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The Regional Municipality of Durham

MINUTES

DURHAM AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 9, 2024

A meeting of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, April 9, 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
W. Wotten*, Regional Councillor attended the meeting at 7:33 PM and left the meeting at 8:34 PM

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

Absent: G. Taylor, Pickering
T. Watpool, Brock

Staff

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

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by B. Smith, Seconded by T. Barrie,
That the minutes of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting
held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, be adopted.

CARRIED

4. Presentations

A) Michael Longarini & Ryan Cullen, The Horticultural Food and Farming Company – Four Farms Market Garden Training Program Overview

Ryan Cullen and Anastasia Tsagrinos, The Horticultural Food and Farming Company, presented to the Committee with regards to an overview of the Four Farms Market Garden Training Program.

R. Cullen introduced the owners of the four market garden farms that have come together to develop the Four Farms Market Garden Training Program, being the City of Greens Farm, the Acre Farm, the Foragers Farm, and the Second Season Farm. He stated that the program was developed to teach others how to get started and successfully run a market garden, and provides hands on experience at each of the four farms. R. Cullen advised that the program is 6 weeks in length and is designed for aspiring growers, property owners and experienced gardeners looking to scale up. R. Cullen stated that the curriculum includes modules on holistic context development, farm planning and design, crop production and planning, soil science and field preparation, tools and equipment, and direct seeding and transplanting.

R. Cullen further stated that in addition to the course content and hands on training portion of the program, a digital resource base is also provided to students that includes spreadsheets, templates, information and resources, and access to a community platform to further support gardeners.

R. Cullen and A. Tsagrinos responded to questions from the Committee regarding how many of the farm operations have an off-farm supplementary income; the development of the training program and course framework; whether the market gardens are organic; and whether there are zoning requirements for market gardens.

5. Discussion Items

A) Rural and Agricultural Economic Development Update

A. De Vos provided the following update:

- The Agricultural Working Group Tour took place in Uxbridge and was attended by municipal staff, planners, economic developers and building development services staff, and consisted of a tour of 3 different agriculture related businesses in Uxbridge. Due to the success of the tour, a future session is being considered in a workshop format.
- The Precision Ag Field Day is continuing preparations for the event with resources currently being compiled for teachers. Discussions continue to take place regarding careers in agriculture to encourage more connections with high school students into the field of agriculture.

L. Talling provided the following update:

- The North Durham Agriculture-Related and On-Farm Diversified Uses (OFDU) project has now selected a consultant for the program and is formalizing a services agreement and workplan. Details of the agreement and workplan will be shared with the Committee once finalized.

L. Talling responded to a question from the Committee regarding the intended outcomes of the OFDU project workplan.

B) Agricultural Advisory Committee Clarington Update

T. Barrie advised that due to a lack of agenda items and change in meeting schedule due to March break, there is no update from the Clarington Agricultural Advisory Committee.

C) Durham Farm Fresh Update

J. McKay provided the following update:

- Brochures and radio advertisements for Durham Farm Fresh will be available soon.
- Maple syrup season has now concluded.
- Asparagus and rhubarb will become visible by early May if the warm weather persists.

D) Greater Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Update

M. Scott stated that there is no update to report as the group will not meet until later this week, and will consider stormwater management fees as a topic on the agenda.

E) Durham Region Federation of Agriculture Update

M. Shiers advised that he was unable to attend the last meeting but received a report from Junior Farmers of Durham that stated a majority of its members will be aging out this year and new members are required to prevent the organization from discontinuing. He further stated that some events are being planned for this year to promote the organization and welcomed members of the Committee to refer any junior farmers to join.

M. Shiers further stated that the report also contained correspondence from Brock with respect to the Township's position on backyard chickens and advised that Durham Region Federation of Agriculture (DRFA) will be issuing a response letter.

M. Shiers responded to a question from the Committee regarding the age range of a junior farmer.

F) Stormwater Management Fees

M. Scott provided the following update:

- The stormwater management fees motion went before the Planning & Economic Development Committee on April 2, 2024, and was passed with an amendment to add that the resolution be sent to the local area municipalities.
- There was discussion among the Committee Members around carbon capture on farms and carbon credits on agricultural properties, with a direction to staff to investigate same and report back to the Committee.
- The amended motion will go before Council for consideration on April 24, 2024.

Discussion ensued regarding stormwater management fees being abandoned in the City of Toronto as directed by Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow.

G) 2024 Farm Tour

Z. Cohoon stated that farm preparations for the 2024 Farm Tour are underway and advised that the next step is to review and update the invitation list and set up a site visit for late May with Regional staff. He further stated that he has engaged in discussions with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the farm staff to organize presentations as part of the event.

Discussion ensued with regards to holding a sub-committee meeting to discuss the invitation list and other preparatory matters for the tour.

Staff responded to questions from the Committee with regards to whether the date for the Farm Tour has been added to the Regional calendar; and the maximum number of guests for the event.

6. Information Items

A) Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 123/04: Apples – Plan, and Ontario Regulation 125/04: Apples Marketing under the Farm Products Marketing Act

Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 123/04: Apples – Plan, and Ontario Regulation 125/04: Apples Marketing under the Farm Products Marketing Act was provided as a link to the agenda and received for information.

B) Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Update to the Draft Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidance Document

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) released an update to the Draft Agriculture Impact Assessment Guidance Document and was provided as a link to the agenda and received.

M. Scott stated OMAFRA will be updating the Draft Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidance Document to align with impending updates to current planning legislation and advised that further updates will be announced as they become available.

C) #2024-EDT-6 Gather at the Farm 2023 Agri-Food Marketing Campaign

Report #2024-EDT-6 of the Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development regarding Gather at the Farm 2023 Agri-Food Marketing Campaign was provided as a link to the agenda and received for information.

7. Other Business

A) Climate Change Education Session

M. Scott stated that a Climate Change Education session is being presented at the April 10, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting and welcomed members to attend.

B) Municipal Official Plan Reviews

M. Scott stated that the area municipalities are undergoing Official Plan reviews following the Region's adoption of its new Official Plan.

M. Scott responded to questions from the Committee regarding whether municipalities will still have to conform to the Regional Official Plan; who will be responsible for land division applications; and whether infrastructure for services such as water will remain a Regional responsibility.

Discussion ensued regarding the evolution of responsibility and authority allotted to the different levels of government as it relates to planning; the potential implications of Bill 23; the formation of land division committees; and the role of committees of adjustment.

C) Warehouse Farm Zoning Issues

D. Stevenson stated that a warehouse farm he operates in Oshawa recently received a by-law violation relating to the zoning classification and was instructed to cease operations. He further stated that the warehouse does not fit into the agriculture classification and following an inspection earlier in the year with City staff, it was determined they could register as a food processing business. D. Stevenson advised that the issue has been resolved and raised the topic for awareness purposes.

Discussion ensued regarding zoning regulations.

D) Agriculture 101 at Local Municipal Councils

Z. Cohoon stated that the Agriculture 101 deputation has been well received by all of the councils of the local municipalities and suggested appearing again before each council in the winter and registering as a presentation to allow for more speech time.

E) Durham Soil and Crop Spring Meeting in Blackstock

B. Smith stated that the Durham Soil and Crop Spring Meeting is taking place on Thursday, April 11, 2024 at the Spring Grove Agri in Blackstock. He further stated that equipment will be on display, and that there will be information on planters and sprayers.

F) Tractor Rally from Lindsay to Oshawa

Z. Cohoon stated that a tractor rally took place on April 9, 2024 in protest of carbon taxes. The rally included approximately 100 vehicles following a route starting in Lindsay and travelling down Highway 12 to Whitby and Oshawa to visit the MPs' offices, which were closed. He further stated that Durham Regional Police Services (DRPS) were present to manage safe traffic flow and there was news coverage of the event.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, May 14, 2024 starting at 7:30 PM.

9. Adjournment

Moved by D. Risebrough, Seconded by M. Somerville,
That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Z. Cohoon, Chair

V. Walker, Committee Clerk