

**Agricultural Advisory Committee
Minutes
Thursday, March 5, 2015
7:00 PM
Canada Room**

Members Present: Guy Farintosh Richard Reesor Lynne Koss Paul Reesor Agency Representatives: n/a Guest: Kuo Tong	Staff Present: Prabh Banga, Sustainability Coordinator Lilli Duoba, Manager Natural Heritage Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator Regrets: Deputy Mayor Jack Heath Councillor Don Hamilton Candice Einstoss, York Region Public Health Sonia Dhir, TRCA Jason Ezer, York Region Mike Bender, Rouge Park, TRCA Bryant Hulshaf Ruth Brock Kim Empringham Ligia DeFilippis Doug Lindeblom, York Region Maria Gatti, Transport Canada Maria Papoulias, Rouge Park, TRCA
---	---

The Agricultural Advisory Committee convened at 7:10 pm with Paul Reesor presiding as Chair.

1. Election of the Chair

The Clerk advised that elections will be held for the Chair and Vice-Chair at the next meeting. Committee Members were encouraged to think about who they may want to nominate for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair.

2. Review the Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the December 4, 2014 Agricultural Advisory Committee. The minutes could not be approved as there was no quorum.

3. 2015 Premier Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence Program

Lilli Duoba spoke about the 2015 Premier Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence Program. The Committee was encouraged to nominate a Markham Farm.

4. Sustainability Update

Prabh Banga provided an update on sustainability programs:

Review of Local Food Act and Local Food Fund

The Province is done receiving applications. The projects selected to receive funds through the fund will be posted on the Province's website.

Markham's Sustainability Organic Home Garden Program

The Markham Organic Home Garden Program now offers seeds for rental all year around at Markham Public Libraries.

It was suggested that the City consider partnering with the Thornhill Horticultural Society to promote/expand its seed library. Staff advised that the seed Library is currently managed by the City's Public Libraries. The seeds are rented out using library barcodes to track the seeds. The Sustainability Office's role is to plan the program, and to educate the public on the program. Staff would need to consult with the Library with respect to the possibility of forming a partnership with the Thornhill Horticultural Society to promote/expand the seed library.

Community Gardens

The City is seeking new applicants for its community garden program. It hopes to add two more community gardens to its program. The program does not include the children's gardens; these gardens are part of a different City project. The Committee asked if a community garden could be put at Markham Civic Centre.

Earth Day

The Sustainability Office in conjunction with the Environmental Advisory Committee and other City departments are planning Earth Day and Earth Hour festivities.

5. Work Plan Review

Lilli Duoba presented the following proposed 2015 Agricultural Advisory Committee work plan:

Meetings	Topic	Lead	Dates
1	Markham Life Articles	Committee directed activity	March 5, 2015
	Agriculture Tour 2015	Committee directed activity	March 5, 2015
2	Presentation from Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance	Planning/Sustainability Office	April 9, 2015
	Presentation from Local Food Bank	Planning/Sustainability Office	April 9, 2015
	Our Region/Our Community/Our Home – Provincial Policy Review	Planning	April 9, 2015
3	Presentation on Municipal Tree Preservation By-law	Committee directed activity	October 8, 2015
	Research on building permit fee exemptions for agriculture structures applications	Planning	October 8, 2015
4	Prepare 2016 Work Plan	Planning/Sustainability Office	December 3, 2015
	Funding Opportunities for Committee	Sustainability Office	December 3, 2015

The Committee reviewed the work plan.

A Committee Member had emailed the following items to be considered to be added to the 2015 work plan:

- Investigate if there is an opportunity to connecting young urban farmers to farmers on our committee for mentorship or land access opportunities
- Investigate if there is public land in Markham available for community gardens/urban farms
- Add an urban farmer to the Committee Composition

The Committee requested that Sonia Dhir provide more information on the proposed mentorship program prior to adding it to the 2015 work plan.

Staff advised that there may be an opportunity to have an urban farm in the Rouge Park. This opportunity would need to be discussed with Parks Canada. Parks Canada is in currently holding meetings regarding the agricultural leases in the Rouge Park.

The Committee discussed the Our Region/Our Community/Our Home Provincial Policy Review. The Province is currently holding public meetings on the matter. There are currently no public meetings scheduled to be held in Markham. It was requested that a link to the Provincial Policy Review be circulated to the Committee.

The Committee discussed ways Markham could help produce food locally. Some communities have been using roof top terraces to grow local food. Lynne Koss will provide staff with recent studies that have been conducted on growing food locally in urban areas.

The Committee noted that there is a lot of interest in having community gardens. It discussed how it can encourage organized groups to come forward to start a community garden. They thought surveying the community on the matter may be an effective way of identifying community interest. The survey could be included in Markham Life or through another City communication. Prabh Banga will look into the possibility of issuing a survey on the matter.

The Committee discussed the agricultural tour. It was suggested that the Committee think about the theme of the agriculture tour and when it will be held. September was proposed as an ideal time to hold the tour, as summer is over and it is still warm.

Lynne Koss reported that the Committee has already prepared an article for Markham Life on nuisance animals. A copy of the article will be circulated to staff. The article will be included in the upcoming issue of Markham Life. In the future, the Committee may write other articles for

Markham Life on key agriculture issue. A Committee Member suggested writing an article on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) from an agricultural perspective.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be held on April 9, 2015 at 7:00 pm in the Ontario Room.

7. Adjournment

The Agricultural Advisory Committee adjourned at 8:05 pm.