



The Corporation of the District of Central Saanich

REGULAR COUNCIL REPORT

For the Regular Council meeting on Monday, September 9, 2024

Re: Agricultural Community Outreach Results & Next Steps Re: PAAC

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the District of Central Saanich:

- 1) *With regards to the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission,*
 - a. *Member municipalities proceed with a Terms of Reference review for the PAAC, with drafts and changes going to PAAC for the information and feedback prior to the end of 2024;*
 - b. *That, once PAAC has been consulted, the revised Terms of Reference be referred to each member municipality in early 2025 for their consideration and adoption;*
 - c. *Reach out to the Saanich Fairgrounds to ask about meeting space moving forward for PAAC;*
- 2) *Organize an annual Agricultural Open House on both timely and general topics of interest;*
- 3) *Reach out to the agricultural community via survey in a 2025 mailout to seek additional feedback on areas of focus and best methods of engagement for the upcoming Agricultural Plan Review.*

PURPOSE:

To provide Council with the results of the feedback it sought from the agricultural community during its governance review and consideration of withdrawal from the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission and provide Council with additional opportunities to engage with the District's Agricultural community.

BACKGROUND:

The District of Central Saanich (District), along with the District of Metchosin(Metchosin) , the District of North Saanich (North Saanich) and the District of Saanich(Saanich)are participants in the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Committee (PAAC).

PAAC is a long-standing, sub-regionally focused external advisory body founded and maintained by the member municipalities. Its intended purpose, since it's creation in 1997, has been to provide advice, information, and assistance to the member municipalities on matters involving agriculture. Advisory bodies provide information and advice to Council to assist with decision making. This two-way communication is intended to use local and/or expert skills, knowledge and experience to provide advice to Council that complements that of staff, consultants and members of Council.

The 2024 contribution to the PAAC by the District is \$4148. The funding goes to the administration of the committee, which includes a contracted clerk, and funds identified for 'additional educational

opportunities'. Each municipality pays a portion. The administration, including the management of the clerk, has been the responsibility of Saanich since the Committee's inception. The PAAC Terms of Reference (ToR), most minutes and agendas, and the annual reports are available online. The composition of PAAC includes: one Council liaison from each municipality as non-voting representation; Councillor Paltiel is the Councillor Liaison for the District. There are 12 PAAC voting representatives, however there is no have a formula for representation from the 4 participating member municipalities, and all are appointed at-large.

In the past, the District has also had a District only Agricultural Advisory Commission or the Newman Farm Agricultural Program Committee). Both ended in 2019 when Council updated the Procedures Bylaw and opted for time limited Task Forces over Advisory Committees.

In the past year, the discussion on the role of PAAC is as follows:

- July 31, 2023: PAAC staff reach out to the District to request two appointments in August 2023. Staff advise PAAC Committee Coordinator (contracted by Saanich) the requirement for the District to endorse appointments, as the original letter is addressed to Saanich. Staff also advise Committee Coordinator that the item will go the first meeting in September as there are no August meetings
- September 2023: Prior to the District's Council's (Council) consideration of the applicants put forward by SPAAC, Council learns that the other three municipalities have confirmed the appointments and publicized them, therefore publicizing any decision the District would make by process of default. Council deferred the appointment in favour of a governance review and referred the motion to the three other member municipalities.
- October/November 2023: As per the motion, the District reaches out to the other member municipalities, and requests their participation in a joint governance review.
 - *Motion from the October 10, 2023 Closed Council Meeting:*
 1. *That Central Saanich will not be making appointments until a governance review of PAAC has been conducted.*
 2. *That Council request the support of the other member municipalities in this governance review*
 3. *The staff processes for managing the committees be clarified as part of the review*
 4. *That staff rise and report on this to the Chair and support staff of the PAAC on Wednesday, and Mayor Windsor attend the next meeting on behalf of Central Saanich.*
- November 2023: Metchosin and North Saanich indicate support for a governance review.
- December 2023: Saanich Council requests a referral to the CRD to seek their interest in a sub-regional or regional agricultural committee. While not directly privy to their response, it is staff's understanding the CRD declined.
- May 2024: Saanich advises the District of their support for a review, requesting that the District manage the Terms of Reference update and incorporate feedback from member municipalities and PAAC. Advises staff that the existing clerk and meeting room support will discontinue at the end of December 2024, and requests that District staff include the matter of administrative support and meeting space in the upcoming Terms of Reference review. Saanich has provided this support to the PAAC for 20 years. The District expressed gratitude for this service.
- June 2024: Council received Saanich's response and directed the following:

- *That staff be directed to reach out to farming stake holders within Central Saanich to engage on transitioning our resources away from the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Committee to other options or initiatives.*
- July 2024: As directed by Council, a survey is launched, then extended given the season (as per feedback received). Survey shared via limited email distribution list and promoted via social media and public notice; non-survey based feedback through the District's municipal.hall@csaanich.ca email and shared previous agendas. Survey and non-survey based feedback welcomed to be shared via agricultural networks. Results are summarized below.
- September 2024: Report back to Council for further direction

DISCUSSION:

Timeline

Many months have passed since the original request for a governance review. A major factor in the delay was the gap between the late November 2023 agreement to participate in the governance review from Metchosin and North Saanich, and that received from Saanich in May, 2024. The delay included a referral to the CRD to seek feedback if there was interest in a regional approach; The District was not included in the response to that request.

North Saanich and the Metchosin also have standalone agricultural committees. The Town of Sidney and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area were also previously members of PAAC. The Terms of Reference were last "reformatted" in 2016, and reviewed in 2014.

Engagement

As directed by Council, staff reached out the agricultural survey – primarily via survey. Verbatim comments have not been included, both for privacy reasons and due to a few that violate the District's Respectful Workplace Policy. The overall results are as follows:

- 47 survey responses
 - Have you heard of the PAAC? 100% yes
 - As a farmer or agricultural member of the community, have you felt advocated for by the PAAC, or benefited from their programs, advocacy or public education? 95% yes
 - Would you like the District to continue to be a member of the PAAC? 95% yes
 - Would the District be better served by a District specific agricultural group? 83% no
 - Would twice a year District-specific Agricultural Round Table event, focusing on issue-specific items between the District and agricultural community and open to District farmers, be of greater benefit? 82% no
 - Should the District support other local or regional agricultural initiatives, such as the South Island Farmers Institute? 60% yes
 - What do you think the District can do to support engagement with the farming community? (open ended)
 - 12 responses: Advocate directly to regulators on issues of importance to the District's agricultural community
 - 3 Responses: Reinstate the Agricultural Advisory Committee
 - 2 responses: Focus on central Saanich as a rural agricultural community as supported in the OCP. Three municipalities have the capacity for food sustainability in the CRD: Central Saanich, North Saanich and Metchosin. Spoke contains our amazing water supply the capacity of which residential

development must never strain. The other CRD municipalities are residential and that strains our sustainability.

- Use property tax notices to survey farmers
- Limited authority at the local level to make an impact versus Federal/Provincial
- Plan needs to include the issue of tenant farmers versus landowner farming

In summary, the overall engagement feedback was to keep PAAC, but work together: coordination and cooperation is key. Other activities can include advocacy to regulators on behalf of the agricultural community, including to the CRD for the continuation of the agricultural water rate.

Management of PAAC

Since the requests to seek our partner municipalities' cooperation in the governance review, and the District's pause of appointments until completion of the governance review, the individuals who were not confirmed by member municipalities as per the ToR, began receiving materials, attending meetings, being listed on the minutes and providing written reports to the PAAC.

The District's intent to make appointment and requests for a review of the ToR process have been called into question publicly by members of PAAC. Reviews of ToR is considered best practice. This is even more important when multiple municipalities are involved.

Regular onboarding of members, training and oversight by an impartial Committee Coordinator who receives appropriate oversight and an annual review of the ToR by member municipalities recommended by District staff as part of the governance review.

Format and Role

Committees are typically internal, while commissions are often external. Advisory bodies are meant to provide input and expertise to a governing body. Advisory bodies should direct any commentary or criteria to the relevant 'parent' governing body. There should not be any independent activation or advocacy against a member or disrespect shown to other members. A code of conduct provision, including a clear scope for the spokesperson, should be included or discussed in the review.

As local governments are creatures of the Province and exist via guiding legislation that must be adhered to, so too are advisory bodies established by local governments and are bound by the rules laid out in their terms of reference and are not to go beyond them. Committees formed by local governments to provide input on areas of expertise and interest, such as PAAC, or the Saanich Peninsula Accessibility Advisory Committee, are intended to act through their founding local governments, including providing input or advice on matters within their terms of reference.

The role of a committee and their members, instituted by are guided by the ToR. An advisory committee is not an advocacy committee. It provides advice and guidance to the local governments; members can advocate as individuals but may not use their position as Advisory Committee members, or the advisory committee itself, to do so.

Any group of similarly driven individuals can come together and form a society or other group who can advocate on their area of choice. This could be done without the involvement of the municipalities and offer freedom of advocacy without limitations to the bound and respectful relationship that should exist between a local government and its advisory body.

The District could, if it wishes, instead establish a District-specific agricultural committee. This would focus on District-specific agricultural challenges, advocacy and referrals and could still call on many of the same experts (as a large majority, we are proud to say, are from Central Saanich). The District would need to provide notice to the other members, draft and adopt the new committee’s TOR, recruit membership, and initiate meetings. In many ways this would be the same level of effort required to sustain PAAC given the withdrawal of support from Saanich, but would be focused on the District’s agricultural community.

District Agricultural Projects Underway

- A review of the agricultural plan is planned for 2025, to provide an update and reflect the many recent community and global changes and legislative updates that have occurred since the previous plan.
- Agricultural Housing Review, underway
- Agricultural Open House, planned for later this fall
- Business and Agriculture Wayfinding Signage Program, timing still under development
- In early 2024, Council granted \$1000 to the South Vancouver Island Farmer to Farmer event.

Scope

In Scope (Terms of Reference)	In Scope (General)
Membership	Meeting Support (clerical support with meeting support role, space, hosting agendas/minutes)
Mandate	Billing/Finance
Conflict of Interest	Orientation
Membership Distribution (including appointments and process)	Method to ensure support and guidance on adhering to meeting procedures and TOR
Member Roles & Responsibilities	Minutes standards
Meeting Details	Staff involvement/roles/liaisons
Financial support	Financial process
Reporting requirements	
Terms of Reference review period	

IMPLICATIONS:

Strategic

In Council’s 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, one of the priorities includes “Cultivate a Resilient Economy and Thriving Agricultural Sector”, including the goal of “support the agricultural community and encourage farming that improves food security.”

Legislative/Policy

Letter writers and speakers have previously requested that appointments continue during the governance review process. As the appointments and a process discrepancy were one of the triggers for the governance review, this is an area of need for a close review during the anticipated governance work. In addition, it would be inefficient to appoint someone temporarily to the PAAC if there is potentially a wish to not have them appointed in the newly revised PAAC under a newly adopted TOR which could include a different committee composition or criteria. Finally, the appointment process currently requires unanimous consent of the participants, and no process is outlined for disagreement or individual municipal representation. In lieu of a clear appointment process and the previous issues, it is suggested that any appointments wait and that the member municipalities understand that

recommendations and discussion might, temporarily, take part with a commission that at times is under quorum.

Currently the District is aware of two vacancies that have been waiting since Fall 2023. The remaining 10 filled positions of voting members, of which 6 would constitute quorum. PAAC can request, as part of the TOR review, to reduce quorum requirements.

Regarding the previously directed governance review, if directed to proceed, staff would propose the following:

- Meeting of Corporate Officers or appointees to discuss areas of concern, best practice, items outside of the TOR that should be simultaneously addressed
- Once a new TOR and additional details have been coordinated, provide the draft to PAAC for comment
- Review of the PAAC comments by the Corporate Officers/staff for possible inclusion
- A staff report and referral by Central Saanich to the other participants for their endorsement.

A requirement for orientation will also be recommended, as there has been demonstrated need to ensure a common understanding of meeting procedures and the guidelines of the TOR.

Financial/ Resource

Governance is contained within the duties of Corporate Services – Legislative Services division of the District. The current Corporate Officer and Deputy have the required knowledge to complete a terms of reference review, in cooperation with staff of the other municipalities. If Council wishes, it could contract out the governance review.

If additional resources are needed following the review, including for new meeting space or due to an increase in the costs, this will be forwarded along with the governance recommendations to the member municipalities.

Financial (e.g. billing) for the PAAC costs has previously been done by host Saanich – moving forward, the review will need to identify how these services are provided.

Given Saanich's withdraw of management of the support services, the participants would need to provide clerical support, meeting space, website presence, billing/financial support. This will need to be identified as part of the review and as part of the 2025 financial request from the participants. There will likely be resource implications, if not staff providing clerical support then supervision of a contractor to do the same, website updating etc.

Legal/HR

Due to the original error in the appointment process, the District was at legal and reputational risk related to the delayed appointments. A clear process in a TOR will help alleviate this risk in the future.

The clerical support for PAAC has long been a contractor, and this will likely continue. The governance review will have to address who is responsible for the management and oversight of the contractor.

Communications

The outreach directed by Council identified the lack of a coordinated method for the District to reach out to the agricultural community. Staff will review opportunities to collect contact information, on a voluntary basis, for those who wish to be informed of the District's agricultural activities and engagement opportunities.

OCP

The Official Community Plan, adopted in 2023, identified the following:

- Continue to support and seek input from the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission (PAAC) on farm related matters and efforts to strengthen the local farm network through sharing of information, and to facilitate annual or biannual meetings with representatives of the District and farming community.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (recommended):

That the District of Central Saanich:

- 1) With regards to the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission,
 - a. Proceed with a Terms of Reference review for the PAAC, with drafts and changes going to PAAC for the information and feedback prior to the end of 2024;
 - b. Reach out to the Saanich Fairgrounds to ask about meeting space moving forward for PAAC;
 - c. That, once PAAC has been consulted, the revised Terms of Reference be referred to each member municipality in early 2025 for their consideration and adoption;
- 2) Organize an annual Agricultural Open House on both timely and general topics of interest;
- 3) Reach out to the agricultural community via survey in a 2025 mailout to seek additional feedback on areas of focus and best methods of engagement for the upcoming Agricultural Plan Review.

Option 2:

That the District of Central Saanich:

- a) With regards to the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission,
 - a. Provide notice to the other participants and PAAC that effective immediately it will withdraw from the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Committee as a member municipality.
 - b. Encourage PAAC to form as a non-profit organization that can continue the desired advocacy and independent voice for the agricultural community.
 - c. Advise PAAC that if formed as a standalone body, the District would consider a request for funding support and a Council liaison.
- b) Organize an annual Agricultural Open House on both timely and general topics of interest,
- c) Ensure inclusion in the upcoming Engagement Strategy to identify meaningful ways to engage the broader District agricultural community including for the upcoming Agricultural Plan Review.

CONCLUSION:

The District is a member of the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Committee. In 2023, Council initiatives and received support from all current municipal participants for a governance review. A subsequent request for consultation with the agricultural community prior to Council considering leaving the group has resulted in strong support for continued engagement with the agricultural community.

Report written and submitted by:	Emilie Gorman, Director of Corporate Services & Corporate Officer
Concurrence by:	Christine Culham, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: PAAC 2023 Annual Report

Appendix B: [PAAC Terms of Reference](#)

