

## Agricultural Advisory Committee May 4, 2023 – 1:00 PM

The Agricultural Advisory Committee met on the above date at the County Administration Building for a hybrid with the following members in attendance:

Present: Chair Keith Reid; Councillors McQueen, Mackey, Keaveney, and Warden Milne. Members Dianne Booker, Carrie Davenport, Simon DeBoer, Blair Freeman, Rob Lipsett, Brenda Husueh, and Hugh Simpson.

Regrets: Members Lorie Smith and Gail Ardiel and Councillor Hutchinson

### Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, CAO; Randy Scherzer, Deputy CAO; Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism, and Culture; Philly Markowitz, Economic Development Officer; Scott Taylor, Director of Planning; Liz Buckton, Senior Planner; Linda Swanston, Manager Climate Change Initiatives; Rebecca Danard, Interim Manager Climate Change Initiatives; Tara Warder, Clerk; Sarah Goldrup, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator.

## Call to Order

The Clerk called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Members Carrie Davenport, Blair Freeman, Rob Lipsett, Brenda Hsueh and Hugh Simpson participated virtually.

## Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Tara Warder called for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

AAC01-23 Moved by: Councillor McQueen Seconded by: Hugh Simpson

**That member Keith Reid be nominated as Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee for 2023.**

On motion by Warden Milne, nominations closed.

Member Keith Reid accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Chair of the Committee for 2023.

AAC02-23 Moved by: Keith Reid

Seconded by: Dianne Booker

**That member Rob Lipsett be nominated as Vice Chair of the  
Agricultural Advisory Committee for 2023.**

On motion by Councillor McQueen, nominations closed.

Rob Lipsett accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Vice Chair of the Committee for 2023.

Member Keith Reid then assumed the role of Chair.

## Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## Delegations

There were no delegations.

## Reports

### Terms of Reference Review

CAO Kim Wingrove reviewed the Agricultural Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference and spoke about the purpose and scope of responsibility of the Committee.

Member Carrie Davenport joined the meeting at this time.

## Verbal Update - Departmental Overview & Introductions

Scott Taylor introduced the County's Planning Department and reviewed their role and functions, including work with the agricultural sector, forestry, and trails.

Savanna Myers introduced the Economic Development, Tourism, and Culture Department, including the work led by Philly Markowitz, the business enterprise centre's support to small businesses and business retention and expansion initiatives.

Linda Swanston introduced the Climate Action Team and spoke about their work to implement the Climate Action Plan, including opportunities to support thriving agricultural communities and respond to the challenges created by the climate crisis.

## PDR-AAC-20-23 - Draft Provincial Policy Statement (2023)

Scott Taylor introduced the report and presented it to the Committee, reviewing the background of the province's proposed Provincial Policy Statement changes (2023 PPS) and how they will translate to the County and local tier planning context, focusing on the impact on rural, agricultural, and special agricultural lands.

The Director shared staff's comments on the proposed regulatory changes, including support for some areas of increased flexibility, like provisions for additional dwelling units that support farmers to support their families or age in place and avoid future conflicts created by retirement lots while allowing the farm parcel to remain intact. Further, the Director expressed concern about the lack of natural heritage policies that are a critical component to understanding the full scope of the 2023 PPS. The Director noted that while more housing will be created, it will likely not be the types of housing most needed or in the most suitable locations, and discussed the potential impact to agricultural lands and operations. The Director described the possible unintended consequences of the proposed changes to lot creation policies, including increased farmland costs, land use conflicts, and impacts on other resource-based land uses.

Liz Buckton explained that following consultation with planners from other counties to develop a shared methodology for assessing land consumption, it is estimated that up to 10,000 new residential lots could be created in the agricultural designation. These residential lots could consume roughly 5,000 to 10,000 hectares of agricultural land. In contrast, the Senior Planner shared that the same development through a boundary expansion process would only utilize 580 hectares of settlement area lands or 93% less land than when dispersed through agricultural lands. Further, the Senior Policy Planner described that the proposed 2023 PPS changes could have other unintended impacts of disrupting the balance of rural and urban growth, including the potential impact of groundwater from septic beds and considerations for municipal service delivery planning and expectations.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff discussed the need for municipal autonomy to protect local interests and the vacant lots or other lands in the County ready for development. Staff discussed the economic viability of small acreage farms but noted the lack of control or enforcement to ensure the lands are farmed. Further, staff spoke about mapping and the potential conflicts where residential growth meets farms or resource-based land uses, including odours, moving equipment and road safety.

The Committee heard comments from its members supporting the staff's comments and discussed the future of farming, the different perspectives amongst farmers to fund retirement, farm succession, or capital investment opportunities, and the need for long-term planning to preserve agricultural lands. The Committee shared further feedback about other potential implications of the proposed 2023 PPS changes, including creating bush lots for clear-cutting, drainage, and nutrient management or environmental planning.

AAC03-23 Moved by: Councillor Keaveney Seconded by: Councillor Mackey

**That report PDR-AAC-20-23 be received, regarding the proposed update to the Provincial Policy Statement 2023; and**

**That report PDR-AAC-20-23 be forwarded on to County Council for their consideration for inclusion in the County of Grey's comments on the 'Review of proposed policies adapted from A Place to Grow and Provincial Policy Statement to form a new provincial planning policy instrument' posted on the Environmental Registry through posting #019-6813; and**

**That the report be shared with member municipalities having jurisdiction within Grey County; and**

**That the report be shared with local agricultural stakeholder organizations including the Grey County Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers, National Farmers Union, and Grey County Agricultural Services; and**

**That should the revised natural heritage policies be released with a limited commenting timeline, with no ability to prepare a further report for the Agricultural Advisory Committee, or County Council, that Council consider directing staff to submit comments directly to the province on those updated policies.**

Carried

## Verbal Update - Experimental Acres Project

Philly Markowitz and Linda Swanston shared an update on the Experimental Acres Project, which aims to support capacity building and sustainable agricultural pilot projects aligned with the greenhouse gas emissions goals established by Council in Going Green in Grey: Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2050. Staff highlighted that 28 applications were received and reviewed with six diverse projects awarded seed

funding. Staff noted that additional information about the Experimental Acres projects would be found online through the County of Wellington's website.

## Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

## Other Business

There was no other business.

## Next Meeting Dates

### **To Be Determined**

On motion by Councillor McQueen, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Keith Reid, Chair