

Nareka Jacques

Subject: RE: Proposed CRD Foodlands Access Service #4

From: Jason Austin [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, January 24, 2025 5:00 PM
To: Emilie Gorman <Emilie.Gorman@csaanich.ca>; Pamela Martin <Pamela.Martin@csaanich.ca>
Cc: Mayor Ryan Windsor <Ryan.Windsor@csaanich.ca>
Subject: Fwd: Proposed CRD Foodlands Access Service #4

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For Mayor & Council

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Proposed CRD Foodlands Access Service #4

Date: Fri, 24 Jan 2025 14:53:16 -0800

From: Jason Austin [REDACTED]

To: council@langford.ca, Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>, council@saanich.ca, council@esquimalt.ca, cday@colwood.ca, dgrove@colwood.ca, iward@colwood.ca, mayorandcouncil@metchosin.ca, admin@sidney.ca, obcouncil@oakbay.ca, council@sooke.ca, mayorandcouncil@viewroyal.ca, kwilliams@highlands.ca, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], info@highlands.ca, Mayor Ryan Windsor <Ryan.Windsor@csaanich.ca>, chris.graham@csaanich.ca, zeb.king@csaanich.ca, gordon.newton@csaanich.ca, Niall Paltiel <Niall.Paltiel@csaanich.ca>, sarah.riddell@csaanich.ca, bob.thompson@csaanich.ca, allmayorandcouncil@northsaanich.ca, djantzen@colwood.ca, kjordison@colwood.ca
CC: CRDBoard@crd.bc.ca, icaradonna@crd.bc.ca, ccoleman@crd.bc.ca, sbrice@crd.bc.ca, zdevries@crd.bc.ca, bdesjardins@crd.bc.ca, Ryan Windsor <rwindsor@crd.bc.ca>, directorsgi@crd.bc.ca, cplant@crd.bc.ca, Cliff McNeilSmith <cmcneilsmith@crd.bc.ca>, dthompson@crd.bc.ca, charder@crd.bc.ca, mtait@crd.bc.ca, pjones@crd.bc.ca, directorjdf@crd.bc.ca, kwilliams@crd.bc.ca, stobias@crd.bc.ca, malto@crd.bc.ca, sgoodmanson@crd.bc.ca, directorssi@crd.bc.ca, mlittle@crd.bc.ca, kmurdoch@crd.bc.ca, dougkobayashi@crd.bc.ca, jbrownoff@crd.bc.ca

The Mayors & Councils of the Capital Region
cc The CRD Directors

I apologize for writing to you again but there is important new information I must bring to your attention.

I have spoken in my last three emails of January 15, 21 & 22, of the proposed CRD Foodlands Access Service that could be recharged to the municipalities for in excess of \$1,000,000 every year. **I have become aware that a CRD staff report said it was essential this proposal be canvassed with the**

municipalities but astonishingly the CRD Board rejected this and instructed the staff to proceed with this proposal without canvassing the municipalities.

These are the details:

Attached is the October 18 2023 staff report to the CRD Planning & Protective Services Committee which says at the bottom of the first page:

The next step in the service establishment process is to canvas local government partners to confirm service participants and seek feedback on the proposed operational requirements. Staff propose to use the information presented in Appendix B to support this process.

*The proposed service would function best as a regional service. The more local governments who choose to support the new service, the lower the budget requisition will be for each. **Seeking input to refine the service proposal is an essential step for attaining widespread support for the new service.** [my emphasis]*

The Planning and Protective Services accepted the staff recommendation and made their recommendation to the CRD Board that

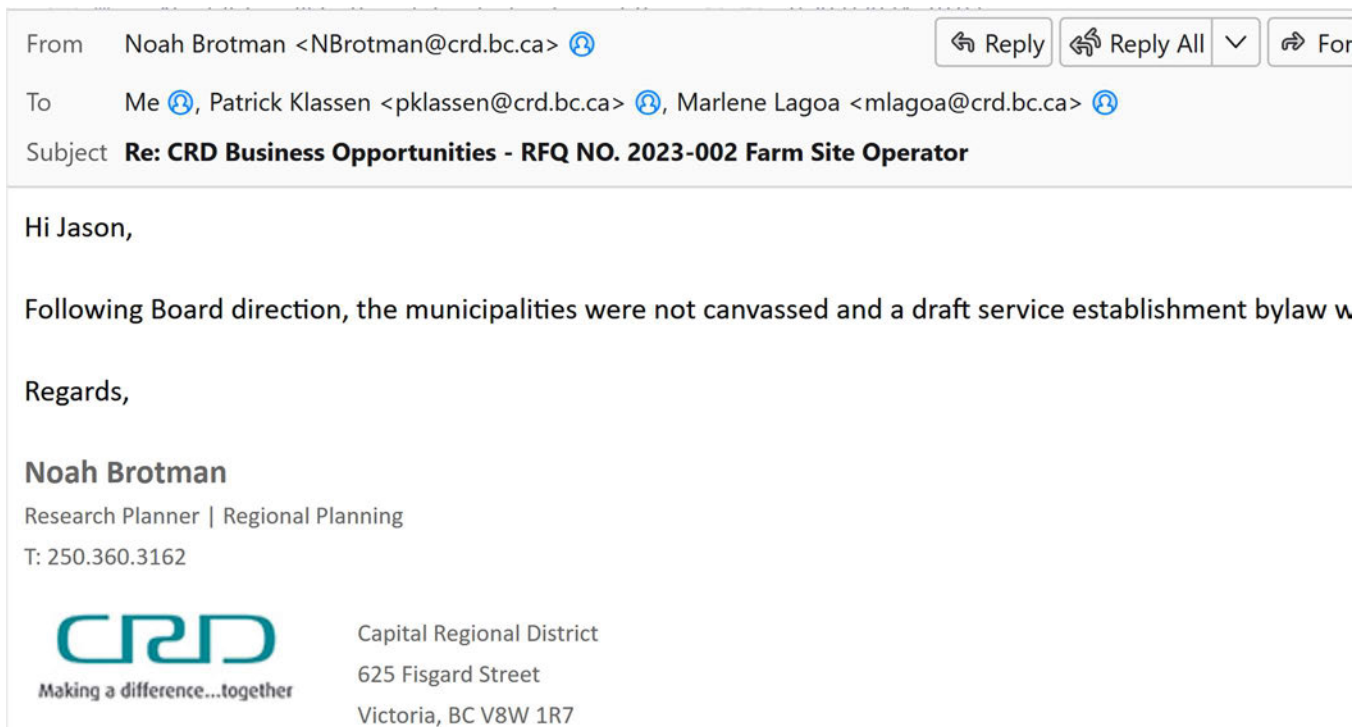
"The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That staff be directed to canvas local governments for interest in participation in a new Foodlands Access Service, receive feedback about the proposed service and draft a service establishment bylaw based on input."

Item 6-3 at https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/committeedocuments/planning-and-protective-services-committee/20231018/2023-10-18ppscminutes.pdf?sfvrsn=42c4ccce_4

The CRD Board at their meeting on November 8 2023 however rejected that recommendation to canvass the municipalities and instructed staff to proceed without that input. See item 12-3 at https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/committeedocuments/capitalregionaldistrictboard/20231108/2023-11-08minutesrb.pdf?sfvrsn=8546ffce_4

So despite the strong wording from staff that ***"Seeking input to refine the service proposal is an essential step for attaining widespread support for the new service."***, and the recommendation from the Planning and Protective Services Committee to the CRD Board ***"That staff be directed to canvas local governments for interest in participation in a new Foodlands Access Service, receive feedback about the proposed service and draft a service establishment bylaw based on input,"*** the municipalities were not canvassed by the CRD for their input on this proposed Foodlands Access Service and this proposal went ahead without that input.

I received this written confirmation from the CRD that the municipalities were not canvassed.



This is extraordinary that a service bylaw, effecting all the municipalities and potentially chargeable to them for in excess of \$1,000,000 every year was not put to those municipalities for their input.

In summary then, this proposed CRD service bylaw 4602

- is based on a discredited 2019 CRD study as shown in my email of January 15th, The CRD was aware of the errors and did not correct them
- the CRD did no business studies to show the expected objectives of the proposal, or the expected outcomes
- there are no business studies for the likely expectations of any persons going through the CRD proposal and how they might fare or fail
- the proposal is presented as being necessary to promote food security in the region yet **there are no studies that show it would have any impact on food security.** It will have no positive impact on the existing large food producers in the region, and it does not address food costs to those in the region who have difficulty affording fresh produce. In fact there are no studies to show any benefit to the community as a whole from these substantial expenditures
- the proposal does not address the primary difficulty for existing small crop farmers which is to find a market for their produce at a price they can live on
- the CRD did not canvass the municipalities who would have to pay for this "service"
- the CRD put this out as an Alternative Approval Process which was not seen by the general public and hence there was no public discussion as there has been with the City of Victoria about the Crystal Pool referendum
- the Notice on the AAP reads as if it was a one time charge and did not disclose that it is a potential \$1,000,000 annual cost for an undetermined period of time

When you blow away the smoke and the rhetoric, there is no basis for spending public funds on this proposal.

A workable alternative - CRD Farm Vouchers: In the Capital Region we have two at-risk communities - the small crop farmers and the food insecure people who cannot afford fresh produce. In my previous emails I have recommended the CRD issue Farm Vouchers to the food banks which they can use to buy fresh food from the small crop farmers. This will benefit both at-risk groups with one payment.

Talk to the public. The CRD chose not to canvass the municipalities about their foodlands proposal and many will view that as a mistake. Those who have read my series of emails will realize that the plight of the small scale crop farmers and the lack of new farmers is a symptom not a cause. The primary causes in my view are the globalization of food where produce from other countries with low wages and easier growing conditions can be sold cheaply here, AND the understandable preference of the public in these challenging times to follow those lower prices instead of buying our farmers seasonal produce at a slightly higher price. If any action is taken by the CRD or the municipalities, it will involve the use of taxpayer funds and the public should be involved in the discussions. At the very least the public will hear how their spending habits effect the future of the small crop farmers and they can decide if they will support the local farmers or not.

Sincerely,

Jason Austin
Gatton Farm
Central Saanich

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**REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2023**

SUBJECT **Canvas Local Governments for Participants in the Foodlands Access Service**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To seek approval to canvas local governments to determine interest in participation in a Foodlands Access Service.

BACKGROUND

On April 13, 2022, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board directed staff to proceed with the next phase of work to consider establishing a regional Foodlands Access Service by identifying the operational requirements, service participants and funding strategy needed to establish a service.

On July 12, 2023, the CRD Board received an update on the proposed service. CRD staff indicated that operational requirements would be delivered through two programs of work: surplus land conversion to agricultural use and land matching grants. At this meeting, the CRD Board also gave conditional approval for the use of the eastern portion of Bear Hill Regional Park as a trial site for the surplus land conversion program. The goal will be to test activating the currently underutilized site for agriculture and to explore how this and other surplus lands can be converted to productive use. See Appendix A for a location map.

Following this conditional approval, CRD staff initiated a Request for Qualification (RFQ) process to identify potential farm site operators interested in partnering with the CRD to manage the Bear Hill Farm trial site. Submissions have confirmed that a viable operator would be available to provide site farm management. Through the engagement process and RFQ submissions, agricultural stakeholders identified that the service should target expanding farmers rather than focus on entrant farmers as there are existing sites that target entrant farmers in the region. This indicates a need for a land conversion program that offers larger leased parcels to support growing farms, rather than incubator support services. This would allow successful farmers to scale their operations, increase productivity, and maximize food produced on the Bear Hill site.

With this input, CRD staff have finalized the operational requirements needed for service establishment. These are presented in Appendix B. Actions related to program delivery, such as defining the partnership and governance responsibilities between the farm site operator and the CRD, refining the proposed plot sizes and number of farmers, determining the capital investments that would be required and setting land lease terms and conditions for farmers, would be determined through an implementation plan once a service is established.

The next step in the service establishment process is to canvas local government partners to confirm service participants and seek feedback on the proposed operational requirements. Staff propose to use the information presented in Appendix B to support this process.

The proposed service would function best as a regional service. The more local governments who choose to support the new service, the lower the budget requisition will be for each. Seeking input to refine the service proposal is an essential step for attaining widespread support for the new service.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That staff be directed to canvas local governments for interest in participation in a new Foodlands Access Service, receive feedback about the proposed service and draft a service establishment bylaw based on input.

Alternative 2

That the Canvas Local Governments for Participants in the Foodlands Access Service report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

CRD Corporate Plan initiative 8b-1 is to consider establishment of a new Foodlands Access Service. Work to date advances delivery of this initiative.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

Development of a new Foodlands Access Service responds to direction from the *CRD Food and Agriculture Strategy* (2016) and the *Regional Growth Strategy* (RGS). Initial service design has been informed by the *CRD Regional Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study* (2019) and the *Kwantlen Polytechnic University's (KPU) Foodlands Trust Business Case* (2022).

Intergovernmental Implications

Staff will canvas the region's 13 local governments and three electoral areas for interest in program participation in Q4 2023. Knowing the number of interested service participants is needed to prepare the service funding strategy and scope the service establishment approval process. The cost to each local government would depend on the number of service participants. Based on past feedback, CRD staff consider that consent on behalf of municipal participating areas would be the preferred approval process.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The proposed service supports implementation of RGS objective 6.1, which is focused on fostering a resilient food and agriculture system. It strives to protect the region's food and farmlands, enhances local food security, expands food system economic opportunities, and provides opportunities for expanding farmers to gain access to productive agricultural lands.

Service Delivery Implications

A key assumption on service delivery is that purchasing agricultural parcels would be cost prohibitive. Instead, the service would seek to use a mechanism such as a lease agreement to secure surplus public land that could then be converted to farm. This would allow the service to focus funding on land improvements to bring the land into production.

The proposed Foodlands Access Service would introduce a new service level to the Regional and Strategic Planning Division. A key service delivery assumption is that farm site management is provided by a qualified farm site operator. The CRD does not have agricultural specialists who can manage a farm site.

A qualified farm site operator can only be retained once a service is established. The farm site operator will be responsible for providing a detailed budget for site preparation, equipment and contract service costs.

Staff would begin drafting a service establishment bylaw based on the input received and report back to the Board in Q2 2024.

Financial Implications

Costs for canvassing local governments and electoral areas for interest in service participation can be covered through core budget.

There are two financial implications related to service creation. The first implication is the annual cost to deliver the service. The proposed trial program would seek to test service delivery and inform future decisions about program expansion. Decisions about operating costs are made through the annual service and financial planning processes. The first year of operating costs would be 2025.

Table 1 provides a summary of anticipated costs over the first five years of the program. Costs reflect a Class C cost estimate (+/- 25-40%), based on information from the 2022 Foodlands Trust Business Case. Further cost refinements would be undertaken once a service is established, and a qualified farm site operator is selected.

Table 1: Foodlands Access Service Five Year Financial Impacts

Description	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Staff	\$-	\$-	\$71,750	\$72,990	\$74,230
Contract services	\$125,000	\$127,500	\$130,000	\$132,500	\$135,000
Site preparation & equipment costs	\$175,000	\$-	\$-	\$300,000	\$-
Land matching grant program	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Operating reserve contributions	\$-	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
TOTAL	\$320,000	\$247,500	\$321,750	\$625,490	\$329,230

The second implication is the requisition limit for the new service. The annual requisition limit identifies the maximum amount of money that can be raised by requisition for the service each year. Staff propose setting a requisition limit that would allow for the Bear Hill trial to proceed and to allow for two additional parcels of land to be phased into the service over the next five to ten years. Based on the five-year operating costs, staff anticipate this would require a requisition limit of \$1 million. The decision about requisition limit is made through the service establishment process and is an item that local governments and electoral areas will be asked to consider.

CONCLUSION

The CRD Board has directed staff to consider establishing a Foodlands Access Service. The purpose of the service is to support expanding farmers by providing affordable access to productive farmland. Staff are prepared to engage local governments to discuss operational requirements, identify interested participants and develop a funding strategy. Should all requirements be met, the CRD Board will be able to consider establishing a new service in Q2-Q3 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That staff be directed to canvas local governments for interest in participation in a new Foodlands Access Service, receive feedback about the proposed service and draft a service establishment bylaw based on input.

Submitted by:	Emily Sinclair, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager, Regional and Strategic Planning
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Nelson Chan, MBA, FCPA, FCMA, Chief Financial Officer
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Bear Hill Farm location map

Appendix B: Foodlands Access Service Information Package