

Agricultural Advisory Committee
November 1, 2012
7:30 PM
Canada Room

<p>Members Present:</p> <p>Councillor Don Hamilton Ruth Brock Kim Empringham Guy Farintosh Jay Reesor Lynne Koss Paul Reesor</p> <p>Agency Representatives:</p> <p>Candice Einstoss, York Region Public Health Jason Ezer, York Region</p>	<p>Staff Present:</p> <p>Katie Burns, Sustainability Coordinator Lilli Duoba, Senior Project Coordinator Ruth Rendon, Senior Environmental Planner Elizabeth Wimmer, Senior Environmental Planner Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator</p> <p>Regrets:</p> <p>Regional Councillor Gord Landon Mike Bender, Rouge Park Alliance Christopher Burkholder Harriet Friedmann Phil Fung, Environmental Advisory Committee Maria Gatti, Transport Canada Bryant Hulshaf Doug Lindeblom, York Region Maria Papoulias, Rouge Park Alliance Richard Reesor Carolyn Woodland, TRCA Gary Wilkins, TRCA</p>
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The Agricultural Advisory Committee convened at 7:34 p.m. without quorum with Jay Reesor presiding as Chair.

1. REVIEW OF MINUTES

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the April 5, 2012 Agricultural Advisory Committee. The approval of the minutes was deferred to the next meeting, as there was no quorum.

2. PRESENTATION ON OFFICAL PLAN

Ms. Lilli Duoba, Senior Project Coordinator provided a presentation on Markham's Draft Official Plan.

Discussion

There was a question on land uses which conflict with agricultural uses in Markham. It was advised that agricultural conflicts exist where land is being used for uses other than for agriculture on lands zoned for agriculture. This conflict arises when the land use creates traffic or noise. Some of these land uses have been permitted through decisions made by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). It was noted that the Ontario Municipal Board is a tribunal that hears land use disputes, where sometimes decisions are in favour of the municipality and sometimes decisions are in favour of the other party.

A Member requested that a description of a precinct plan be provided. Staff advised that the precinct plan falls under the secondary plan and provides more detail and covers a smaller geographical area than the secondary plan. Moreover, comprehensive block plans, which are similar to precinct plans, but are more detailed in nature, will slowly replace the precinct plan.

A Member questioned what the zoning is for the area where Markville Mall is located. Staff advised that the zoning for the geographical area to which Markville Mall is located is for mixed use intensification.

A Member questioned the area where the urban boundary will be expanded. Staff advised that the urban boundary will be expanded into North West Markham due to the ability to provide municipal services and the access to jobs. It was noted that some areas of Markham are protected under the Provincial Growth Plan, which legislates where growth can occur, as urbanization needs to be implemented in a planned way to support expensive infrastructure.

It was questioned if the words “agricultural lands” can be used rather than “countryside lands” in the Official Plan. Staff explained that both words are being used in the proposed Official Plan, as the province refers to agriculture lands as countryside lands in its key documents.

Concern was expressed that large solar farms or other types of sustainable energy farms may be permitted on Markham’s agricultural land. This has occurred in Georgina and is presenting some problems. Staff were requested to look into this matter and to report back at the next meeting.

A Member questioned how the Rouge Park lands are being protected. It was noted that the Rouge North Management Plan was created to protect the Rouge Parks Lands and a buffer of generally 30 metres was applied to surrounding Rouge waterways. Agriculture is a permitted use within this buffer.

Policy Sub-Committee

The Policy Sub-Committee was requested to review the agricultural related sections of Markham’s proposed Official Plan. A meeting was scheduled for November 22, 2012 from 2:00 - 4:30 P.M. to review the plan. The Committee Clerk was requested to send out a meeting request with a link to the proposed Official Plan referencing the chapters related to agriculture and with a link to the Provincial Policy Statement.

3. SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Committee's proposed work plan and minutes from the sub-committee meetings were reviewed.

Katie Burns, Sustainability Coordinator, reported that there was an article in Markham Life on the Agricultural Advisory Committee's new web page, which provides information on the following:

- Local farmers markets;
- On-farm markets;
- Pick your own fruit and vegetable opportunities;
- Community supported agriculture;
- Community gardens;
- Food banks.

This information was presented on a display board at Markham Fair in September. The Committee requested that the link to the webpage be circulated to the Committee.

4. MARKHAM'S PROCUREMENT POLICY

The Committee reviewed a memorandum prepared by Alex Moore, Senior Manager, Purchasing & Accounts Payable, on Markham's cafeteria contract and the requirement to purchase a certain percentage of food from Local Food Plus certified farmers in Ontario. The Committee wanted to ensure that the provisions of the contract do not prohibit local food, as many local Markham farmers may not have this certification. The Economic Viability Sustainability Sub-Committee was requested to review Markham's Cafeteria Contract and its provisions with respect to purchasing a percentage of materials and produce from Local Food Plus certified farmers in Ontario and report back to the Committee at the next meeting.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Policy on Preserving Top Soil

Elizabeth Wimmer, Senior Environmental Planner, reported that Markham has an existing policy on preserving topsoil. A memo on this policy will be circulated to the Committee for Information purposes.

It was noted that the Toronto Region and Conservation Authority (TRCA) is also currently working on a policy for the preservation of top soil.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, December 6, 2012 in the Council Chamber. The focus of this meeting will be on the following:

- The Committee Work Plan;
- The Official Plan;
- The Assignment of Sub-Committee Chairs.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The Agricultural Advisory Committee adjourned at 9:07 p.m.