

City of Chilliwack
AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022 - 3:30 pm
HELD ELECTRONICALLY / DOGWOOD ROOM

Council Members: Councillor Chris Kloot, Chair

ARAC Members: Chris Les, Industry Representative
Brett Payne, Industry Representative
Peter Vink, Industry Representative
Steve Saccomano, Community Member
Stan Vander Waal, Industry Representative
Walter Dyck, Industry Representative
Jeremy Wiebe, Industry Representative
Sarah Sache, Community Member

City Staff: Stacy Thoreson, Senior Planner
Krista Desormeaux, Planning Assistant
Trish Alsip, Recording Secretary

Regrets: Councillor Harv Westeringh, Vice-Chair
Erin Leary, Manager of Development Planning
Gillian Villeneuve, Director of Planning
Glen White, Director of Development and Regulatory Enforcement
Services/Approving Officer
Craig Wickham, Manager of Land Development/Deputy Approving Officer
Walter Goerzen, Community Member
Jacqueline Boer, Community Member

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Chris Kloot was Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm and provided territorial acknowledgement.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved /) That the Agenda for the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee meeting held
Seconded (Wednesday, December 14, 2022 be adopted as circulated.

Carried Unanimously

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved /) That the Minutes for the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee meeting held
Seconded (Thursday, August 18, 2022 be adopted as circulated.

Carried Unanimously

4. CURRENT ISSUES TO ADDRESS

5. NEW BUSINESS

Thomas Balakshin and Sarah Gale, Applicants, were present.

a) ALR00393 – 10639 Bell Road

The Senior Planner provided a presentation regarding an application for a non-adhering residential use to allow for a secondary residence with a total floor area of 219m², in excess of Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) regulations within the subject property located at 10639 Bell Road. The information provided included the location map/ortho photo, proposal/factors, and recommendations.

The subject property is approximately 24.6ac (9.96ha) and operates as an organic dairy farm. The single detached dwelling within the property is approximately 167m² in total floor area and is lived in by the applicant’s parents.

The applicant proposes to retrofit an existing agricultural building (hatchery) into an additional residence to allow the applicant’s family to reside within the subject property. The total floor area of the two storey building is 219m². Of this, 105m² of the building (the upper floor) is proposed to be retrofitted into residential use, with the 114m² existing basement area to be determined, as outlined below. For information, the basement is accessed via a separate outside door and is not accessible from the proposed dwelling unit. As the basement has a 2m vertical height, it does not currently qualify as a crawl space under the ALC’s definition and is therefore not exempt from the total floor area of the building.

While the applicant has demonstrated the proposed living area on the upper floor can meet the requirements of the City of Chilliwack Floodplain Regulation Bylaw, confirmation as to whether the basement can meet the minimum required flood construction level (FCL) for expanded uses (i.e. workshop, rec room etc.) is required. As such, if the basement can meet the FCL and include habitable space, this area will count towards the total residential floor area. Should the basement not meet FCL requirements, the applicant will convert the basement area into a crawl space, with a 1.5m vertical height to meet BC Building Code requirements.

The applicant is prepared to meet all Floodplain Regulation Bylaw and BC Building Code requirements as part of a Building Permit submission to retrofit the agricultural building. As such, the proposal is being considered under the assumption that the basement can be utilized as habitable space and will therefore count toward the total floor area.

Moved /) That the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee supports the proposed non-adhering
Seconded (residential use application within the Agricultural Land Reserve for property located at 10693
Bell Road and recommends Council forward the application to the Agricultural Land Reserve
“with support”.

Carried Unanimously

5. NEW BUSINESS (continued)

Shannon Webb and Kristin Webb, OTG Developments Ltd. joined via zoom.

Daniel Botha, Botha Family Holdings Corporation, was present.

b) ALR00404 – 42990 Keith Wilson Road

The Senior Planner provided a presentation regarding an application for a non-adhering residential use to facilitate the retention and renovation of a non-confirming dwelling within the subject property located at 42990 Keith Wilson Road. The information provided included the location map/ortho photo, proposal/factors, and recommendations. The Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Application Submission was provided.

In January 2018, a Building Permit was issued to construct a new two-storey single detached dwelling with a floor area of 277.8m², under the condition that the existing dwelling be demolished. As demolition of the original dwelling was never completed, the new dwelling has not passed final inspection. Property ownership changed prior to the completion of the Building Permit and Demolition Permit, and the current property owners are now requesting permission to retain the existing dwelling for both residential and agricultural uses. Although the new dwelling has not yet passed final inspection, the property owners currently reside in it; the existing dwelling is currently vacant.

The property is approximately 5.3ha (13.1ac) in area. The proposed total Farm Home Plate (FHP) for both residences is 2,437m², which is well under the 5000m² maximum area permitted within the AL (Agricultural Lowland) Zone. Based on the provided site plan, all structures related to the existing dwellings are contained within the proposed Farm Home Plate area. In addition to the two existing dwellings, the property also currently contains three agricultural buildings. As all buildings are connected by a shared driveway, an additional driveway is not proposed.

According to the submitted plans, the existing one-storey dwelling has a floor area of 225.5m² with a 40.8m² attached covered patio and a 26.8m² carport. The applicant is proposing to retain 90m² of living space and convert the remaining areas, including the covered patio and carport, into storage space for indoor horticulture, including microgreens, and agricultural storage. Should the request be approved, a Building Permit application will be required for the conversion of 203.1m² of the original dwelling for agricultural uses and retain 90m² for residential use.

Currently, the agricultural activities on this property consist of hay production and horse boarding; the property is assessed as a “farm” under the BC Assessment Act. In addition to indoor horticulture, the property owners also intend to expand the agricultural operations to include growing garlic and lavender, as well as raising livestock and poultry. As such, the conversion of the existing home will allow for the expansion of agricultural operations while ensuring that a residence is available for the farmhands required to sustain the operational expansion.

Discussion ensued with respect to whether it would be in the best interest of agricultural to demolish the building and build a new more efficient agricultural facility for microgreens; Mr. Webb, OTG Developments, who is acting on behalf of the applicant, noted that should the building be required to be demolished, it would be an unnecessary cost to the owner to rebuild.

A query was raised regarding whether a building permit is required, should the proposed application be approved; staff noted a building permit would be required with respect to a proper fire separation and residential requirements, as well as to retro-fit the residential portion to agricultural use.

5. NEW BUSINESS (continued)

An enquiry was made as to whether the existing dwelling would be defined as an agricultural building with a residential unit, should the application be approved; staff provided clarification noting the application would require the Agricultural Land Commission’s approval which is outside the City of Chilliwack’s jurisdiction.

A committee member noted while it is with good intention to reuse the space, the demolition of the original dwelling which was not carried out is the issue as the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee has no guidance with respect to the building use.

A query was raised as to whether the applicant could convert the building in question to a strictly agricultural-use building and decommission it as a residential space; staff noted the above-noted enquiry would have to be forwarded to the ALC with respect to whether a conversion from a residential space to an agricultural building would be considered even in its entirety.

Further discussion ensued with respect to ALC policy changes made in 2018 with respect to the types of permitted uses with respect to secondary dwellings; this shift in ALC policy is outside of the City of Chilliwack’s purview and is now required to be made directly to the ALC; whereas previously, the application was made to municipalities.

Moved /) That the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee does not support the non-adhering
Seconded (residential use application within the Agricultural Land Reserve for property located at 42990
Keith Wilson Road and recommends Council forward the application to the Agricultural Land
Commission “without support”.

Carried Unanimously

The Committee noted the rationale provided by the applicant to retain a portion of the house as an agricultural building for microgreens was not sufficient to demonstrate the need as there are three barns on the property; though, the Committee would consider a revised proposal that requests to retain the entire house for residential uses.

6. PRESENTATION / DELEGATION

7. INFORMATION / DISCUSSION

As this is the last meeting for the current committee, Chair Kloot and on behalf of Vice-Chair Westeringh thanked the departing members who have shared their expertise over the years.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be held at the call of the Chair.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:12 pm.

Councillor Chris Kloot, Chair