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THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL

PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

MINUTES PAAWG 2015-04

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) met on November 26, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Mississauga Room, Regional Administrative Headquarters, 10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite A, Brampton.

Members Present: Heather Laidlaw, Chair, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Gary Mountain, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Keith Garbutt, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Ed Russell, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Karen Hutchinson, Caledon Countryside Alliance
Paul Risebrough, Citizen-at-Large
Joanne Currie, Peel 4-H Association
Mike Bakker, Citizen-at-large
Manjari Mehta, Citizen-at-Large

Members Absent: Frank Dale, Region of Peel Chair
Jennifer Innis, Regional Councillor

Staff: Mark Head, Manager, Region of Peel
Brooke Marshall, Principal Planner, Region of Peel
Tim Hayward, Junior Planner, Region of Peel
Mark Pajot, Climate Change Specialist, Region of Peel
Mark Eastman, Program Coordinator, Credit Valley Conservation
Nadine Abrams, Rural Clean Water Program Coordinator, Toronto and Region Conservation

Guests: Ohi Izirein, Senior Policy Planner, Town of Caledon
Ben Roberts, Economic Development Officer, Town of Caledon
Tina McBrien, Public Health Nutritionist, Public Health, Region of Peel

1) **Welcome and opening remarks**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Heather Laidlaw.

2) **Approval of 2015-03 Meeting Minutes**

Moved by Karen Hutchinson,
Seconded by Joanne Currie;

That the Minutes from the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group meeting 2015-03, held on August 27, 2015, be approved.

Carried PAAWG 2015-25

3) Approval of 2015-03 Agenda

Moved by Gary Mountain,
Seconded by Ed Russell;

That the agenda for the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group meeting held on November 26, 2015 be approved.

Carried PAAWG 2015-26

4) Food and Place – Exploring the relationship between the built environment and eating behaviour

Tina McBrien, Public Health Nutritionist, Public Health, Region of Peel

Research is showing a link between the built environment and eating behaviour. In Peel Region of Peel less healthy food options are highly accessible, creating “food swamps”, areas where less healthy food options outnumber healthy food options. It is possible that tools such as by-laws and land use policies may hold the key to adapting built environment conditions, which could help those who live and work in Peel to make the healthy choice the easy and desired choice.

Questions:

Have Region of Peel Public Health staff spoken to the planning department about the relationship between built environment and eating behaviour.

Answer:

Yes, in fact it was that relationship which led to the presentation at PAAWG. There have been specific issues where there is a clear relationship between planning and eating behaviour. A good example is the Walmart that opened on the border of Brampton and Caledon across from a high school. The school was a pilot school in a project promoting healthy eating in schools but kids started crossing the street to go to Walmart for lunch and snacks. The location of the Walmart changed the eating behaviour of the high school students. It also posed a safety concern for students crossing the road. This led to questions about how we can use planning tools to help with dietary and health related projects at the Region. There is a need for planning and public health staff to communicate with each other and exchange knowledge.

Q: The presentation was from the perspective of a dietitian. Have you considered other contributors to diabetes like stress, ethnicity, income etc.?

A: The issue of diabetes is spread among multiple teams in Public Health. The built environment team is only one team which looks at community level built environment, while others look at aspects such as physical activity (bike lanes etc.), “healthy eating, active living”, along with other areas such as ethnic variables. There is a need to gather more and better data. There are many factors, so there needs to be a multi-pronged approach.

Q: Taxation discourages small business, eg. small farm market or a processing plant. They need a break on taxes. Is there any tax relief for those?

A: Taxation is not a matter that public health would be investigating. Financial tools and tax reform is an action item in the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan with staff actively something engagement with the Province and MPAC on issues through forums such as the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee.

* MPAC’s presentation on Farmland Assessment (MPAC) at the November 18, 2015 GTA AAC meeting was circulated to PAAWG members after the meeting.

Q: Quebec has done a lot of work around preventing fast food near schools. Has the Region looked at other jurisdictions for ideas?

A: Quebec has different legislation and planning tools, and is different than other Provinces in Canada, but it is worth studying, as are other places.

*Research papers referenced in the powerpoint were provided to the working group as a follow up to the meeting.

Q: Is culture a protective factor, where people protect their traditional cooking methods?

A: Different cultures tend to come to Canada and start eating more like us, more processed food, so it is a concern.

There could be marketing opportunities for farms to market healthy value added products.

5) **Edge Planning for Agriculture Presentation**

Brooke Marshall, Principal Planner, Region of Peel

Brooke Marshall presented a high-level overview of the joint “Edge Planning Report” draft by the ROP and the Town of Caledon. This report concerns the

regulation of land uses in areas adjacent to agricultural areas and is not meant to be a precursor to a policy that would replace Minimum Distance Separation.

Q: Have you analyzed the statistics on complaints to the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board? Were complaints rural/urban in nature, or were they from people driving around?

A: In 2013/14 there were 156 complaints. Niagara county accounted for the most (101), while Durham Region accounted for the least (6). Location and qualitative factors come into play.

Peel staff would like input from farmers and evidence to support any policy. Factors to consider are the nature and sensitivity of farms and permanency of the edge. Peel is growing so much that there are not many permanent edges right now. But as the urban boundary reaches the Greenbelt it will become a more significant concern.

Staff will research complaints history as staff has thus far heard the complaints anecdotally. Staff will be talking to PAAWG as well as the building industry and others.

Moved by Joanne Currie,
Seconded by Paul Risebrough;

That the presentation and report on “Edge Planning for Agriculture” by Brooke Marshall be received for information and that staff be requested to circulate the report to PAAWG members for review and comment.

Carried PAAWG 2015-27

6) Climate Change Agricultural Vulnerability Assessment Presentation

Mark Pajot, Climate Change Specialist, Region of Peel

Mark Pajot provided an overview and progress update on the Climate Change Agricultural Vulnerability Assessment, which is part of the Peel Climate Change Strategy. A draft of the report has been completed and circulated to stakeholders for review, and the results are currently being integrated into the final report. Key climate drivers of concern include extreme precipitation, drought, changes in growing conditions, and extreme heat.

Q: What is being done to handle problems related to water and ground water?

A: One strategy is to not use tiles to run water off, but to capture some of that water to use in irrigation through underground irrigation. This could be a potential funding opportunity for PAAWG in the future.

Q Have you looked at residue management? Higher producer crops lead to more residue left. In order to break down that higher level of residue to get a crop in the spring, there is a need to work it to allow it to breakdown in time.

A: Some growers are reverting to old tillage practices, to deal with it. For example, vertical strip tillage is being used in Chatham-Kent. However, the cost of equipment is prohibitive in a lot of cases.

A link to the report presented to the Peel Federation of Agriculture will be provided. Comments will be accepted until the report is closed.

The Cap and Trade Ontario program is being considered and staff is looking at Quebec for opportunities in agriculture. In Quebec on-farm anaerobic digestion projects are eligible to provide carbon offsets in Quebec's cap-and-trade program. Purchasers in carbon credits could pay for this. Staff will continue to monitor opportunities for the agriculture sector as climate policy advances.

Moved by Keith Garbutt,
Seconded by Gary Mountain;

That the presentation on "Climate Change Agricultural Vulnerability Assessment" by Mark Pajot be received for information.

Carried PAAWG 2015-28

7) **Peel Rural Water Quality Program Applications**

a) 05-TRCA-15 – Machinery Crossing.

The objective is to install a larger culvert that is appropriately sized to handle high flows. The culvert will be arched with a full (flat) bottom. It will be embedded in the bottom of the tributary and partially filled with substrate that best matches the existing conditions. Minor re-grading of the area will be required.

It was asked if the work would reduce the buffer. The hope is that, at a minimum, it will prevent the width of the existing buffer from increasing. If the culvert replacement does not mitigate the flooding, TRCA and the landowner are prepared to consider other options such as in-stream work up stream.

It was asked if artesian wells are supposed to be contained.
Staff replied that they would investigate the Ontario Well Regulation 903 under the Ontario Water Resources Act for information..
Update: Information on the regulations surrounding artesian wells was provided to PAAWG following the meeting. Artesian wells can remain flowing as long as the well is being used as a consumptive source. This information was provided to the Working Group via email.

Moved by Joanne Currie,
Seconded by Keith Garbutt;

That the application be approved and funding in the amount of \$10,000 be provided for 05-TRCA-15 under the category of “Erosion Machinery Crossing”.

Carried PAAWG 2015-29

b) 11-CVC-15 – Cover Crops

The objective is to promote the establishment and over-wintering of cover crops (living or dead) to help provide soil protection and reduce erosion to water features. Cover Crops also assist with the management of soil fertility, soil quality, water, pests, disease, biodiversity and wildlife in agro-ecosystems. In this case, the stream is habitat to the endangered Redside Dace. The project will also help protect groundwater by promoting biological nitrogen fixation.

Moved by Mike Bakker,
Seconded by Keith Garbutt;

That the application be approved and funding in the amount of \$5,000 be provided for 11-CVC-15 under the category of “Cover Crops”.

Carried PAAWG 2015-30

c) 12-CVC-15 – Cover Crops

The objective is to promote the establishment and over-wintering of cover crops (living or dead), to help provide soil protection and reduce erosion to water features. Cover Crops also assist with the management of soil fertility, soil quality, water, pests, disease, biodiversity and wildlife in agro-ecosystems. The project will also help protect groundwater by promoting biological nitrogen fixation.

Moved by Gary Mountain,
Seconded by Joanne Currie;

That the application be approved and funding in the amount of \$1,800 be provided for 12-CVC-15 under the category of "Cover Crops".

Carried PAAWG 2015-31

General discussion:

PAAWG was pleased that a number of cover crop applications were received throughout 2015. CA staff commented that there appears to be substantial agricultural land planted to winter wheat and winter cover crops for the winter of 2015-16. CA staff will look at the spring water quality monitoring data and see if total suspended solids appear lower in spring runoff as a result.

CA staff will investigate the availability of Census of Agriculture data reporting on cover crop usage and provide summary to Peel Regional staff and PAAWG.

8) PAAWG Proposed meeting Dates for 2016

February 25th, May 26th, August 25th, and November 24th.

9) New Business

Peel Farming Alliance had their Farm Family Banquet. Bruce McClure of McCluredale Farm won Farm Family of the Year.

Keith Garbutt indicated that he received a parking ticket for parking a "commercial vehicle" (vehicle over 3000 kg) in the Living Arts City Centre parking lot when attending the Climate Change meeting as a representative of PAAWG. He inquired if PAAWG members could get a parking pass for such occasions.

Staff indicated that property management staff could be spoken to regarding what options are available for citizen working group representatives with larger vehicles attending functions at municipal sites.

10) Communication Items and Information Items

- i. Food Charter Update

It is nearly complete and it incorporates most of comments provided by PAAWG.

- ii. Mileage Forms – Distributed and filled out.

11) Adjourn Meeting/ Next Meeting

The meeting stood adjourned at 9:07 pm. The next Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group meeting will be held on February 25th, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.