



Meeting Record

Electoral Area 'H' Official Community Plan Review Community Working Group Meeting

Tuesday, April 4 at 6:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Bowser Legion
7035 Island Highway West, Bowser

Members Present:

Candace Cowan	Margie Healey	Dave Simpson
Jim Crawford	Ed Hughes	Mac Snobelen
George Dussault	Bob Leggett	John Stathers
Dianne Eddy	Don Milburn	Dick Stubbs
Nelson Eddy	Shirley Petrie	Laurel Webster
Murray Hamilton	Keith Reid	

Guests Presenters: Ione Smith and Andrea Shaw, Upland Consulting

Other Guests Presents:

Paul Christensen
Heather Vallance
Jens Johansen
Lesley Ferris
Mark Rautiainen
Dietmar Quint

Others Present: Bill Veenhof, Electoral Area 'H' Director
Courtney Simpson, RDN Senior Planner
Jamai Schile, RDN Senior Planner

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS, REVIEW OF AGENDA

Director Veenhof welcomed everyone and introduced consultants: Ione Smith and Andrea Shaw and turned the meeting over to Planner Simpson.

Planner Simpson welcomed attendees and invited Working Group members to identify themselves to the room. She provided an outline for the evening in terms of the presentation on the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) Boundary Review Project for Area 'H' and the draft Official Community Plan (OCP) Section 3: Natural Resource Management.

2. APPROVAL OF DRAFT MEETING RECORD OF MARCH 22, 2017

It was noted that Margie Healy's name should be removed from the list of attendees. It was also decided that more time was needed for Working Group members to review these draft minutes and their approval would be deferred to the next meeting.

3. PRESENTATION FROM IONE SMITH, UPLAND CONSULTING

Ione Smith spoke to the goal and objectives of the project before expanding on the methodology applied. She discussed the rationale for the assessment criteria and that for the purpose of this project Area "H" was broken down into four sub-areas as illustrated in the four slides containing the mapped areas. Smith presented the results of the study, explaining the findings of the desktop research as well as the field visit observations. She confirmed that no test pits had been dug or soil samples taken as part of this study as this was outside of the scope of the preliminary analysis. In addition to the project specific information, Smith explained how the Canadian Agriculture Capacity classification system is applied and discussed the difference between and opportunities associated with soil-based and non-soil based agriculture. She also touched on how property owners with ALR and non-ALR lands have the opportunity to apply for Farm Class through BC Assessment.

With respect to the recommendation, Smith spoke to each of the nine recommendations and expanded of various components and answered any questions as they arose.

4. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION Regarding ALR Boundary Review

The following comments were made and questions asked by Working Group members and others in attendance.

- Comment on the frustration a few attendees have experienced with the Agriculture Land Commission (ALC) regulations and policies and the level of investment required for non-soil based agriculture.
- It was noted on the Deep Bay sub-area farm class map that Crown lands predominately appear to have farm status. There was speculation that this could be a carry-over from when there was a seed farm on part of the property.
- Recommendation No. 9 – there was some discussion Recommendation No. 9 and lack of support for it, that would have the RDN filter ALR applications that are sent to the ALC.
- Planner Simpson explained that RDN current policy is to forward all ALC application that are received and that there isn't anything in the current RDN's work plan or direction to staff to amend this policy. She also said that many local governments in BC do filter ALC applications and do not forward all of them to the ALC, based on OCP policy, and that she believes the RDN is in the minority with the current practice to forward all to the ALC.
- Director Veenhof further reiterated the point that there is no direction to change the policy and ALR applications received by the RDN and it will continue to forward all of them to the ALC for decision.
- Reference to no. 3 - some discussion regarding parcel size and the importance of aquifer protection. It was noted that ALR boundary study did not consider aquifer protection, as this was outside of the scope of the project.

- Planner Simpson explained that when undertaking an OCP review we have to look at it through many lenses. There is a separate study that provides recommendations for aquifer protection. The ALR report is only one piece of the puzzle and all of the information is considered before changes are made to the OCP policies. In addition, she referred to the Area 'H' Background Report: Part 2: Land, Buildings & Spaces, page 1 to confirm that the area in question is a protected Old Growth Management Area and Coastal Douglas Fir Land Use Order area. She noted that there are already several levels of protection for this area.
- Some discuss on how the RDN's Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) and the ALC arrive at decisions on ALR applications. It was confirmed by an AAC member on the Working Group, that even if an application is not recommended by the AAC that it still goes forward to the ALC for decision.
- Smith further clarified that the scope of the project was for the whole of Area 'H' not about individual parcels or applications. The main goal of the project was to determine if a block application is warranted. She also explained what was mean by a "block" application to the ALC and that this process only applies to local governments not individuals.
- Smith also mentioned that the ALC conducted an ALR fine tuning review for the entire RDN in the 1980s in order to have the boundary refined for accuracy in areas where new data had become available and/or multiple exclusion applications had occurred. Since this type of review had already been undertaken it is unlikely that the current ALR boundary would require further adjustment based on the existing ALC criteria.

Refreshment Break

5. REVIEW OF DRAFT OCP SECTION 3: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Planner Simpson provided an overview of the draft section and the following comments were made in the discussion:

- New Policy No.5 – suggestion to break out shellfish and fin fish. It was also suggest land based activities such should include fin fish.
- Some discussion on parcel size, noting already a large number of small lots so there's no reason to continue to create more through subdivision into lots smaller than the OCP supports (but that are supported in the zoning bylaw). Smith confirmed that the findings showed a "sweet spot" of about 8 ha not to say smaller lots are not generally being successfully farmed.
- Concern that Crown land can be sold and subdivided into small lots. Planner Simpson confirmed the current zoning supports large parcels of 50 ha and this is not recommended to be reduced. Any changes of this nature would be subject to a rezoning application process and full public consultation.
- Some discussion about which jurisdictions regulate lot/parcel size, especially for land in the ALR. Planner Simpson explained that the RDN has the jurisdiction to regulate parcel size and changes to the OCP that have implications for ALR lands is required to be referred to the ALC before the RDN can adopt an OCP bylaw.
- It was generally agreed that small parcel in the ALR and under 2 ha creates a false expectation for only residential development.

- Comment about density transfer. Planner Simpson mention that it is recommended that density can be transferred from ALR properties and this may help land owners leverage value from their property.
- Planner Simpson referred to section 5.2 Resource Lands and provided a brief over of this section.
- It was suggested that the designation title “Resource Lands” should be changed.
- Some discussion about BC Assessment’s criteria for Farm Class status and the associated benefit to land owners.
- Concern expressed that privately managed forestry land can be logged and then sold for residential land.
- Planner Simpson confirmed that there is a lot of subdivision potential in the forestry lands, and that density transfer could target forest lands as donor parcels.
- Some discussion on restricting the size of houses on ALR. Planner Simpson confirmed that currently the land use zoning regulates setbacks and parcel coverage, but there are no restrictions on the size of house that can be built. There were suggestions from the Working Group that this should be considered.
- Comment as to how the current minimum parcel size of 50 ha was determined. Planner Simpson explained this is a historic number and she does not know how it was established initially. A Working Group member explained that it could be based on viable forestry yield per hectare.
- Some concern about squatters on Crown land and open access to forest roads. Suggest that they be gated and limited access to key holders. Further discussion regarding access and right to roam.
- Comment regarding Shawinigan Lake industrial dumping – can we stop it from happening here? Director Veenhof explained approval through both the Province and RDN required as well as a Waste Hazardous Materials license that involves public consultation is required before any waste disposal can occur. He also confirmed that neither the Province nor the RDN is motivated to dispose of waste in Area ‘H’.

6. SUMMARY AND CLOSING

Director Veenhof provided brief comments on the status of the Bowser Village Center wastewater servicing project.

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm