

# Report

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Date	May 29, 2012	File:	File number
To	Agricultural Advisory Committee		
From	Audrey Rogers, Planner	Endorsed by	
Subject	<b>Committee Strategic Planning and Mandate</b>		

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## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to summarize the committee’s workshop that was held on May 15, 2012 and to ask the committee to consider the results, and ratify their strategic priorities.

Further this report recommends that the committee begin to consider how to operationalize the priorities and develop a related work plan.

## Background

As per provincial legislation Council establishes a five year financial plan that is reviewed and approved annually as well as an annual budget. Generally, the financial planning and annual budget discussion process begins in the fall. The Chief Administration Officer, Dave Devana, and the committee’s Council representatives encouraged the committee to prioritize and develop a work plan so that they can ensure their priorities and resource needs are considered in the financial planning and budgeting process.

During the workshop the committee focused their attention on the action items identified in the 2001 Strategic Agricultural Plan (SAP) and policy goals, both specifically and generally related to agriculture, in the 2011 Official Community Plan.

This report provides the resulting priorities as staff understands them. Staff requests that the committee develop a work plan to operationalize the identified priorities. Once determined the work plan is anticipated to be presented to Council for consideration during their budget deliberations and provide direction to help determine staff resources needed (that is, staff time commitment needed to support committee goals).

By using a dot-mocracy<sup>1</sup> exercise, the committee reviewed the action items of the Strategic Agricultural Plan and some elements of the Official Community Plan to determine their high, medium, and low priorities. See Table 2 and Table 3 for the overall results. Note that with respect to Table 3 there was less participation with respect to the dot-mocracy exercise and the results are less certain than the results of Table 2. The definition of the priorities was provided prior to the workshop as per the following chart. The definitions were intended to reflect the five year financial plan time frame:

Table 1: Priority Definitions

High Priority:	work expected to start in the very near future or within the next five years
Medium Priority:	likely beyond the five year framework but within a ten year framework
Low Priority:	likely beyond the ten year framework

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<sup>1</sup> The use of coloured dots to identify each committee member’s view as to whether or not an action item had a high, medium, or low priority.

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## **Strategic Priorities**

### **Priority One – Water Management**

The committee identified water management as a top priority. The discussion generally included giving consideration to developing plans for specific areas, giving farmers the ability to maintain and control water on their lands and those adjacent to them and further obtaining municipal support for Water Act Section 9 approvals.

The committee discussed/raised the following:

1. lands with agriculture potential that either have too much or too little water and developing a plan for agricultural purposes.
2. management of storm water from roads and its impact on farming - raising the question as to whether or not the rules, ditches, watercourse classifications need review and change. Also of concern is the maintenance of ditches – what are the maintenance policies?
3. agricultural community needs to be included as one of the stakeholder groups for any watershed and flood management planning processes (for example, Cowichan Basin Plan).
4. water supply, water licences and getting access to unused or underutilized water licences; (for example Catalyst uses less water than their licence permits but are not required to change the licence). The questions are: whether or not there are unused water licences, how they are monitored and are they available to farmers?
5. detail is needed as to which farmers and which geographical areas are affected most by water issues (too much, too little; which areas have viable soil that would be improved for farming with access to better water & control.)
6. Somenos flats have been left too long and would be too expensive to improve for farming
7. Water quality data for different systems is collected by individuals / groups but there does not appear to be a central holding place for this information.

### **Priority Two – Economic Development**

Promotion, marketing, and agri-tourism were identified as the next highest priority. Continue to support CVRD economic development commission (brochure) and Cowichan Green Community (map) but focus on North Cowichan by developing economic development and marketing plans. Take advantage of the profile of the wineries. Consider simple improvements: physical signage, use available technology, and facilities.

The committee discussed/raised the following:

1. signage applications, cost and bonding for security; use of direction signs, 3<sup>rd</sup> party signs
2. develop an “ap” for iPhones, iPads, and Blackberries.
3. interpretive space at the visitor centre
4. local government cannot assist businesses directly (legislation)
5. marketing as a package
6. user pay vs tax dollars
7. “Two Days in the Valley” brochure (focus on N. Cowichan, farmers market, wineries, take advantage of / tie in with visitor information centre

### **Priority Three – Regulatory Barriers**

The issue ranged from property taxes on land that cannot be used for farming (e.g. riparian areas), how BC Assessment determines assessments, agricultural land that is not used for agricultural purposes, revenue levels to qualify for reduce property taxes for farming (\$6,500, and if under 4 hectares \$2,500)

The committee discussed/raised the following:

1. Paying taxes on land that cannot be farmed – difficult areas to farm on the property (such as steep slopes, rocky, poor soils); 30m RAR setbacks, ESA lands (e.g. species at risk); also concern about loss of income as a result of changing, more restrictive regulations. Available options per legislation.
2. Review lands to truly determine if they are being farmed. A question was raised about what farming means; for example, small vs large scale farming (some measure of commitment to farming)(what the issues are that different farm types, and sizes have)
3. Training programs (investment, farm plans) for new farmers; succession planning; access to affordable land for farming and farm business growth.

#### **Priority Four – Bylaws, Policy, Land Use**

Expand and address guidelines and land use adjacent to farmland (buffers, intensity of use). Intensity of farming, need for additional agricultural zone option(s).

The committee discussed/raised the following:

1. Appropriate densities next to agriculture
2. Trails through agricultural land
3. OCP reference to 6 hectare parcels
4. Again the question of focus: scale of operations, farm income, farm commitment (working off farm), support systems for new farmers

#### **Priority Five – Agriculture Reserve Fund**

The OCP identifies the establishment of a reserve fund for purposes related to agriculture. Some funds have been collected, however:

1. Need to formalize reserve fund with a bylaw
2. Develop implementation policy
3. Establish rules for use of funds (e.g. water concerns, economic development) and for collection of funds (e.g. establish expectations for non-farm use, exclusion, subdivision applications)

#### **Emergent/emerging/"parking lot" Issues**

In addition to work on the priorities expressed by the committee during the workshop, recognition that other issues will be part of the agenda. For example, recent septic concerns, direction on land use from Council, and relationship and communication with the CVRD Agricultural Commission.

The committee discussed/raised the following:

1. Committee member time commitment outside regular meetings
2. Use of sub-committees to undertake some of the work

### **Committee Mandate**

During the workshop, the committee considered its mandate as determined by bylaw no. 3475. This report includes the results of the discussion. No changes to the bylaw were proposed.

The previous and current bylaw that sets out the mandate of committees has identified a generalized "high level" involvement for the AAC on land use issues. The committee discussed the question of land use applications and whether or not they should be referred directly to the committee. The question was put to each member. Some felt that it was an important function of the committee. Some felt that the review of applications took away from their ability to focus on strategic priorities. No recommendation was made to change the Select Committees Bylaw.

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## Committee Approach

### Meeting Schedule

The committee discussed the meeting scheduling options that would support the work of the committee and meet the needs of the farming community (for example, the committee would have greater ability to meet more frequently in late fall and winter). Consideration was given to having an “average” number of meetings (for example, six annually) with the option of the Chair calling additional meetings if necessary. The committee is expected to formalize their schedule. A recommendation is proposed below.

### Agenda

A question was raised about previous agenda items that have not yet been addressed (for example VIHA and septic systems). The intent is to bring these items forward as part of future committee meetings.

### Work Plan

Developing a work plan that addresses and provides focus to the strategic priorities is recommended as the next step. Offered for discussion is the following general approach for developing the work plan ***(please test it for suitability prior to the next meeting):***

1. Strategic Priority
  - a. What is the vision (or desired outcome)(something that can be observed or measured)?
  - b. What are the major tasks needed to accomplish the vision? How will the committee achieve its desired outcome?
  - c. For each task determine:
    - i. Who is responsible for each task?
    - ii. What is the projected date of completion?
    - iii. What tools (eg data) or resources (eg engineering staff) may be needed to accomplish the task?
    - iv. Is funding required? What sources of funding are available?
  - d. How will the committee know if the work plan was successful? Are there people or things that can be counted or observed for signs of improvement? How will major task results be measured and documented?
    - i. How will the results be used to revise strategies, tasks?
  - e. How will the results be shared internally (committee, staff, council) and externally to the farming community?

The committee could chose to tackle the work plan for each priority as a group; or, alternatively, divide the priorities among the members and come back to the whole group with a proposed plan. Where staff or consultant resources are needed to develop the work plans requests should be made either through Council or management (depending on the intensity).

## Recommendation

### Strategic Priorities

That the committee ratifies the priorities (as provided in the report / as revised herein) and recommend to Council that they agree in principle to the priorities and the development of a work plan for each.

**2012 Schedule**

That the committee supports the following (revise as desired) schedule for the balance of 2012. (The schedule shown is what would be continuation of the usual approach.)

Month, 2012	Day (3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday)	Time
July	17	8:30 a.m.
August	21	8:30 a.m.
September	18	8:30 a.m.
October	16	8:30 a.m.
November	20	8:30 a.m.
December	18	8:30 a.m.

<b>TABLE 2: Strategic Agricultural Plan – Workshop Results</b>					
Goal		Objective	Action Item Priority		
			High	Medium	Low
1	Improve the Planning Framework for Agriculture	Protect the agricultural land base	1,3,4	2,5	
		Provide more opportunities for small farms		6,7,8,9	
		Increase agricultural input on planning decisions		10,11,12	
2	Support and enhance small farm sector	Revitalize the small farm sector in the District of North Cowichan	16	14,15	13
3	Expand local marketing opportunities	Enhance marketing opportunities for medium/large scale farms		18	17
		Enhance local marketing opportunities for small farms		21,24	19,20,22,23
		Establish the Cowichan Valley as a centre for value added processing of agricultural products	25	26	27,28
		Capitalize on available agri-tourism opportunities		29,30,32	31,33
		Expand the greenhouse sector through alternative energy sources			34,35
4	Improve communication with the community	Increase general political and public awareness of the agricultural industry and issues	39	36,37,38,40,41	
		Develop a strong education in the classroom program with school district 79		42,44	43
		Increase local political and public awareness of the agricultural industry and issues		46,47,48	45
5	Improve land and water stewardship, conservation and management	Improve access to water and water management	49,51	50	
		Improve information related to soil and water management		52	53
		Improve farm management skills		55	54,56
6	Reduce cost and regulatory barriers	Reduce regulatory and related cost burden on agriculture	57,60,62	58,59,61,63	

**TABLE 3: Official Community Plan (OCP) – Workshop Results**

Note that with respect to Table 3 there was less participation with respect to the dot-mocracy exercise and the results are less certain than the results of Table 2.

	OCP Action	Reference	AAC Priority		
			High	Medium	Low
1	Establish an agricultural reserve fund or Broaden existing forestry fund to also support agriculture	2.1.1.2 d & 2.1.1.7 d	H		
2	Create a new agricultural zone that will permit a minimum lot size of 6 ha for small farm development	2.1.1.2 g & 2.1.5.5		M	
3	Protect agricultural activity from negative urban influences along the UCB	2.1.1.3 b DPA-5	H		
4	Develop DPA for the protection of agriculture. Modify Zoning Bylaw to reflect the intentions.	2.1.1.3 c		M	
5	Work with others to address drainage issues and identify opportunities for irrigation water to promote food production.	2.1.1.4	H		
6	Amend subdivision bylaw to permit registration of long term leases of land for agricultural purposes.	2.1.1.5		M	
7	Review existing regulations and land use bylaws to reduce regulatory barriers to agricultural production and on-farm income generation.	2.1.1.6 & 2.1.1.7		M	
8	Develop informational handouts about direct marketing signage and temporary housing for farm labour.	2.1.1.6		M	
9	Update zoning bylaw to introduce horticulture as a permitted use in most agricultural and residential zones, and add agriculture as a permitted use in A4 & A5 zones.	2.1.1.9		M	
10	Develop mining policy for applications within the Municipal Forest Reserve, emphasizing sustainability and environmental sensitivity. Minimize conflicts between aggregate extraction and other land uses.	2.1.3.1, 2.1.3.2, 2.1.3.4, 2.1.3.6, 2.1.3.7		M	
11	Prepare a Citizen's Guide to Rural Development	2.1.4.1		M	
12	Develop a Viewscape Management Plan	2.1.4.2		M	
13	Update subdivision bylaw re package treatment plants	2.1.5.2		M	
14	Update both the zoning bylaw and the campsite bylaw to recognize variety of campgrounds, and establish a campground zone for rural areas.	2.1.5.4		M	
15	Amend zoning bylaw to restrict second dwellings to properties of 6 ha or more, and restrict the size of the 2nd residence,	2.1.5.5 & 2.1.5.9		M	

**TABLE 3: Official Community Plan (OCP) – Workshop Results**

Note that with respect to Table 3 there was less participation with respect to the dot-mocracy exercise and the results are less certain than the results of Table 2.

	OCP Action	Reference	AAC Priority		
			High	Medium	Low
	particularly on 2 ha parcels.				
16	Encourage the regular maintenance of septic systems by owners	2.1.5.7		M	
17	Partner with ENGOs to undertake water quality monitoring of all lakes in North Cowichan, specifically Somenos & Quamichan Lakes	2.2.1.3 c			L
18	Develop air quality standards for the municipality.	2.2.2.1		M	
19	Develop policies for commercial and project development burning consistent with air quality standards. Encourage new industrial projects to provide an assessment of impacts on air quality, and give evidence that appropriate steps will be taken to protect air quality.	2.2.2.1		M	
20	Monitor the effects of outdoor burning practices (urban, rural).	2.2.2.1		M	
21	Enhance air quality information and public awareness. Provide public education about how to improve local air quality. Encourage alternatives to outdoor burning.	2.2.2.1		M	
22	Amend local bylaws to encourage alternate methods of development waste disposal, i.e. no burning of development waste.	2.2.2.1		M	
23	Develop bylaw enforcement capacity to reduce noise violations under the current Noise Bylaw.	2.2.2.2			L
24	Evaluate temporary use permit applications in light of their noise potential.	2.2.2.2			L
25	Ensure that Zoning bylaw is consistent with provision that flood proofing is not typically required for farm buildings, other than for dwelling units and enclosed livestock structures.	2.2.3.2 c		M	
26	Update subdivision and building bylaws to accommodate wildfire interface provisions	2.2.3.4 a			L
27	Develop a community-wide climate change action plan that addresses climate change targets, adaptation and mitigation strategies, and economic opportunities through a broad-based planning process.	2.3.1.2		M	
28	Adopt sediment and erosion control standards to mitigate sediment impacts on municipal infrastructure and	2.3.1.6		M	

**TABLE 3: Official Community Plan (OCP) – Workshop Results**

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	OCP Action	Reference	AAC Priority		
			High	Medium	Low
	watercourses.				
29	Investigate the potential to establish a municipal business advisory council to meet regularly with municipal leadership.	2.4.1.1		M	
30	Review business related bylaws to ensure that they are current and do not unnecessarily discourage new business investment.	2.4.1.1		M	
31	Revisit the tourism information and directional signage policy. Update sign bylaw.	2.4.1.2 2.4.2.2 2.5.3.4	H		
32	Investigate feasibility of various climate change mechanisms for generating revenue for North Cowichan, i.e. selling carbon offset credits from forest lands, benefiting from cap-and-trade programs,	2.4.2.1		M	
33	Investigate potential for differing standards for home-based businesses, whether rural or urban.	2.4.2.3		M	
34	Amend Zoning Bylaw to allow for agricultural production and processing in industrial areas.	2.4.6.1 c		M	
35	Add “horticulture” as a permitted use in residential neighbourhoods	2.5.4.10		M	
36	Investigate the feasibility of permitting backyard chickens in urban areas (2010/2011 review indicated no change to Animal Control Bylaw needed or desired at this time)	2.5.4.10			L
37	Develop food security policy for North Cowichan.	2.5.4.10		M	
38	Develop comprehensive approach to groundwater protection	2.5.7.1	H		
39	Explore ways to use bio-solids from wastewater treatment facilities	2.5.7.4 c		M	
40	Implement BC’s Water Balance Model in assessing development projects.	2.5.7.7 b		M	
41	Encourage the CVRD to undertake a study to determine the need for a Mass Mortality facility in the Cowichan Valley.	2.5.7.8			L
42	Develop and promote a code of conduct for the use of trails in North Cowichan.	2.5.8.2 d		M	

**TABLE 3: Official Community Plan (OCP) – Workshop Results**

Note that with respect to Table 3 there was less participation with respect to the dot-mocracy exercise and the results are less certain than the results of Table 2.

	OCP Action	Reference	AAC Priority		
			High	Medium	Low
43	Establish a variety of trail and related maintenance standards that reflect different use types (wheelchair accessible, hiking, biking, equestrian, mixed) and trail pressures (number of users)	2.5.8.3		M	
44	Update the Trail Network and Cycling Plan	2.5.6.1 2.5.8.3 a		M	
45	Update the Park and Open Space Strategy for North Cowichan	2.5.8.5 b		M	
46	Develop a comprehensive public consultation policy and process	3.2.1.4			L
47	Together with neighbouring First Nations, develop a protocol for the referral of land development applications which may affect First Nation interests	3.2.2.2			L
48	Develop an environmental stewardship awards program	3.2.2.3			L
49	Consider introducing performance-based Development Agreements to achieve performance goals, i.e. green infrastructure innovations, best management practices, that reduce pressures on municipal infrastructure	3.2.2.4		M	
50	Establish a development approval information requirements and procedures bylaw	3.2.2.4 a			L
51	To achieve consistency with OCP direction, update zoning, subdivision, and DCC bylaws; develop amenity contributions policy	3.2.3.1 3.2.3.4		M	
52	Modify GIS system to track policy intent re density, when sewer or water is extended into rural areas	2.1.5.8 3.2.3.5		M	