



Committee Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Committee February 17, 2022 – 9:30 AM

The Agricultural Advisory Committee met on the above date through electronic means with the following members in attendance:

Present: Councillors Soever, Keaveney, Robinson and Woodbury and Warden Selwyn Hicks; Amy Kitchen, Brenda Hsueh, John Dejong, Lorie Smith, RJ Taylor and Kathy Eckenswiller

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Randy Scherzer, Deputy CAO; Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture; Heather Morrison, Clerk; Philly Markowitz, Economic Development Officer; Scott Taylor, Manager of Planning Services; Linda Swanston, Manager Climate Change Initiatives; Olivia Yale, Communications Officer and Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk / Legislative Coordinator

Call to Order

Heather Morrison called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM.

Election of the Chair and Vice Chair

Heather Morrison called for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

AG01-22 Moved by: Councillor Keaveney Seconded by: Councillor Carleton

That Councillor Robinson be nominated as Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee for 2022.

AG02-22 Moved by: Councillor Robinson Seconded by: Lorie Smith

That John DeJong be nominated as Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee for 2022.

On motion by Councillor McQueen, nominations closed.

Councillor Robinson declined the nomination.

John DeJong accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Chair.

Heather Morrison then called for nominations for Vice Chair.

AG03-22 Moved by: Councillor Robinson Seconded by: Councillor McQueen

**That Lorie Smith be nominated as Vice Chair of the Agricultural
Advisory Committee for 2022.**

On motion by Councillor Carleton, nominations closed.

Lorie Smith accepted the nomination.

Lorie Smith was acclaimed Vice Chair of the Committee for 2022.

John DeJong then assumed the Chair.

Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations.

Delegations

Tom Smith – Atwood Resources, Deadstock Removal Value Chain

Tom Smith of Atwood Resources spoke to the Committee about deadstock removal. He noted that his ability to expand his facility is hindered by timeline constraints from a federal government funding program. The inability to access additional funds for expansion is preventing access to this much needed service.

The government is currently spending money on helping small abattoirs. This is beneficial to those operations and the value chain in general but creates additional strain on deadstock services. He expressed frustration with the current program and the need for his services to grow alongside the abattoirs to help address the deadstock removal shortage.

Discussion occurred on the difficulty in burying animals on the farm. Not everyone has the equipment to complete this and it is important to ensure the process is done properly to limit disease outbreak. There may be a lack of understanding of what the impacts can be. Some of these diseases are devastating, especially when they jump

from wild to farmed animals. It is being looked at from a processing perspective but is in fact a much larger issue.

County staff agreed to work with and speak to local, provincial and federal partners to better understand the issue and help ease pain points for livestock producers. Staff will continue to connect with Mr. Smith and provide an update at the next Committee meeting.

Official Plan Amendment 11 Update

Scott Taylor noted that February 22, 2022, is the final date for submitting comments on Official Plan Amendment 11. Following review of the comments received, additional research and/or tweaks to the proposed policies will be considered. A report will then come forward to Committee of the Whole for endorsement followed by a by-law to County Council incorporating the revisions. At this stage a date for that report is not yet known.

Mr. Taylor addressed questions on the proposed changes to policies surrounding preservation of barns in Grey County. The proposals will encourage preservation of these structures where it makes sense within the farm community.

Forest Management By-law Update

Scott Taylor noted that Grey County staff are working on the draft Forest Management by-law for presentation to this Committee, and the public, before any final consideration by County Council. He noted that the Town of The Blue Mountains has been actively moving forward on its by-law as well. Staff will be seeking feedback from the farm community when the draft by-law has been prepared.

He further noted that the current County by-law deals with woodlands of one (1) hectare in size or greater. Staff are interested in hearing from residents and the farm community on what the tone of the by-law should be. There have been mixed responses in this regard in the past, with some farmers saying interference should be minimal and that they need the freedom to farm however others have said there is a need to protect matters such as fence rows. Staff would also like to understand how this by-law functions alongside the Climate Change Action Plan.

The Committee inquired as to whether it is important for each individual municipality to have a by-law if the County does as well. Staff indicated that this by-law will not cover individual trees. There is opportunity for the County's by-law and local municipal by-laws to work alongside one another and not duplicate efforts.

Climate Change Action Plan Update

Linda Swanston provided an update on the Climate Change Action Plan. She noted that one of the significant changes proposed is to separate greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste management and farm practices from combustion of fossil fuels. They are two very different types of emissions, and each requires different types of solutions. She is happy to discuss how those two areas and opportunities are different.

She further noted that there was clearly an interest in nature based agricultural strategies and there are proposals in the final draft. There is also the possibility of tracking land use changes over time and data associated with this.

The draft of the plan will be presented in late March to the Climate Change Task Force and then to Committee of the Whole. Engagement is ongoing and staff will be reaching back out to the relevant sectors in the design of programs and the actual implementation and action items.

The Committee inquired as to whether there is a place in this plan to look at adaptation work relative to agricultural land use. Ms. Swanston noted that one of the parts of this plan is to make an adaptation plan.

Ms. Swanston noted that there will be an online webinar on Wednesday, March 2nd from 1:00 to 2:30 pm: Climate Risk Products for Agriculture in Grey, Bruce and Huron Counties where key climate risks will be discussed as well as demonstrations on developed information products tailored to the agricultural sector in Grey, Bruce and Huron Counties.

Lorie Smith noted that Grey Ag Services has many upcoming courses, including Choosing the Right BMPs to Weather Proof your Farm. A similar course was held a few years ago and they would like to encourage farmers to attend this course to see how farming will be done in the future with these changes in weather.

Update on Ag 4.0

Philly Markowitz provided an update on Ag 4.0. The event explores the intersection of agriculture/food and technology/innovation. The event will be an all-virtual event and focuses almost exclusively on climate change adaptation. There are four main presenters who will be speaking to innovative agriculture practice.

Update on meat processing

Amy Kitchen spoke to the announcement from the Province with respect to meat processing, noting that there is additional money being released. She noted that processing is an issue here in terms of quality of the processing that is available to

small scale producers. It continues to be a pressure point on a small scale. This hinders expansion and remains a risk when sending your product to different processors. Is there any opportunity to be proactive and work with the processors and producers on this matter?

Staff noted that they are speaking with municipal staff about opportunities for the meat processing sector.

Correspondence

The Committee discussed the correspondence. It was noted that it is necessary to do something with the plastic. There are programs that help with recycling the plastic or compacting it into more manageable bales so it can be transported more easily. The Clean Farms program accepts plastic wrap, and the material is transported to Quebec.

It was further noted that net wrap is being used more and more and is not accepted in the Clean Farm program. The wrap has to be clean and net wrap tends to retain materials such as hay, grass, etc. There are other opportunities that need to be found for net wrap. There is an article in Rural Voice on plastic wrap solutions.

It was noted that Switch Energy has additional markets for this plastic and hopefully can continue to collect in this area. The technology for plastic recycling is cost prohibitive.

It was noted that the Arran landfill does accept bale wrap. Staff will investigate as to whether that landfill accepts bale wrap from nonresidents.

AG04-22 Moved by: Councillor Keaveney Seconded by: Brenda Hsueh

That the correspondence from the Town of Georgina regarding the lack of recycling options for agriculture bale wrap, twine and boat shrink be supported.

Carried

AG05-22 Moved by: Warden Hicks Seconded by: Councillor Carleton

That the following correspondence be received for information:

- **Farm and Food Care Ontario regarding the “Real Dirt on Farming” booklet.**
- **the Source Local News Release**

Carried

Standing Items

Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site Update

Scott Taylor noted that staff have had a meeting with the agricultural societies to look at a revised site plan. Feedback was received from the agricultural societies and staff are hoping to have an in person meeting soon with the agricultural societies to consider any further changes. They anticipate having a finalized plan in the near future so an application can be submitted to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

Roundtable

Challenges, updates and/or opportunities from the different sector representatives

Brenda Hsueh spoke to the issues created by high land prices. This is concerning and affecting the ability to be able to support and bring new farmers on board.

Kathie Eckenswiller noted that labour is tied closely to housing. There is a perception that Grey County doesn't have good jobs. There is also a disconnect between what society feels is a good job and what actually is. There is a need to change these perceptions.

Discussion occurred on funding opportunities, employment and labour, and the need to pay a fair living wage. Further, there is a need for skilled labour. The level of technology that exists on farms does require a certain skill set.

Amy Kitchen noted that their staff just went through a mental health training session. The program is still being offered through Workplace Safety Prevention Services. She further noted that Eat Local Grey Bruce is currently based in Owen Sound, however the County has purchased the building it currently occupies. Eat Local Grey Bruce has found a suitable location and will be announcing where that location is in the upcoming days.

RJ Taylor spoke to the benefits that Eat Local Grey Bruce has provided their farm with over the years. The awareness of their business has increased around Grey and Bruce counties. The pandemic has shown that the provincial government does have regulatory flexibility when it wants to, and his business is moving forward with some new things. He also noted the climate change impacts of fish farming has been real and has an impact on fish health and husbandry practices and how we structure our farms and technology.

Mr. Taylor also spoke to labour and housing issues noting that it is difficult to bring on interns because the work is becoming increasingly technical. He noted that the agricultural sector in general attracts people that like being outside and noted the challenges for people to buy the type of land they need. He spoke to the increased desire for mobile homes and tiny houses, noting that country property is scarce and that is where these types of workers want to be.

Lorie Smith noted that February 22, 2022, is Canada's Agriculture Day. This is a day to celebrate Grey County farmers. Further, there is hope that in 2023 Grey Bruce Farmers Week will return to an in-person event. There are upcoming courses available and webinars, including some free of charge for anyone interested.

John DeJong noted that supplies will be tight, and costs will be higher, with some prices increasing by 50 -100 percent. The advice is to secure your supplies soon. Many inputs are coming from Europe as well. The cost is higher, and the delivery time is longer than in the past.

Other Business

Discussion on Reviewing the Terms of Reference

If there are any opportunities for this Committee to further advance any items or projects, these discussions can take place. Staff will send out the Terms of Reference to this Committee. There was a suggestion that at the end of this term in 2022, consideration be given to including a member on this committee who is a cash crop producer or dairy / beef farmer who also grows feed or cash crops.

Update on the 2021 Census

Philly Markowitz noted that agricultural data from the 2021 census will be released on May 11th. Staff will examine the data and discuss it at the next meeting.

Adjournment

On motion by Councillor McQueen, the Committee adjourned at 11:47 AM.

John DeJong, Chair