

City of Chilliwack
AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY, 20, 2021 - 3:30 pm
HELD ELECTRONICALLY

Council Members: Councillor Chris Kloot, Chair
Councillor Harv Westeringh

ARAC Members: Walter Goerzen, Community Member
Walter Dyck, Industry Representative
Steve Saccomano, Community Member
Chris Les, Industry Representative
Jacqueline Boer, Community Member
Brett Payne, Industry Representative
Sarah Sache, Community Member
Jeremy Wiebe, Industry Representative

City Staff: Gillian Villeneuve, Manager of Development Planning
David Blain, Director of Planning and Engineering
Ian Josephson, Fire Chief
Tara Friesen, Manager of Environmental Services
Caitlin Weston, Assistant Manager of Bylaw Enforcement
Trish Alsip, Recording Secretary

Regrets: Peter Vink, Industry Representative
Stan Vander Waal, Industry Representative

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved /) That the Agenda for the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee meeting held
Seconded (Wednesday, January 20, 2021 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, November 19, 2020 be adopted as amended.

Carried Unanimously

4. DELEGATION

5. CURRENT ISSUES TO ADDRESS

6. NEW BUSINESS

Ian Josephson, Fire Chief was present to answer any enquiries regarding the following presentation.

a) Open Burning Regulation Bylaw Updates – Summary Memo

Tara Friesen, Manager of Environmental Services provided a summary memo and presentation regarding the new Open Burning Bylaw that has been drafted to replace the City's existing Open Air Burning Regulation Bylaw. Most of the changes to the bylaw were required to resolve conflicts with the BC Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation. Details regarding the bylaw changes were presented to the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee for discussion.

Below are the most significant changes to the bylaw:

- Ventilation index required on day of burning
- Permitted hours for burning
- Setback from neighbouring residences and businesses

An overview of other changes and additional details regarding the bylaw changes were provided.

Stan Vander Waal was unable to attend the meeting; however, provided comment via email. Stan noted that, if done correctly, open burning is beneficial in keeping our community clean and avoids filling up our landfill sites. He suggested considering opening the burning window in Chilliwack which would allow for better opportunity to follow best practices; and burn when materials to be burned are 'seasoned', to help reduce smoke pollution assuring a reasonable opacity level. It was felt the current Chilliwack burning window is often not suitable to burning when materials to be burned are 'seasoned'.

Comment was provided on behalf of some of Chilliwack's local farmers who feel open air burning is a necessary part of farming; and therefore, do not want to see restrictions as far as a reduced time frame in which to burn.

Staff concurred that the Ministry of Agriculture considers burning to be a "normal farm practice" under the Right to Farm Act and that municipalities are able to set regulations pertaining to burning, but not prohibit it entirely.

Staff noted the pros and cons of changing or extending the spring and fall burning seasons in Chilliwack. Considerations include ventilation index, other elevated air pollutants (e.g. ground level ozone) and fire risk during the late spring through early fall period. Discussion ensued regarding air quality and the effects of particulates in the air. Chief Josephson noted the Fire Department provides ongoing education to the public with respect to best practices to reduce smoke.

A query was raised regarding the flammability of organic soil/peat moss even if it contains some inorganic soils; staff noted the peat moss layers locally can vary in depth and composition, and there are some areas where the peat layer doesn't have silt or other inorganic soil mixed in. The concern is that these layers can present a fire hazard as they are susceptible to underground burning under certain conditions, and as such, the new bylaw will allow for a requirement of a barrier to mitigate any risk of fire. Staff noted that the current bylaw outright prohibits burning in areas with peat soils, but a review determined that this aspect of the bylaw wasn't being enforced.

6. NEW BUSINESS (continued)

The possibility of public consultation regarding the proposed bylaw changes was raised; staff noted that time would be tight since the spring burning season starts in March, and that most of the bylaw changes are required to meet provincial legislation; and therefore, aspects that could be up for discussion are very limited. Although the provincial regulation does not stipulate specific burning seasons, the seasons in the bylaw are being guided by a combination of ventilation index, air quality and fire risk considerations.

Staff committed to providing Council with a summary of ARAC’s feedback when the burning bylaw is brought forward.

A query was raised regarding whether the City has had discussions with the FVRD or neighbouring First Nations communities regarding their respective burning bylaws. Staff noted a regional study on open burning conducted by the FVRD a few years ago, and that Chilliwack’s bylaw and burning seasons align with Abbotsford’s. Staff also noted that discussions have taken place with Tzeachten First Nation and Skowkale First Nation. Staff will continue to reach out to First Nations communities regarding this issue.

Steve Saccomano left the meeting at 4:15 pm.

The Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee provided the following recommendation:

Moved /) That the proposed new Open Burning Bylaw, drafted to replace the City’s existing
Seconded (Open Air Burning Regulation Bylaw 2008, No. 3511, be approved by Council.

Motion Carried

Councillors Kloot, Westeringh, Jeremy Wiebe, Brett Payne, Walter Goerzen, Walter Dyck, Sarah Sache and Jacqueline Boer voted “Yea” Chris Les voted “Nay”

7. INFORMATION / DISCUSSION

a) 2021 Terms of Reference

The 2021 Terms of Reference were provided for information.

b) 2021 Membership List

The 2021 Membership List was provided for information.

Chair Kloot relayed some information on behalf of students and teachers of the Sardis Senior Secondary School’s Agricultural Program. The program has been running for over 30 years, and is currently run by Agriculture teachers, Tonia Toth and Joe Massie. The program is very successful with over 200 students enrolled. The students and teachers would like to expand the greenhouse program by adding an additional greenhouse; however, need financial support for the expansion. If any local agricultural business or industry is interested in supporting the program, please contact either Tonia Toth, Joe Massie or Jacqueline Boer.

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 4:30 pm.

Councillor Chris Kloot, Chair