

AGENDA ITEM NO: 7-H-2

MEETING DATE: March 6, 2012

**STAFF REPORT – COVER SHEET**

SUBJECT: Chilliwack Agricultural Area Plan DATE: February 28, 2012

DEPARTMENT: Planning & Strategic Initiatives PREPARED BY: Karen Stanton / ck

**1. SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

An Agricultural Area Plan has now been completed for Chilliwack. Funded in part by the Agriculture Investment Foundation, Agri-Food Canada, the BC Ministry of Agriculture, the City and CEPCO, the plan identifies key issues affecting the sustainability of agriculture in Chilliwack, and recommends a prioritized list of policies and strategic actions, and corresponding partners, to address those issues. The Chilliwack Agricultural Commission, which has taken a lead role in this project, is requesting that Council implement the Plan, by adopting it as a schedule to the Official Community Plan, and by establishing an Agricultural Advisory Committee to provide advice on day to day agricultural issues as well as broader agricultural initiatives in Chilliwack.

**2. RECOMMENDATION:**

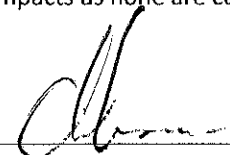
That Council direct Staff to bring forward an amendment bylaw to incorporate the Agricultural Area Plan as a sub-plan of the Official Community Plan; and

That Council direct staff to prepare Terms of Reference for Council consideration to establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee to assist the City with implementation of the Agricultural Area Plan.

  
Kurt Houlden  
Director, Planning & Strategic Initiatives

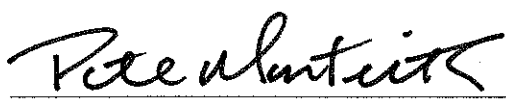
**3. FINANCE COMMENTS:**

There are no immediate financial implications in adoption of this plan as recommended by staff. There would be nominal costs and staff time associated with the formation and support of another advisory committee, but manageable within existing budgets. Any future initiatives that propose a change in infrastructure projects or City service levels should be reviewed for financial and operational impacts as none are currently envisioned or funded within the current Financial Plan.

  
Chris Crosman, General Manager,  
Finance and Community Development

**4. CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION/COMMENTS:**

Supports recommendation.

  
Peter Monteith, CAO

**STAFF REPORT ON  
Chilliwack Agricultural Area Plan**

PREPARED BY: Karen Stanton DATE: February 28, 2012  
POSITION: Manager, Long Range Planning DEPARTMENT: Planning & Strategic Initiatives

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**1. DEFINITION OF ISSUE:**

An Agricultural Area Plan has now been completed for Chilliwack. Developed under the leadership of the Chilliwack Agricultural Commission (CAC), with significant stakeholder input, the plan identifies key issues affecting the sustainability of agriculture in Chilliwack, and recommends a prioritized list of policies and strategic actions, and corresponding partners, to address those issues. The CAC is requesting that Council implement the Plan, by, and by establishing an Agricultural Advisory Committee to provide advice on day to day agricultural issues as well as broader agricultural initiatives in Chilliwack.

**2. FACTORS:**

- 2.1 Initiated in Spring 2010, development of the Plan was overseen by the Special Projects Committee of the Chilliwack Agricultural Commission, with support from staff from CEPCO and the City. The primary objectives of the project were:
- a. to address strategies outlined in the 2004 Chilliwack Agricultural Commission report *"Chilliwack Agriculture Sector Strategy Update;"*
  - b. to increase public awareness about the impact of the agricultural sector on Chilliwack's economy; and
  - c. to engage all stakeholders in the identification of strategies, policies, and procedures that address rural-urban interface issues, support agricultural land use planning and the long-term sustainability of the agricultural industry and assist with the overall community planning process.
- 2.2 An extensive consultation program was undertaken to develop a 20 year vision for the agriculture in Chilliwack, and identify key subject areas. This consultation included:
- a. A Visioning Workshop with the Chilliwack Agricultural Commission.
  - b. 29 farm tours and on-farm meetings involving a cross section of farms that covered as much variety as possible across commodities representative of agriculture in the area, and included farmers of all ages.

- c. Stakeholder meetings with representatives from the horse industry, small lot agriculture, Agriculture Society, UFV students, veterinarians, Chamber of Commerce, and City Management staff.
- 2.3 Following this consultation, the plan was drafted with input from the Steering Committee, and staff from CEPSCO and the City. The draft plan was presented to City Council in November 2011, and to the public through the website and two open houses in December 2011.
- 2.4 Following the open houses, the plan was further refined to incorporate feedback, and to identify higher, medium, and lower impact actions and policies, as well as lead and support agencies. Some of these recommendations reinforce the need to continue current policy and action (e.g. the protection of agricultural land through densification and the maintenance of an urban growth boundary; enforcement of non-agricultural uses in the Agricultural Land Reserve; ongoing maintenance of watercourse drainage). Other policies and actions will require additional resources, both from the City, and from partners.
- 2.5 To move forward with implementation of the Plan, the Chilliwack Agricultural Commission is requesting that:
  - a. The Agricultural Area Plan be approved by Council and adopted as part of the City's Official Community Plan.
  - b. An Agricultural Advisory Committee be established to provide advice and support on Agricultural Land Commission applications, to share insight on day to day agricultural issues, and to provide input on proposed bylaws, plans and other land use proposals that impact agriculture. Support for the establishment and operation of effective AACs is available from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission. (<http://www.al.giv.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/aac/index.htm>)

### **3. RECOMMENDATION & SUBSTANTIATION:**

#### **Recommendation:**

That Council direct Staff to bring forward an amendment bylaw to incorporate the Agricultural Area Plan as a schedule to the Official Community Plan; and

That Council establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee to assist with implementation of the Plan.

**Substantiation:**

The Agricultural Area Plan, developed through extensive consultation with agricultural stakeholders strengthens the City's commitment to comprehensive, sustainable, community planning, providing additional support for agriculture. Adoption of the Agricultural Area Plan as part of the Official Community Plan, and the establishment of an Agricultural Advisory Committee are seen as the first steps in implementing the Plan.