



Memorandum

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Date July 7, 2011 File Number

To Gabriola Island Advisory Planning Commission
From Kaitlin Kazmierowski
Island Planner
Cc Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee
Re Local Trust Committee Referral- Establishing an Agricultural Advisory Commission on Gabriola Island

At the June 28, 2011 regular business meeting of the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (LTC), staff was directed to request the advice of the Advisory Planning Commission (APC) with regards to the establishment of an Agricultural Advisory Commission for Gabriola Island. This memorandum will provide the APC with a brief background on the role of Agriculture Advisory Commissions as well as a description of the attached materials being referred to the APC to serve as a reference for the discussion.

Agricultural Advisory Commissions (AACs) maintain communication between the agriculture/ food community and local government to ensure that food and farming issues are considered in local decision-making. These commissions are appointed by local government and often comprise of representatives from various sectors of the food system. Several AACs exist in the Trust Area, some as standing commissions and others assembled for larger planning projects such as Official Community Plan reviews. The North Pender Island Official Community Plan (2008) refers to its AAC in the following manner:

“2.2.23 The Local trust Committee shall consider the appointment of an additional Advisory Planning Commission to advise the Local Trust Committee on specific issues and initiatives relating to agriculture. This APC should be asked to examine the role of agriculture and food supply in creating sustainable communities and to make recommendations to the LTC on any changes to its policies or regulations”

The Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee has indicated a desire to appoint a standing AAC in order to provide advice on land-use applications with agricultural components as well as for larger projects. **The LTC is requesting the APC’s advice on what the Terms of Reference of such a commission should look like.** Two documents attached to this memo have been referred by the LTC in order to provide the APC with some reference materials for the discussion:

1. Salt Spring Island Agricultural Advisory Commission Terms of Reference
2. Ministry of Agriculture document entitled “Agricultural Advisory Committee: A link to your farm community”

Respectfully prepared and submitted by:

Kaitlin Kazmierowski, Island Planner



Islands Trust

SALT SPRING ISLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Approved by SSILTC September 29, 2004)

1.0 Role and Mandate

- 1.1 The Agriculture Advisory Committee shall provide recommendations to the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee (Local Trust Committee) on matters referred to it by the Local Trust Committee concerning policy, regulation and planning approval applications relative to issues affecting agriculture and agricultural land use.
- 1.2 The role of the Agriculture Advisory Committee is advisory to the Local Trust Committee and recommendations of the Agriculture Advisory Committee are not binding upon the Local Trust Committee.
- 1.3 Agriculture Advisory Committee members are to exercise their judgement based on personal expertise, experience and knowledge of the subject matter as objectively applied to a specific application. On the other hand, the gauging of community opinion on a particular issue or application is more appropriately considered one of the roles of the Local Trust Committee.
- 1.4 The Agriculture Advisory Committee shall be guided by the general policy intent as set out in the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw.
- 1.5 Agriculture Advisory Committee members shall listen to and acknowledge the views of other Agriculture Advisory Committee members and promote a meeting environment where all opinions are respected and all members feel comfortable expressing their views.
- 1.6 The Agriculture Advisory Committee may request information from other agencies through Islands Trust Staff. The establishment of policy and liaison with other levels of government, non-government agencies and community interest groups is the responsibility of the Local Trust Committee.

2.0 Membership

- 2.1 The total number of members shall not exceed 7.
- 2.2 The members of the Agriculture Advisory Committee shall be appointed by resolution of the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee.
- 2.3 The Local Trust Committee may, by resolution, remove a member at any time.
- 2.4 If a member resigns, or an appointment is otherwise terminated, the Local Trust Committee may, by resolution, appoint a member to serve the balance of the term of the appointment.
- 2.5 The Local Trust Committee will endeavour to reappoint half of the membership each year.
- 2.6 Members shall be appointed for a term not exceeding 2 years.
- 2.7 The Local Trust Committee may reappoint a member for additional terms.
- 2.8 The Local Trust Committee shall be ex-officio members of the Agriculture Advisory Committee.
- 2.9 The membership of the committee shall include both those persons with qualifications related to the mandate of the committee and persons that represent a wide cross section and the varied interests of the community. The mandate of the committee includes the related qualifications of agriculture, animal husbandry, drainage engineering, horticulture, soil engineering and forestry.

3.0 Chair and Vice-Chair

- 3.1 The members shall, at the first meeting of a calendar year, elect from among the members a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson.
- 3.2 In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall act in place of the Chairperson.

- 3.3 In the absence of a Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, the quorum of members amongst themselves shall appoint an acting-Chairperson.
- 3.4 The Chairperson is to ensure proper conduct of all meetings in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.
- 3.5 The Chairperson shall sign the minutes certifying that they are true and correct after they have been approved by the Agriculture Advisory Committee

4.0 Recording Secretary

- 4.1 A recording secretary shall be appointed by Islands Trust administration. The recording secretary shall:
 - a. ensure that notification of the Agriculture Advisory Committee meetings is given in accordance with the terms of reference,
 - b. provide members with agenda, reports and pertinent background material in advance of the meeting,
 - c. provide to applicants notification of meetings at which their applications are scheduled to be considered,
 - d. ensure that members are notified of any extraordinary meetings at least 5 days prior to the proposed meeting date,
 - e. keep minutes of all meetings and ensure that they are signed by the Chairperson or member presiding at the meeting, and
 - f. maintain a record of approved minutes to be made available to the public upon request.

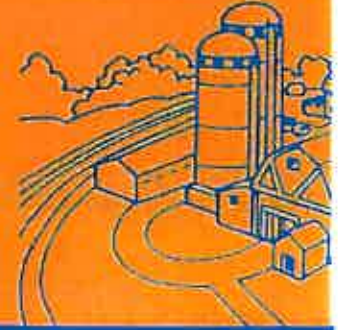
5.0 Meetings

- 5.1 A quorum for a meeting shall be a majority of the members.
- 5.2 Public notification of the date, time and location of Agriculture Advisory Committee meetings shall be posted on the Islands Trust Notice Board not less than 72 hours prior to the meeting.
- 5.3 All deliberations of the Agriculture Advisory Committee must take place at a meeting of the Agriculture Advisory Committee and such meetings must be open to the public.
- 5.4 All regular meetings of the Agriculture Advisory Committee shall be held on a monthly advisory committee meeting day as scheduled by the Local Trust Committee.
- 5.5 In the event that there are no referrals or other business to conduct, no meeting need be held.
- 5.6 Extraordinary meetings of the Agriculture Advisory Committee may be held only if approved by the Local Trust Committee upon request by the Chairperson or an Applicant.
- 5.7 The Agriculture Advisory Committee shall not receive delegations or hold public participation meetings except as directed by the Local Trust Committee.
- 5.8 The Agriculture Advisory Committee will provide an opportunity for applicants to speak to the Agriculture Advisory Committee at a meeting during which their application is being considered.
- 5.9 If an applicant or their agent fails to appear at a meeting of which they were duly notified, the Agriculture Advisory Committee may proceed and reach its recommendation in their absence.
- 5.10 A motion of the Agriculture Advisory Committee must be provided to the recording secretary or their designate prior to conducting a vote.
- 5.11 Prior to a scheduled meeting the panel members shall advise the coordinating secretary respecting their attendance at the meeting and review the agenda documents in preparation for an informed and critical evaluation of the agenda items.

6. Referrals and Other Matters

- 6.1 Members of the Agriculture Advisory Committee shall not contact applicants, representatives of applicants or agency representatives directly respecting applications or other matters under consideration by the committee. Communication with such persons should be directed through Islands Trust staff or the Local Trust Committee
- 6.2 The committee shall respond in a timely manner on all referrals and prior to a date that may be specified by the Local Trust Committee in its referral.
- 6.3 If the Local Trustees have not been in attendance at a meeting where a recommendation is made, the Local Trust Committee may receive a verbal report from the Chairperson or Islands Trust staff.

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES



A link to your farm community

What is an Agricultural Advisory Committee?

Agricultural Advisory Committees (AACs) are an effective way for local governments to link with their farm and ranch communities. An AAC is appointed and functions similarly to other advisory committees of councils or regional boards. A key asset is that the AAC members are predominantly drawn from the farm and ranching community and the committee focuses on agricultural issues. Over 40 local governments have appointed AACs to work with councils and regional boards and their staff. For a current list of AACs, see: <http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/aac/list.htm>.

Agricultural Advisory Committee Activities

Local governments with AACs have access to the advice of knowledgeable members of the farm community in a timely manner, on any issue that might affect agriculture. Although each AAC functions slightly differently, most advise local governments in two broad areas: day-to-day issues and broader initiatives.

Day-to-Day Issues:

- review proposed bylaws and official plans and rezoning applications
- advise on applications under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*
- share insight on water supply and drainage issues
- give feedback on the effectiveness of insect and weed control programs
- provide input on parks and recreation, transportation, growth management plans and other land use proposals that impact agriculture

Broader Initiatives:

- steer agricultural studies, economic plans, and agricultural area plans to completion
- assist with implementation of the plans for the agriculture and food sectors
- assist with the development of agricultural edge policies to enhance land use compatibility
- advise on the need for and appropriateness of farm bylaws
- steer studies and reports on farm infrastructure needs
- propose local government policies related to farming
- advise on opportunities for joint funding of drainage or irrigation works
- steer studies on the impacts of transportation corridors and park and recreation proposals
- raise agricultural awareness
- assist with farm tours and on-farm visits
- contribute to Agriculture in the Classroom initiatives

Agricultural Advisory Committees: A link to your farm community



Starting a Successful Agricultural Advisory Committee

- First steps**
- Make contact with Ministry of Agriculture staff to discuss AAC formation.
 - Speak to other jurisdictions with AACs about their experience.
 - Identify agricultural groups in the area.
 - Assign specific staff to provide on-going support and ensure the AAC functions smoothly. Many communities assign a planner and secretarial support. These staff can help distribute information to AAC members, book meeting rooms, and record and forward minutes and decisions to the council or board.
 - Develop a clear “terms of reference” for the AAC, while providing a degree of flexibility so that it can meet local needs. See <http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/aac/package.htm> for a model terms of reference.

Appointing members

- To gain the best advice on agricultural issues, at least two-thirds of the AAC members should be farmers. Appointments should represent a cross-section of commodity types that are important within the community the AAC serves. Where relevant, include a representative from the agricultural processing or distribution sector.
- Contact agricultural groups for advice on possible AAC appointments and discuss the relationship that the AAC will have with each group. Ideally, a broad-based agricultural group will nominate AAC members from its membership. If not, local agricultural groups could nominate most members and elected officials could appoint a few members.
- Discuss possible appointments with Ministry of Agriculture staff.
- Ensure that a strong, committed Chair person is available to lead the AAC. Consider designating a member of the agricultural community as Chair to encourage fruitful discussion and effective decision-making.
- To establish a solid link between the AAC and the council or regional board, appoint a council or board member to be responsible for staying updated on the AAC’s activities and reporting back to the council or board. Alternatively, appoint a council or board member to sit on the AAC.
- Consider appointing a university representative involved with agricultural courses or research.
- If the agricultural area includes other major land uses such as rural residential, forestry or recreation, consider including people that represent these interests, but ensure that farmers remain the majority of the membership.
- Where there are inter-related issues and a local government has several committees, consider having joint meetings or “cross-over” committee members. For example, there is often a strong relationship between agriculture and economic development. Members could be appointed to sit on both the AAC and economic development committees or commissions. Other examples include environment, planning advisory, parks and recreation, transportation, or healthy community committees.

Once the AAC is formed

- Put the best interests of agriculture forward and be a credible source of agriculture-related information for the council or board.
- Have patience, as it often takes time for new AACs to “find their feet” and for the council or board to feel comfortable with its new committee. Don’t get discouraged!

Agricultural Advisory Committees: A link to your farm community



Best Practices for Agricultural Advisory Committees

- Plan meeting times with daily and seasonal farming schedules in mind. It may make sense to have less frequent meetings during planting and harvest, or evening meetings.
- Establish and follow conflict of interest guidelines so that members understand when they should leave the discussion. Where applicable, the *Community Charter* conflict of interest guidelines should be followed (http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/03026_04).
- Make sure the local government staff liaison contacts the AAC members regularly, especially when meetings are infrequent. One way to do so is through monthly email updates.
- Encourage the AAC to tackle day-to-day issues as well as broader initiatives.
- Maintain a clear, effective relationship between the AAC and council or regional board and provide frequent updates on AAC activities. When possible, connect with council or regional board members informally through lunches and other social engagements.
- For other key committees or commissions, appoint an AAC member to act as liaison.
- Consider limiting the term of office for the Chair to keep things fresh and build leadership capacity.
- Connect with the farm community beyond AAC members (see below for ideas).



Additional Ways for Local Governments to Link to the Farm Community

- Appoint farm representatives to advisory planning commissions and other committees.
- Seek the advice of farmers’ institutes and commodity groups.
- Maintain contact with staff at the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Land Commission.
- Appoint a Council or Board member as the farm/ranch liaison.
- Designate a specific staff person to focus on agricultural issues.
- Coordinate farm tours and on-farm workshops for local government staff, politicians and/or the public.



Agricultural Advisory Committees:
A link to your farm community



Provincial Support for Agricultural Advisory Committees

The Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission support AACs by making knowledgeable personnel available and by sharing information.

- Staff can be available to attend AAC meetings as non-voting technical resource members.
- The Strengthening Farming website (<http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/aac/index.htm>) has a number of resources including a model terms of reference, a sample volunteer's contract and "The AAC Information Exchange" where AACs can post resources to share with one another.
- The Ministry of Agriculture hosts biennial AAC workshops. Information about previous workshops is available at: <http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/aac/wrkshps.htm>.

**For more information on Agricultural Advisory Committees,
contact the Strengthening Farming Program at the Ministry of Agriculture!**

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