

Minutes

Meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee

Electoral Area 'A' and Town of Osoyoos Agricultural Advisory Committee

April 19, 2011

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sonora Room, Osoyoos Community Centre, 8505 68th Ave, Osoyoos

In attendance: Mark Pendergraft, Gerald Hesketh, Sera Lean, Evelyn Riechert, Alain Cunningham, Phil Armstrong, Jane Mastin, Dave Whiting

Regrets Naga Terada, Joe Carvello, Carl Withler

10:00 -10:10	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jane Mastin, TRUE Consulting.- Dave Whiting, Consulting Agrologist and Planner- Alain Cunningham, Town of Osoyoos Director of Planning and Development- Phil Armstrong, Town of Osoyoos, Planning Technician- Gerry Hesketh, Producer and Farmer- Sera Lean, Southvalley Sales Growers Supply- Mark Pendergraft, Area A Director, and rancher
10:10- 10:30	Background information review <p>Preliminary comments from Gerry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Current OCP does not address agriculture properly- as a result there have been lots of land use issues that have had to be addressed by local government ad hoc- Gerry's hope is that the approved Agricultural Area Plan will lead to amendments to the OCPs- In Gerry's opinion, orchards are financially sustainable only when high quality fruit is directly marketed by grower to niche markets Census of Agriculture 2006 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Review of Census 184 farms, but over 240 class 9 properties. Farms can be on multiple properties. Interpreting census data is complicated because farms can have more than one parcel and more than one operator. Parcels can also be leased or owned by operators- 2.1 -120 farm workers over 55- 2.2 -Census states very few operators work non-farm work, but most farmers have 2 jobs or work on other people's farms or packing houses. Census info on non-farm work is felt by committee to be inaccurate- High farm receipts – greenhouse and grapes – seems accurate- Ranching crops skewed because of ranch HQ in plan area but some ranch holdings are outside plan area2.2 -8 producers making between \$250,000 – 2 million2.3 - land area in apples has decreased substantially since 2006. Apples and grapes numbers in 2006 census should be reversed – big changes in

	last five years since census - apples have converted to grapes
10:00 -11:00	<p>Survey Results 3.0 -mailed to over 240 Class 9 properties in Osoyoos and Area A. There were 29 responses. 15% response, if the response rate is calculated using the Census 184 farms in the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sent it out in Punjabi, but many people cannot read and write Punjabi even if they speak it. BC Growers used an interpreter at an event once, and this was well attended. - Only 3 respondents stated pests as a concern. <p>*Pests (such as drysophola) will be big issues in the future, little understanding by growers – (coddling moth and cherry fly not a big issue [Sera])</p> <p>3.1 Key points from Respondents</p> <p>ALR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong support for Agricultural Land Reserve. Over 15% said it was important to protect ALR. - Some respondents stated concern that good ALR land has been excluded for development, especially in Osoyoos. <p>Comments regarding ALR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town of Osoyoos has not seen very many ALR exclusion recently - 22 acres marginally supported by Town Council and ALC turned it down 3 times in a decade. - Southeast Meadowlark - 40 acres that is already quite developed and fragmented. Approved as staged ALR exclusion, conditional on medium residential density and 15% affordable housing. - Town could provide a map showing recent exclusions. - OIB just purchased a number of good pieces of land that will be incorporated into reserve and no longer in ALR. - Signage warning to residents needed about orchard spraying and use of gyro mowers that spit-out rocks and branches <p>Labour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Transient workers major issue for Town - they cause fires, and loiter at beach. Do not know how many are actively working and seeking work. Town working with RDOS and province to create a camp facility. Will it become a summer resort? Town will gate Strawberry Creek road. - seasonal workers do not want to stay on growers land, also there have been health concerns with health hazards associated with worker accommodation - Foreign labour gets housing provided. - Foreign labour program useful to deal with labour reliability issues. - Pooling labour allows a group to serve many small farms through a contractor (such as A and G) -A and G vineyard management outsources foreign labour. They have rules they must follow (for example they have a specific driver and van for moving labour.) - BCFGA will help growers with Foreign Worker application process - In the past pickers cabins turn into rental accommodation, but with a

housing agreement a local government can stipulate who occupies the unit, but local governments are reluctant to enter into a housing agreement due to the amount of staff resources required.

Land use

- 5 acres of greenhouse requires a lot of labour. The labour should be able to live on farm, but zoning does not allow the necessary site coverage.
 - Variance for site coverage due to size of greenhouse. Area A currently 15% site coverage. In Area C increased it to 70%. People think lights and greenhouses are ugly, and detract from agri-tourism. On the other hand, a greenhouse could go anywhere - it does not have to be on agricultural soil, could be on Industrial land.
 - site coverage should be soil based
 - Home-site Severances by Agricultural Land Commission a major concern for fragmenting land.
 - Big packing plants have required a couple variances each. Demelo has many holdings, but wants to concentrate their packing on one parcel.
 - smaller packing houses cropping up on individual farms, but can only build a 600m² building. They need larger buildings for various requirements including clean storage areas.
 - Town has farming interface guidelines, but farmers near urban areas can have any type of farm. A piggery or other intensive use could open up next to Town or urban area. Could pass farm bylaw, but support unlikely because currently only vineyard and orchards near town.
 - PMRA Pesticide Management Regulatory Inventory inform about best spraying practices
 - Service extension currently underway will lead to significant development pressure. There will be huge pressure for redevelopment. There should be an agricultural boundary along NW sewer boundary. This will provide a rationale for turning down rezoning along lake and the Monashee Packinghouse site
 - Also, fear of subdivision in ALR, need to amend Area A OCP for stronger policies to deny forwarding the application to Land Commission for subdivision in ALR.
 - Regional Growth Strategy approved, but RDOS has to ASAP amend the OCP to include an Urban Growth Boundary for Area A, especially important with NW sewer
 - Reflection Point, and Willow Beach out of ALR.
 - Sunfresh formerly Monashee Packinghouse zoned industrial site-specific for fruit packing. Will close in 2014. What will the next use be? This is lakefront property with sewer.
 - Fruit map shows agricultural land not very fragmented
 - ALR map does not show Regal Ridge ALR exclusions
 - 10 unit RV sites allowed in ALR permitted uses, but not allowed in Osoyoos or Area A zoning.
 - Concern with size and use of fruit stands
 - Size of winery and Cidery is 600sq ft enough. Distilleries operate under different rules
- Improving agricultural markets outside of local governments jurisdictions and mandate outside of plan's terms of reference

Water

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very sensitive given the restrictions on urban users and lack of water stewardship by some producers -growers use water for frost protection instead of wind machines -Irrigation scheduling education ongoing -don't need to irrigate until after bloom, scares bees, lowers temperature, not good for roots - Farmwest model for irrigation scheduling is not working or being used - Provincial irrigation licenses - you need to use it or you lose it. Province unlikely to actually take licenses away. But this area has more licenses than water. - As agriculture changes to grapes, less water needed, but this may revert. In the future may go back to a crop that requires more water. - irrigation governance is complicated in plan area – will be challenging to implementing water strategies - Affirm that grazing should continue on public lands within plan area, even if land status changes to National Park - minutes to be posted on RDOS website Attachments on RDOS website - Maps - Agricultural Area Plan - Discussion Paper to be added to the minutes.
<p>11:00 – 11:30</p>	<p>Sites for afternoon tour Suggestions to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orchard, packing house, farm (8703 100th Ave (Gills) - Sandhu's greenhouses (north of Osoyoos Hwy 97) - Peach Hill Market (north of Osoyoos, Hwy 97) - Twisted Tree (east of Osoyoos) - Sunfresh Packinghouse
<p>11:30 – 12:00</p>	<p>Discussion Process, timelines, etc -Next meeting we have to appoint a Chair, Chairs role will be just a formality, because staff and consultant play the major role.</p>
<p>Lunch</p>	