

Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes
January 9, 2014
7:00 PM
Canada Room

Members Present: Regional Councillor Gord Landon, Chair Councillor Don Hamilton Jay Reesor, Vice Chair Guy Farintosh Ruth Brock Ligia DeFilippis Kim Empringham Lynne Koss Richard Reesor Agency Representatives: Sonia Dhir, TRCA Candice Einstoss, York Region Public Health Jason Ezer, York Region Maria Papoulias, Rouge Park , TRCA	Staff Present: Lilli Duoba, Manager Natural Heritage Ruth Rendon, Senior Natural Heritage Planner Prabh Banga, Sustainability Coordinator Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator Regrets: Mike Bender, Rouge Park, TRCA Phil Fung, Environmental Advisory Committee Bryant Hulshaf Paul Reesor Doug Lindeblom, York Region Maria Gatti, Transport Canada
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The Agricultural Advisory Committee convened at 7:02 p.m. with Regional Councillor Landon presiding as Chair.

**1. REVIEW OF THE DECEMBER 5, 2013
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Moved by Ruth Brock
Seconded by Guy Farintosh

That the Minutes of the December 5, 2013 Agricultural Advisory Committee be approved as presented.

CARRIED

2. 2014 WORK PLAN

The Committee reviewed the 2014 Agricultural Advisory Committee Work Plan. The key agenda items for 2014 were highlighted.

Moved by Jay Reesor
Seconded by Kim Empringham

That the 2014 Agricultural Advisory Committee Work Plan, attached as Appendix A, be approved as presented.

CARRIED

3. SOIL PRESERVATION PILOT PROJECT

Biju Karumanchery, Senior Development Manager was in attendance to speak about Markham's Soil Preservation Pilot Project. This project was initiated in support of the Greenprint - Markham's Sustainability Plan, to improve soil conditions for new homeowners wanting to start a garden in their backyard. One of the initiatives under this project includes an agreement with Greenpark Homes to include as part of a 35 unit townhome development, an area with higher quality soil in the backyards to be used for a garden. The results of this project are unknown at this time, as staff are still in the process of collecting data.

The Committee discussed the need to improve the topsoil in new developments. Staff advised that a presentation was provided at the April 2013 Agricultural Advisory Committee on Markham's topsoil requirements. The City's topsoil requirements were last reviewed in 2011. Under this review the amount of topsoil required in new developments was increased. Staff will provide the Committee with a further update on this matter.

Moved by Richard Reesor
Seconded by Candice Einstoss

That the report on the Soil Preservation Pilot Project be received.

CARRIED

2. ORGANIC HOME GARDENS PROGRAM

Prabh Banga, Sustainability Coordinator reported that the Markham Organic Home Gardens Program was developed to encourage residents to start their own gardens and to grow their own food. Through this program workshops are held on gardening matters and residents can obtain advice on gardening issues they may be encountering.

The program was first launched in 2013 in Ward 7. The program was a success with over 150 residents from Ward 7 participating in the program in 2013, which exceeded the City's target of having 100 residents from Ward 7 participating in the program. Based on the success of the project, the

project is being expanded to all Wards in 2014. The goal is to have 100 residents participating in the program per Ward in 2014.

Moved by Lynne Koss
Seconded by Kim Empringham

That the report on the Organic Home Gardens Program be received.

CARRIED

4. COMMUNITY EVENTS

Prabh Banga inquired whether the Committee would be interested in attending community events to promote awareness of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (i.e. Farmers Markets, Earth Day or Markham Fair). The Committee requested that Prabh provide a list of community events that it could attend. It was suggested that a promotional flyer promoting awareness of the committee be created if the Committee decides to attend community events.

Moved by Jay Reesor
Seconded by Ruth Brock

That the report on Community Events be received.

CARRIED

5. MARKHAM MUSEUM 'S AGRICULTURAL EXHIBIT

Prabh Banga advised that Markham Museum was very thankful for the Committee's contributions to its agricultural exhibit that will be opening at the end of January. Members still have an opportunity to submit agricultural pictures/ artefacts to be included in the exhibit.

6. FARMLAND TAX REDUCTION

Kim Empringham provided a presentation entitled 'Farm Property Class Tax Rate'. The presentation provided an overview of how the property taxes of farms in Ontario are calculated. Since 1998 farm properties have been taxed in accordance with the *Farm Property Taxation Policy*. In accordance with the Policy, the upper tier municipalities set the tax ratios for farmland for the lower tier municipalities. In York Region farms are taxed at 25% of the municipal residential tax rate with the exception of the farm residence and one acre of land surrounding the farm, which is taxed at the residential tax rate.

In 2010 some municipalities in Ontario reduced their farmland tax ratio below 25% due to farmland assessments increasing more than the residential class assessments. This action may have been taken as greater increases to farmland values relative to housing prices can shift the tax burden onto farm properties if municipalities do not balance the share of taxes fairly between the residential and farm tax classes. This matter will be addressed by the York Region Agricultural Advisory Committee, as it is a Regional matter.

An update on this matter will be provided at a future meeting.

7. NEW BUSINESS

The new member of the Agricultural Advisory Committee introduced herself and there was a brief discussion on the ice storm.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

Staff advised that the March 6, 2014 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting is cancelled due to no staff being able to attend.

The next meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, February 6, 2014 in the Council Chamber.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The Agriculture Advisory Committee adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Markham's Agricultural Advisory Committee - 2014 Work Plan

Topic	Staff Assistance	Purpose
Subdivision Soil Density Pilot Project	Planning	Presentation of soil preservation pilot project by Biju Karumanchery Target Meeting: January 9, 2014
Update on Organic Home Gardens	Sustainability	Presentation of Markham's Organic Home Gardens Program by Prabh Banga Target Meeting: January 9, 2014
Community Events	Sustainability	Discussion on AAC participation in community events lead by Prabh Banga Target Meeting: January 9, 2014
Tax Reduction in Farmland Tax Rate beyond the 25%	Planning	Discussion regarding this matter lead by Kim Empringham Target Meeting: January 9, 2014
Update on New Official Plan	Planning	Discussion on the final adopted agricultural policies in the adopted Official Plan lead by Lilli Duoba Target Meeting: February 6, 2014
Update on York Region's Context Solutions for Regional Roads Report	Planning	Presentation on Regional Roads by Angela Gibson or other (York Region) Target Meeting: February 6, 2014
Community Gardens and School Gardens	Sustainability Office	Update on policies and implementation of community gardens By Prabh Banga Presentation on Seeds for Change school garden initiatives by Lynne Koss Target Meeting: April 3, 2014
Agricultural Tour	Sustainability Office	Discussion on a possible 2 nd Agricultural Tour. Possible tour to visit GTA farms being managed by TRCA Target Meeting: April 3, 2014
Update on Rouge National Urban Park	Planning	Presentation on Rouge National Urban Park planning process and agricultural priorities. Invitation to Parks Canada Target Meeting: October 9, 2014
Management of wildlife disposition on agricultural lands	Planning/ Sustainability	Discussion on regulations available to City to manage wildlife releases on agricultural lands. Target Meeting: October 9, 2014
Firearm usage and the Provincial "Right to Farm" legislation	Planning/ Sustainability	Discussion on regulations available to the City to manage firearm usage and requirements under the Right to Farm legislation. Target Meeting: October 9, 2014
Expansion of urban agriculture opportunities	Planning	Discussion of possible expansion of urban agriculture in existing and emerging planned communities Target Meeting: November 6, 2014
Review of the Local Food Act and Local Food Fund	Sustainability Office	Presentation on Local Food Act and Local Food Fund Target Meeting: November 6, 2014
Prepare 2015 Work Plan	Planning/ Sustainability Office	Discussion on Work Plan matters for 2015 and Holiday Celebration Target Meeting: December 4, 2014