



Agricultural Advisory Committee

Minutes

Thursday, March 3, 2016

7:00 PM

Ontario Room

Members Present: Councillor Don Hamilton (arrived - 8:35 p.m.) Paul Reesor Ruth Brock Kim Empringham Regrets: Deputy Mayor Jack Heath Ligia DeFilippis Guy Farintosh Bryant Hulshaf Lynne Koss Richard Reesor	Staff Present: Jessica Yau, Sustainability Coordinator Ruth Rendon, Senior Planner Natural Heritage Kitty Bavington, Council/Committee Coordinator Agency Representatives: Candice Einstoss, York Region Public Health Sonia Dhir, TRCA
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1. Call to Order

The Agricultural Advisory Committee convened at 7:05 pm WITHOUT QUORUM with Paul Reesor presiding as Chair.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest – None Declared

3. Additions/Changes to the Agenda - None

4. Minutes

The minutes of the February 4, 2016 Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting were reviewed and amended to clarify under item # 4 that “York Region will no longer be sending an **Economic Development** representative to meetings”.

As there was no quorum, the minutes were not adopted.

5. Business Arising From Minutes

a. Terms of Reference – Review and Approval of Changes

The Committee reviewed the suggested changes and made further amendments.

The composition was amended to 15 members instead of 19, reflected as follows:

- Up to 9 members representing interest in agriculture
- 1 member of Council
- 1 representative from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)
- 1 representative from the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP)
- 2 representatives from York Region, preferably to include representatives for Public Health and/or Economic Development and/or Planning
- 1 representative of the Environmental Advisory Committee

The section *Membership Eligibility Criteria* (residency, agricultural expertise and knowledge, availability) will be deleted and the attributes will be listed under *Composition* instead, as: “Members should have expertise and knowledge of urban and rural matters in agriculture.”

The Committee will finalize the Terms of Reference at the next meeting and prepare a recommendation for Council to endorse the amended document.

b. Work Plan 2016

The Committee reviewed and updated the 2016 Work Plan.

Tasks	Topic	Lead	Potential Dates
1	Markham Flood Control Program <ul style="list-style-type: none">Examine flood control program to determine impacts to farming community.	Water Resources staff will be invited to attend next meeting and present on matter.	April 7, 2016
2	Municipal Tree Preservation Bylaw <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review tree preservation by-law to understand permissions regarding tree removals on agricultural lands.	Committee to conduct research on this matter for review. Staff to provide Markham and York Region by-laws to Committee for information.	tbd
3	Building Permit Fees <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review agricultural building permit fee and application process.	Staff to provide Markham and York Region building permit fee to Committee for information.	tbd

Tasks	Topic	Lead	Potential Dates
4	<p>Rouge National Urban Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion regarding Rouge National Urban Park governance in Markham. • Understand Rouge National Urban Park policies and implications to farmers such as building permits, fire arms, etc. • Scope urban agriculture opportunities within Park 	Deputy Mayor Heath will lead discussions on this matter and provide Committee with Rouge National Urban Park governance updates.	tbd
5	<p>Provincial Review: Coordinated Land Use Planning Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of plans and provide comments to Council. 	Committee will review documents and provide comments, when the Provincial recommendations are released.	tbd
6	<p>Community Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify outreach opportunities. 	Committee will identify outreach opportunities to promote agricultural and local food opportunities.	tbd
7	<p>TRCA and Markham Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review potential urban agriculture opportunities. 	Committee will scope opportunities for urban agriculture within Markham with TRCA and other stakeholders.	tbd
8	<p>Local Food Procurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing policies and explore similar opportunities. 	<p>Staff to provide committee update on City's local procurement program. Committee to explore similar opportunities within other City facilities.</p> <p>Committee to explore Farm to Cafeteria Food Program – bringing local foods into the schools.</p>	tbd
9	Prepare 2017 Work Plan	MAAC Committee members & Planning / Sustainability Office.	Dec. 1, 2016

c. Meeting date

The Committee confirmed that the October meeting will be scheduled for October 13, 2016.

6. Agricultural Advisory Committee Tour 2016

Paul Reesor gave an overview of the tour of local farms, held in September, 2015. Photographs were displayed.

- The tour involved Paul Reesor's farm and Dale Reesor's farm
- There were approximately 20 participants
- The tour focused on soils. A pit was dug to display soil types and levels, and a demonstration was provided of tractors and machinery working the soil
- At Dale Reesor's farm the participants sampled sweet corn and viewed soy bean crops
- The extreme width of the machinery and their difficulty travelling on the roads, was discussed
- The tour visited Wittamore's produce store for lunch
- Frank and Mike Wittamore provided a tour of their crops including a large pumpkin patch, and provided apple and corn food tasting

The Committee expressed appreciation for the tour, and Paul hoped it was a learning experience about the importance of managing the soil.

7. York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group

Kim Empringham provided an update.

An Economic Development tour was held in the Colbourne area, outside of York Region. It included a new agrifood facility used for incubation and product development that can be rented on a short-term basis and is available to the public. They also visited the Big Apple, which is under new management, for a tour of their cidery and apple trees. The trip included the Durham College Centre for Food for a look at their Farm to Fork Program, and the Food and Culinary programs.

The Group held a joint meeting with other groups from the Golden Horseshoe and other areas, in late 2015. Kim outlined the presentations and discussions of future joint ventures. The joint group will be meeting approximately twice each year, and Kim requested suggestions for issues they can work on.

The Liaison Group is working with the Federation to consult with FarmFresh and with the public. Two surveys are available, and the committee members were encouraged to participate. Submissions should be made by March 25. Kitchen table consultations will take place at a full-day facilitated event on March 29th at the East Gwillimbury Sports Complex in Sharon, and it is open to everyone to attend.

The Liaison group will be reviewing the government's comments on the Oak Ridges Moraine review.

On April 1st, Food for Change is collaborating with the York Region Food Network on a workshop. The focus will be on "Making Sense of the Local Food Economy". The committee clerk will distribute invitations for the event.

8. Preparation for Future Meetings

a. Tree By-law

This is a Markham by-law, # 2008-96. It is presently being updated, and a presentation by City staff is scheduled for the Committee meeting in April.

The scope of issues needs to be determined before proceeding. For example, occasionally, the overgrown hedge rows have to be cut back to keep the fields clear and sometimes permits are required:

- How many farmers have had to get permits
- What areas of the by-law need to be revised and what are the suggested changes?

Kim agreed to get information on the issues prior to the April meeting, for discussion and Q & A with City staff.

b. Firearms and Guns By-law

The Committee referred to Page 29, Section 3.1.d) of Markham By-law 2012-233, which states that farmers are exempt from the restrictions in the by-law in certain circumstances. How does this apply within the Rouge National Park lands? It is intended that the Park Wardens will deal with nuisance animals. The Committee will follow-up on this issue in the fall and prepare a statement in preparation for a presentation by RNUP representatives later this year.

c. Outreach and Public Engagement

It was suggested that outreach opportunities will be available during Local Food Week, the first week of June, during the Unionville Festival. The Agricultural Advisory Committee can share a booth with the Sustainability group, at the festival. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

9. Next Meeting

April 7, 2016

Scheduled items:

- Staff presentation on the flood control program
- Tree By-law review
- Discussion on Outreach for Local Food Week

10. Adjournment

The Agricultural Advisory Committee adjourned at 8:50 pm.