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## The Regional Municipality of Durham

### MINUTES

#### DURHAM AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 16, 2024

A meeting of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 in Meeting Room 1-B, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby, Ontario at 7:30 PM. Electronic participation was offered for this meeting.

#### 1. Roll Call

Present: T. Barrie, Clarington  
Z. Cohoon, Member at Large, Chair  
R. Death, Whitby  
N. Guthrie, Ajax  
B. Hulshof, Uxbridge  
J. McKay, Durham Farm Fresh  
G. O'Connor, Member at Large  
D. Risebrough, Member at Large, Vice-Chair  
H. Schillings, Member at Large  
M. Shiers, Durham Region Federation of Agriculture  
B. Smith, Uxbridge, Vice-Chair  
M. Somerville\*, Member at Large  
D. Stevenson, Oshawa  
N. Swain, Scugog  
G. Taylor, Pickering  
T. Watpool, Brock  
W. Wotten\*, Regional Councillor

**\* denotes members of the Committee participating electronically**

#### Staff

Present: A. Chung, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT  
A. De Vos, Program Specialist, Department of Planning and Economic Development  
S. Jibb, Manager, Agricultural & Rural Economic Development, Department of Planning and Economic Development  
M. Scott, Project Planner, Department of Planning and Economic Development  
L. Talling, Program Specialist, Tourism & Culture, Department of Planning and Economic Development  
V. Walker, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

## **2. Election of Officers for 2024**

V. Walker called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Moved by D. Risebrough, Seconded by G. O'Connor,  
That Zac Cohoon be nominated for the position of Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

V. Walker asked if Z. Cohoon wished to stand. Z. Cohoon indicated he would stand.

Moved by H. Schillings, Seconded by B. Hulshof,  
That nominations be closed.  
CARRIED

Z. Cohoon was acclaimed as the Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Z. Cohoon assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Z. Cohoon called for nominations for the position of First Vice-Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Moved by D. Risebrough, Seconded by T. Barrie,  
That Bryan Smith be nominated for the position of First Vice-Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Z. Cohoon asked if B. Smith wished to stand. B. Smith indicated he would stand.

Z. Cohoon called for nominations for the position of Second Vice-Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Moved by H. Schillings, Seconded by B. Smith,  
That Dave Risebrough be nominated for the position of Second Vice-Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Z. Cohoon asked if D. Risebrough wished to stand. D. Risebrough indicated he would stand.

Moved by N. Guthrie, Seconded by B. Smith,  
That nominations be closed.  
CARRIED

B. Smith was acclaimed as the First Vice-Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

D. Risebrough was acclaimed as the Second Vice-Chair of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. Adoption of Minutes**

J. McKay requested that the minutes of the December 12, 2023 meeting be amended to reflect that he was present for the meeting.

Moved by T. Watpool, Seconded by M. Shiers,  
That the minutes of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting held on Tuesday, December 12, 2023, be adopted as amended.

CARRIED

**5. Presentations**

A) Lia Van Wees, Grounds Supervisor, OntarioTech – Windfields Farm Project

Lia Van Wees, Grounds Supervisor, OntarioTech, presented to the Committee with regards to the Windfields Farm Project.

L. Van Wees stated that Windfields Farm is a multi-purpose farm that has an office for OntarioTech, a lab for forensic students, some small apple orchards, and is part of the 50 million tree program. She further stated that OntarioTech uses the property for sustainability and research projects and planted approximately 20 acres of wildflowers in 2023.

L. Van Wees advised that OntarioTech is seeking input from members of the community with respect to potential uses for an approximately 9-acre vacant portion of the mid-section of the farm and welcomed suggestions from the Committee.

Discussion ensued with members of the Committee providing suggestions for potential uses of the farm; potential challenges accessing the vacant lot with large equipment and machinery; and the history of vegetation grown on the lot.

L. Van Wees responded to questions from the Committee with regards to the type of soil on the vacant piece of land; whether any weeds are currently growing on the lot; and whether OntarioTech has received funding for the development of the lot.

B) Jennine Agnew-Kata, Executive Director, Literacy Network of Durham Region & DWA and Literacy Network of Durham Region, and Heather McMillan, Executive Director, Durham Workforce Authority - Pathways to Skilled Trades

Jennine Agnew-Kata, Executive Director, Literacy Network of Durham Region & DWA and Literacy Network of Durham Region, and Heather McMillan, Executive Director, Durham Workforce Authority, provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to Pathways to Skilled Trades.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Project Sponsors: Introductions
  - Durham Workforce Authority
  - Literacy Network of Durham Region
- Pathways to Skilled Trades
- Agri-food: Project Progress to Date
  - Project Scope
  - Key Themes: Research and Stakeholder Feedback
- Durham Agriculture Advisory Committee (DAAC) Feedback
- Discussion Questions
  - Do the key themes we've discussed resonate with your experience in Durham Region?
  - How are the skilled trades influencing the agriculture industry in Durham Region?
  - From your perspective, what are the hiring and skills challenges that the agriculture industry is currently facing? What particular jobs are challenging to fill?
  - Would you be interested in participating individually or as part of a group in our work? What is the best way to engage?
- Preliminary Project Observations.

Discussion ensued with regards to the need for skilled trades workers in the agriculture field; the difficulties in finding and retaining trained workers; the changes experienced in the agriculture sector as a result of the introduction and continued advancements of intelligent control systems and specialized technical equipment, and the resulting creation of technical-related positions; the importance of educating high school students and parents of the availability of skilled trades jobs and apprenticeships, and educational requirements; alternative avenues for attracting workers; the intense demands of agriculture related jobs; and the benefits of upgrading machinery and equipment.

## **6. Discussion Items**

### **A) Agriculture 101 Training**

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A. De Vos advised that Agriculture 101 Training has been provided to Council for Scugog and Brock and advised that dates have been set to present to Council for Uxbridge, Whitby, and Clarington. She stated that a date to present to Oshawa Council is pending confirmation and that a volunteer is required to present to Pickering.

It was the consensus of the Committee that M. Somerville present to Pickering Council.

A. De Vos stated that the presentation to Brock prompted discussion with Councillors looking for the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee's (DAAC) feedback as it relates to battery storage and backyard chickens. She further

stated that there was Council support for agriculture tourism and Council vocalized the importance of educating youth about agriculture.

Discussion ensued with regards to backyard chickens being kept in urban areas, and the potential negative effects of backyard chickens causing an increase in predatory animals and rodents, and avian influenza outbreaks.

Further discussion ensued with regards to by-laws related to the possession of farm animals in urban municipalities.

Moved by G. O'Connor, Seconded by B. Smith,  
That we recommend to the Planning and Economic Development  
Committee for approval and subsequent recommendation to Regional  
Council:

That as the introduction of chickens within urban and rural settlement areas (which includes towns, villages and hamlets) can result in the potential spread of Avian Influenza and other diseases to livestock in the Region, particularly poultry farms;

And that backyard chickens attract pests and predators, resulting in conflicts between predatory animals and chickens, and additional vectors for spreading disease;

Therefore be it resolved that Durham Regional Council be advised that the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) does not support permitting chickens being kept in urban settlement areas and rural settlement areas (which includes towns, villages and hamlets); and

That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the area municipalities for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

B) Rural and Agricultural Economic Development Update

S. Jibb introduced Lori Talling to the Committee as the successful candidate for the temporary position of Manager of Agricultural & Rural Economic Development in the Planning and Economic Development Department.

S. Jibb provided the following update:

- The Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock are undertaking a project to update their zoning by-laws to better enable and encourage agriculture related and farm diversified uses and aims to create consistency across the three municipalities. A project team has been formed with representatives from all three municipalities and the Region, and a consultant will be retained as well. The project should run throughout 2024 and more updates will be provided.

A. De Vos provided the following update:

- An agri-food gateway program is a new program that is being run by Durham College with support from the National Research Council. The purpose of the program is to assist with agriculture training for technology companies and will provide in-class training in agriculture and agri-tech. The program will begin this year and companies are required to apply to be a part of the program.
- An Environmental Farm Plan Workshop is scheduled to take place on two (2) separate days on February 13 and 20, 2024 in Courtice and members of the Committee are welcome to attend.

C) Backyard Chickens DAAC Position

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This item was discussed earlier in the meeting as part of Discussion Item A) Agriculture Training 101 [see page 5 of these minutes].

D) Agricultural Advisory Committee Clarington Update

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T. Barrie stated that the Agricultural Advisory Committee in Clarington heard a presentation regarding rodenticide and advised that some municipalities have already moved towards banning rodenticide.

T. Barrie responded to a question from the Committee regarding what alternatives to rodenticide were suggested at the presentation.

E) Durham Farm Fresh Update

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J. McKay stated that Durham Farm Fresh recently had its Annual General Meeting and advised that they have hired a coordinator that is shared with Durham Farm Connections. He advised that engagement among members is a continued challenge.

J. McKay responded to a question from the Committee with regards to the number of active memberships Durham Farm Fresh has currently.

F) Greater Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Update

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M. Scott stated that the Greater Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance is currently drafting an urban agriculture paper and anticipates them presenting to the Committee in the spring.

G) Durham Region Federation of Agriculture Update

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M. Shiers stated that the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture had a meeting on December 19<sup>th</sup> that mainly addressed organizational matters, and also included a discussion regarding battery storage.

H) Presentation on 2023 Annual Report & Workplan to Planning and Economic Development Committee

Z. Cohoon stated that he appeared before the Planning and Economic Development Committee to present DAAC's Annual Report and Workplan. He advised that a few questions and light discussion took place following the presentation.

I) 2024 Farm Tour

D. Risebrough suggested Colebrook Farms in Uxbridge as a potential location for this year's farm tour and stated that he has had preliminary discussions with staff at the farm and has reached out to the owner to discuss further. He stated that Colebrook Farms runs a thoroughbred horse breeding operation and a training operation for racehorses.

D. Risebrough suggested the formation of a subcommittee that would be responsible for arranging the farm tour for this year. The Committee agreed that D. Risebrough, T. Barrie, T. Watpool, N. Swain and Z. Cohoon will comprise the subcommittee.

The Committee discussed potential dates for the farm tour.

J) Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Easements Discussion

M. Scott stated that due to the Province of Ontario's reversal of its decision with regards to the Greenbelt Lands, the preserve lands have reverted to its previous status and remain protected. M. Scott advised that there are currently no steps to be taken by either the Region or the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) at this time.

**7. Information Items**

A) Pickering Urban Agricultural Engagement

M. Scott stated that the City of Pickering is canvassing for opinions on its Urban Agriculture Program.

A link to the City of Pickering's Urban Agricultural Engagement website was provided as Attachment #2 to the Agenda.

**8. Other Business**

A) Battery Storage Sites

M. Scott advised that the deadline to apply for battery storage sites with the Independent Electricity Systems Operator (IESO) has now passed. He further advised that more information regarding the sites that applied should be available shortly and next steps will include the sites seeking government approval. M.

Scott stated that approval of applications is based on a point system, with more points being given to sites that have received government approval.

M. Scott advised that the motion regarding the DAAC's position on battery storage sites was passed by Regional Council in December 2023.

Discussion ensued with regards to alternate power sources; the outcome of previous solar power projects in Newtonville and Newcastle; and the environmental impact of battery storage sites.

B) Nominations for Outstanding Young Farmers

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J. McKay stated that Outstanding Young Farmers is accepting nominations for 2024 for farmers who are 40 years of age or younger with an ownership stake in their operations and who have undertaken an innovative and unique approach to their operations. He advised that nominations are being accepted until the end of February and welcomed members of the Committee to submit nominations ahead of the deadline.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 2024 starting at 7:30 PM.

**10. Adjournment**

Moved by B. Smith, Seconded by Hubert Schillings,  
That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM

Respectfully submitted,

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Z. Cohoon, Chair

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V. Walker, Committee Clerk