



Committee Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Committee December 17, 2020 – 1:00 PM

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 and RJ Taylor

Regrets: Kathy Eckenswiller

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Heather Morrison, Clerk; Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture; Scott Taylor, Senior Planner; Hiba Hussain, Planner; Katrina Peredun, Media and Communications Coordinator and Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk / Legislative Coordinator

Call to Order

Heather Morrison called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM

The members introduced themselves and spoke to their interest in the agricultural sector.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

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

AGC01-21 Moved by: Councillor Robinson Seconded by: Councillor Woodbury

That John Dejong be nominated as Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee for 2020 and 2021.

On motion by Councillor Soever, nominations closed.

John Dejong accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Chair.

AGC02-21 Moved by: Councillor Soever

Seconded by: Councillor Keaveney

**That Councillor Robinson be nominated as Vice Chair of the
Agricultural Advisory Committee for 2020 and 2021.**

On motion by Lorie Smith, nominations closed.

Councillor Robinson accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Vice Chair.

Mr. Dejong then assumed the Chair.

Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations.

Review Task Force Mandate and Terms of Reference

Heather Morrison reviewed the Terms of Reference with the Task Force. The Committee's primary purpose is to act as a voice of the agricultural community and communicate between the agricultural organizations and Grey County Council. The group will raise issues and opportunities related to the health of the sector and provide advice and recommendations based on those discussions.

Workplan Development

Scott Taylor provided an overview of the planning framework. He spoke to the Recolour Grey County Official Plan review process. Mr. Taylor noted that the Official Plan is a policy document that looks 20 years in the future to determine how the County is anticipated to grow. It provides broader policy guidance on planning matters as compared to other tools such as a zoning by-law.

One of the main themes in the Official Plan Review was "Cultivate Grey". Mr. Taylor spoke to feedback received from the farm sector during the Recolour Grey process. Comments included the difficulty in opening a business on a farm and lack of flexibility surrounding farm consolidation and severing surplus farm dwellings. These comments resulted in changes to the Official Plan.

Mr. Taylor spoke to permitted uses in agricultural areas, farm sizes and agriculture related severances. Information on the Minimum Distance Separation formula (MDS), surplus farm dwellings, split designations, as well as other planning matters were discussed.

Warden Hicks entered the meeting at this time.

Savanna Myers then addressed the Committee on past and current economic

development projects, including the Agri food Strategic Plan, the Ag 4.0 conference, the Agri-food map, farmer's market networking, Agri-food business retention and expansion, land seeker / owner networking and the Royal Winter Fair, among others.

The Committee provided feedback on the initiatives.

Agricultural Survey from Climate Change Action Plan

Hiba Hussain spoke to the Committee on the Climate Change Action Plan.

The agricultural section of the action plan is a key theme. Agriculture is a significant sector in Grey County and affects every aspect of the community. As part of engagement with the agricultural community, staff released an agricultural survey to receive additional input and information that wouldn't necessarily have been captured in the more general survey.

She highlighted key concepts from the survey, noting that the majority of respondents were concerned about the impacts of climate change on their farm, and are familiar with resiliency and sustainability practices from a climate sustainability perspective.

Challenges for the farm community which are preventing them from adopting some of the sustainability practices include sustainability cost, funding, income related challenges and regulatory red tape.

Questions and comments were addressed regarding best practices for farming in terms of climate change considerations and challenges with funding programs. There was a suggestion to develop a local cost share program that aligns with the identified priorities. It is hoped that Grey County can support the local municipalities when they're developing their own Climate Change Action Plans as well.

Staff noted that the County often receives invitations to participate with universities and their students in research projects. Some of these items might be something staff could suggest as potential research topics in the future.

It was suggested that this group be a key part in applying a Grey County agricultural lens on the legislation coming forward and provide feedback to the Province. This could become part of the mission and purpose in the Terms of Reference as well.

Other Business

Changes to the Forest Management By-law

Scott Taylor updated the Committee on proposed changes to the Forest Management By-law. Staff are tentatively planning on holding an online open house in February with the Town of The Blue Mountains to get feedback on the proposed by-law. Once those

dates are set, staff will let the group know and perhaps the draft by-law can come forward to the Committee before proceeding to Council.

Next Meeting Dates

To be determined.

On motion by Councillors Soever and Keaveney, the meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.

John Dejong, Chair