

## Regional District of Nanaimo

### Summary of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan Review Citizen's Committee Meeting Held on Monday, March 23, 2009 @ 6:30pm At the North Cedar Improvement District Hall 2100 Yellow Point Road

Meeting called to order at 6:45 pm. There were approximately 30 people in attendance including guests.

The Chair, Director Burnett, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **Agenda Item No. 1 – Minutes of the March 9, 2009 Meeting**

The minutes of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan review Citizen's Committee meeting of March 9, 2009 were moved by Devon Wyatt and seconded by Joanne McLeod and were approved without amendments.

#### **Agenda Item No. 2 – Presentation by Roger Cheetham, Regional Planner Agricultural Land Commission**

The following is a summary of Roger's presentation to the Committee:

**Roger Cheetham** introduced himself as a Regional Planner who mainly deals with issues related to Bylaws and Local Governments. Mr. Cheetham started by giving an outline of his presentation which was on the ALC mandate, land use planning, and the application process. Mr Cheetham indicated that the ALR makes up about 5% of the Province and due to British Columbia's mountainous terrain, that there is very little land that is suitable for farming. Mr. Cheetham explained that the land that is suitable for farming in areas where there is great pressure for urban development. Mr. Cheetham explained that most of the land in Electoral Area 'A' includes prime soils with agricultural potential.

**Mr. Cheetham** provided a summary of applications made in Electoral Area 'A' for exclusion, inclusion, subdivision, and non-farm use since 1996. He indicated that since 1996 there have been 6 applications for exclusion of which 3 have been approved and that about 66 ha of land has been removed from the ALR in Electoral Area 'A'. Mr. Cheetham indicated that most of the land removed is due to lands adjacent to the airport being used for RV sales.

**Mr. Cheetham** then talked about the purpose of the ALC. He explained that the ALC has two main functions to process applications and to work with Local Governments. Mr. Cheetham explained that the Ministry of Agriculture and the ALC have developed agri-teams to link at the staff level with Local Governments to work on planning issues.

**Mr. Cheetham** then spoke about how the ALC is involved in the referral process during the Official Community Plan review. He explained that the Official Community Plan must get referred to the ALC at first draft and that there are two streams that referrals to the ALC can follow. He explained that stream 1 is a self declaration made by the Local Government that the Official Community Plan complies with the Agricultural Land Commission Act and stream 2 is a more in-depth review by the ALC.

**Mr Cheetham** then provided an overview of the ALC's involvement and position with respect to Regional Growth Strategies, Official Community Plans, and Zoning Bylaws.

With respect to Growth Strategies, **Mr. Cheetham** explained that the ALC serves on the Interagency Advisory Committee. He indicated that Growth Strategies should have clear language that recognizes ALR land is for farming and not urban reserve. He explained that the ALC does not want to see more subdivision and would like to see a limit of 1 dwelling unit per parcel. He also explained that the ALC supports urban containment to prevent urban expansion in to the ALR.

With respect to Official Community Plans, **Mr. Cheetham** explained that one of the concerns is the Environmental Development Permit Areas are too strict on agriculture. Mr. Cheetham indicated that there should be support for edge planning as well as implementation measures.

With respect to land use bylaws, **Mr. Cheetham** indicated that the ALC has published a guide to bylaw development in farming areas. He indicated that there should be restrictions on the location and size of homes in on ALR land. Mr. Cheetham then spoke briefly about agricultural plans and indicated that they are the most positive way to benefit agriculture.

**Mr. Cheetham** then provided an overview of the regulations that pertain to land in the ALR. He explained that "Farm Uses" are uses that can occur on ALR land which can be regulated by Local Government, but not prohibited. He then explained that "Permitted non-farm uses" are uses that can occur on ALR land without an application to the ALC, but which can be regulated and/or prohibited by Local Government.

**Mr. Cheetham** then spoke about applications made to the ALC. He indicated that applications for the subdivision of land in the ALR are the biggest proportion of applications received. He indicated that about 50-60% of applications for subdivision get approved. Mr. Cheetham explained that the overall consideration in reviewing an application is whether or not the application complies with the ALC's mandate to preserve agriculture.

**Mr. Cheetham** then spoke about the application referral process and explained that the Regional District of Nanaimo does not provide an opinion to the ALC on applications it receives. He also explained that the Regional District of Nanaimo has decided not to withhold referring applications to the ALC. Mr. Cheetham indicated that the ALC needs to know what the Agricultural Advisory Committee thinks about applications going to the ALC.

**Mr. Cheetham** indicated that applications to the ALC can be held at the Local Government office and the Local Government can decide not to forward it to the ALC.

**Jack Anderson** asked if the ALC is beginning to recognize the difference between agriculture and sustainable agriculture.

**Mr. Cheetham** responded by explaining that currently the ALC supports all types of agriculture and does not support restricting it to certain uses, practices, or types.

### **Agenda Item No. 3 – Presentation by Wayne Haddow, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands**

The following is a summary of Wayne's presentation to the Committee:

**Wayne Haddow** introduced himself as a Regional Agrologist who works with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Mr. Haddow began his presentation talking about interface issues between urban and agricultural uses. He explained that much of the prime productive agricultural lands in the Province coincide with the large urban areas.

**Mr. Haddow** indicated that interface issues are on both the farm side and the urban side. Mr. Haddow Mr. Haddow explained that urban development close to farming operations can lead to issues for both the farmer and the residential property owner.

**Mr. Haddow** then provided an overview of the Ministry's position on Regional Growth Strategy's, Official Community Plans, and Zoning Bylaws.

**Mr. Haddow** explained that policies in a Regional Growth Strategy should emphasize that ALR land is for farming not urban reserve. Mr Haddow suggested that Official Community Plans should support the preservation of ALR land. **Mr. Haddow** explained that there is room in the Official Community Plans to support economic development on ALR land. He provided an example where the Capital Regional District provides community water at a discounted rate to agricultural uses.

With respect to zoning, **Mr. Haddow** suggested that there could be agricultural zoning that supports agriculture and could support agro-industrial and agro-commercial uses.

With respect to Zoning and other bylaw development, **Mr. Haddow** indicated the Ministry has a larger role to play. **Mr. Haddow** indicated that the Ministry encourages there to be flexibility for farming uses and regulations that are fair to farmers. **Mr. Haddow**, indicated that the greatest concern in the Regional District of Nanaimo is Development Permit Areas on Agricultural land.

**Mr. Haddow** then spoke about some things that could be done to support agriculture in Electoral Area 'A'. He indicated that there could be support for farm friendly subdivisions and that the Approving Officer can refuse a subdivision if it interferes with agriculture or if roads impact farming. Mr. Haddow indicated that the Official Community Plan could support compatible uses through the implementation of a farm land Development Permit Area. Mr. Haddow indicated that buffering is strongly encouraged. Mr. Haddow provided an example in Pit Meadows where there is a 300 metre Development Permit Area on each side of the ALR

**Mr. Haddow** provided some ideas for tools that can be used to support and encourage agriculture. On the Local Government side, Mr. Haddow identified Development Permit Areas, Buffers, Rainwater Control, signage and awareness, and larger setback from the ALR. On the farm side, Mr. Haddow indicated building type and technology, visual buffer, control of noise dust and odour, and minimize urban farming conflict.

**Mr. Haddow** then indicated the main impediments to agricultural production and productivity as being management, capital, water supply, infrastructure, and labour. He indicated that we need to maintain opportunities for agriculture of all sizes.

**Mr. Haddow** identified some other things that could be done including establishing an economic development function, and working with groups such as community futures.

**Henrik Kreiberg** asked if there is agricultural potential outside of the ALR.

**Wayne Haddow** responded by explaining that there is, but it depends on the location. Mr. Haddow provided an example where an abandoned gravel pit was converted into an agro-industrial use. Mr. Haddow explained that the challenge is that food is cheap, which makes it hard to justify investment in agriculture.

#### **Agenda Item No. 4 – Presentation by Greg Keller, RDN Senior Planner**

**Greg Keller** gave a brief presentation on how the Official Community Plan addresses agriculture. Mr. Keller then provided an overview of the options identified in the meeting workbook.

Mr. Keller explained that there are three land use designations located outside of the Urban Containment Boundary which mention agriculture which are Rural Residential, Rural, and Rural Resource. Mr. Keller reviewed the land use policies that pertain to each of the above land use designations.

Mr. Keller then reviewed the options identified in the workbook and explained that all the meeting workbooks and presentations will be available on the project website.

The meeting was closed at approximately 9:30 pm.

Certified correct by:

Original Signed By

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Director Joe Burnett, Committee Chairperson