

**Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes**  
**October 10, 2013**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Canada Room**

<b>Members Present:</b> Jay Reesor, Vice Chair Ruth Brock Kim Empringham Lynne Koss Paul Reesor  <b>Agency Representatives:</b> Candice Einstoss, York Region Public Health Jason Ezer, York Region Maria Papoulias, Rouge Park , TRCA Sonia Dhir, TRCA	<b>Staff Present:</b> Prabh Banga, Sustainability Coordinator Ruth Rendon, Senior Natural Heritage Planner Elizabeth Wimmer, Senior Planner Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator  <b>Regrets:</b> Regional Councillor Gord Landon, Chair Councillor Don Hamilton Mike Bender, Rouge Park, TRCA Guy Farintosh Phil Fung, Environmental Advisory Committee Richard Reesor Bryant Hulshaf Doug Lindeblom, York Region Maria Gatti, Transport Canada Lilli Duoba, Manager Natural Heritage
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The Agricultural Advisory Committee convened at 7:04 p.m. with Jay Reesor presiding as Chair.

**1. Review of April 4, 2013**

**Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes**

The following sentence was deleted from the April 4, 2013 Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes:

“It was clarified that the Committee’s interest is to protect the tax rate of the farmer, and not to protect the tax rate of developers or corporation owned farmland.”

Moved by Kim Empringham  
Seconded by Lynn Koss

That the Minutes from the April 4, 2013 Agricultural Advisory Committee be approved as amended.

CARRIED

## **2. Backyard Garden Initiative**

This item was deferred to a future Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting as the presenter was unable to attend the meeting.

## **3. Sustainability Office Update**

Prabh Banga, Sustainability Coordinator provided a Sustainability Office update. The update included the following:

### Community Gardens

- The Community and Allotment Garden Manual was adopted by Council;
- There is interest in continuing the Kirkham Community Garden next year;
- Currently working on establishing a new community garden- Cornell Community Garden.

### Home Organics Gardening Program

- The Home Organics Garden Program has 115 participants and was created to help residents start a garden at their home;
- Members benefit from free compost, workshops, one personnel visit by a gardening expert for tips and guidance, a bi-weekly newsletter with tips and recipes and can borrow gardening tools.

### Community Outreach

- Organizing an art and writing contest in the new Year for young adults to promote the value of a sustainable Markham;
- The contest will begin in the second week of January 2014 and conclude at the end of February 2014. Eligible submissions include paintings, poetry and short stories etc. Judging will occur in March 2014 and the winners will be announced in April 2014. There are four age categories for the contest. The age categories are as follows:
  - Under 10 years old
  - 10-13 years old
  - 14- 17 years old
  - 17-21 years old
- The Agricultural web page on the City's website was visited the most in June & July;
- The Agricultural Advisory Committee Tour was a great success;

- The Sustainability Office had a booth at Markham Fair.

#### News

- Information on the new Local Food Fund was provided.

#### Discussion

It was noted that applications to the Local Food Fund are usually more successful when applying in partnership with another organization. The applicant may also have to match the funds being provided through the Local Food Fund.

It was questioned how residents start a community garden. It was advised that the community must first demonstrate an interest in starting a community garden. The policy would then need to be followed to start the garden. The process for starting a community garden is volunteer driven.

#### **4. Appointment Update**

The Committee/Coordinator advised that three of the members of the Agricultural Advisory Committee terms will expire November 30, 2013. These members are eligible for re-appointment, as they have only served one term on the committee. The members interested in re-appointment to the Committee will be recommended for re-appointment to the Appointment Committee, as there will still be vacancies on the Committee that can be filled by new applicants including one academic vacancy and one farmer vacancy.

#### **5. New Business**

##### Agendas

Staff reported the following fall agenda topics:

- Drainage Agency and Staff Presentations – November 14, 2013
- Share the Roads Discussion – December 5, 2013

##### Farm Tax Rate

There was a discussion on the memo from Shane Mason, Senior Manager, Revenue & Property Tax on the Farmland Property Class Tax Rate Program. The memo provided the committee with a good explanation of the program, however lacked information on how the tax rate could be adjusted to help farmers keep their land. This memo was requested based on the Committee's concern that the new property assessments for Ontario created an imbalance between the

residential and farm tax rate. The Committee was interested in how the tax rate could be reduced below the 25% to support Markham farmers.

It was suggested that Shane Mason be invited to a Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting in the New Year to answer questions regarding farmland property taxes.

#### Topsoil

The Committee received the memo from David Mhango, Manager, Development engineering entitled "Markham Site Alteration By-Law 2011-232 and Associated Subdivision Policy regarding Placement of Topsoil". It was requested that David Mhango be in attendance at a future meeting to answer questions on this matter.

#### Work Plan

The Committee should start thinking about what it would like to include in its 2014 work plan. Staff will bring back the list of items that were reviewed when putting together the 2013 work plan to help the committee identify its 2014 priorities.

It was suggested that a map be put together of Markham's rural roads to identify problem areas (share the roads). This could be included in the 2014 work plan.

It was recommended that the Sub-Committees be consolidated on a go forward basis to better utilize staff resources and to avoid duplication of discussions.

#### Christmas Party

The Committee agreed to start the December Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting one hour earlier to have a potluck Christmas gathering.

### **6. Adjournment**

The Agricultural Advisory Committee adjourned at 8:22 p.m.