual basis.
 - Invite experts to advise the AAPC regarding issues such as cannabis regulations, farmworker housing etc.
 - Invite a Ministry of Agricultural representative to be a member of the AAPC.
- The services provided by agriculture need to be quantified and built into the economic model and considered in terms of the value of the ecosystem mandate. Support was expressed for considering a pay for service model. It was noted composting and producing soil could be considered a value, farm land can help in fire protection as wildfire breaks and agricultural areas can be used as buffers for ecologically valuable areas such as the Coastal Douglas-Fir zones.
- There was a question regarding payment for ecological services. It was noted specifically carbon sequestering – to look at other values – could add income for landholders
- Referring matters to the Agricultural Alliance could have reduced the unforeseen consequences that the composting regulations have had on the farming community.
- Support was expressed for the LTC to consult with the Agricultural Alliance on a frequent, continual basis.
- The following comments regarding composting were noted:
 - The proposed composting facility in Burgoyne Bay.
 - There is wording in LUB Section 3.23 regarding composting regulations that is concerning to farmers. There is no regulation that permits farmers to bring organic matter from off the farm to make compost to use on the farm.

- The Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) regulations supersede the Islands Trust bylaws.
- There was discussion regarding compost that is used in products that are sold off the farm such as in plant pots.
- Support was expressed for the regulations to be explicitly clear in permitting materials to be brought onto the farm for composting use.
- The ALC regulations do not apply to farming that is happening on non-ALR land. There is a need for equity for farming that is happening both on ALR land and non-ALR land.
- ALR farmland has significant rights compared to non-ALR farmland.
- There was a suggestion to invite an expert to discuss composting with the AAPC and Agricultural Alliance.
- The following comments regarding farmworker housing were noted:
 - There is a need to shift to equity in farming and to consider “farmworkers” as “farmers” and consider ways to provide equity shares to workers.
 - The LTC’s Housing Solutions project will look at farmworker housing.
 - There are issues with compliance and it is important that farm housing is used for farm use.
 - The Area Farm Plan has recommendations regarding farm worker housing.
 - The farmworker housing crisis has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The ALC regulations specify that farmworker housing must be justified by agricultural needs. This regulation is poorly defined. It would be helpful if farmers had regulations to support them in providing sufficient housing for their workers.
 - Valuable farmland is being purchased with no intention to continue farming. There was a suggestion to provide incentives for property owners to provide much needed farmworker housing.
 - Support was expressed to acknowledge the existing needs in the farming community.
 - Support was expressed for land use zoning to represent the vision of the community.
- Small-scale farms are the fastest growing sector in farming and there is a need to shift the focus away from large-scale agriculture.
- Agriculture Canada defines small farms based on total assets/ profitability of the farm. The Province has significantly reduced small-farm program funding. Support was expressed for the Local Trust Committee to be an advocate for small farmers in the Local Trust Area. There is a need to re evaluate the roles that local governments have jurisdiction over and review the regulatory framework to identify gaps in supporting farmers.
- There was a question regarding appointment of a Ministry of Agriculture representative to the AAPC. Staff reported a Ministry of Agriculture representative has been an ex-officio member in previous years. Staff will follow up regarding appointment of a Ministry of Agriculture representative to the AAPC.
- There was a question regarding how the Agricultural Alliance could participate in discussions with the LTC and whether there is an Agricultural Alliance member on the AAPC. The AAPC does not have an Agricultural Alliance representative at this time.

By general consent, there was agreement to schedule a Special Meeting to consider agricultural matters in February, July, and November each year on an ongoing basis. Staff will schedule the next meeting in February 2021.

4. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Peter Luckham, Chair

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Sarah Shugar, Recorder