

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
(Committee of the Whole)

Thursday, June 23, 2016

PRESENT:	Chair	Mark Parker
	Directors	Taylor Bachrach Eileen Benedict Shane Brienen Tom Greenaway Mark Fisher Dwayne Lindstrom Bill Miller Rob Newell Jerry Petersen Darcy Repen Luke Strimbold Gerry Thiessen – arrived at 10:09 a.m.
	Directors Absent	Thomas Liversidge, Village of Granisle Rob MacDougall, District of Fort St. James
	Alternate Director	Brenda Gouglas, District of Fort St. James
	Staff	Janine Dougall, Director of Environmental Services – arrived at 10:31 a.m. Farhan Hussain, Regional Economic Development Summer Student – arrived at 10:19 a.m., left at 10:57 a.m. Deborah Jones-Middleton, Protective Services Manager – arrived at 10:43 a.m. Corrine Swenson, Manager of Regional Economic Development Deneve Vanderwolf, Regional Economic Development Assistant – arrived at 10:33 a.m., left at 10:56 a.m. Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant
	Others	Derek MacDonald, Lake Babine Nation – arrived at 10:31 a.m. Bernard Patrick, Lake Babine Nation – arrived at 10:31 a.m. John Stevenson, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture
	Media	Flavio Nienow, LD News – arrived at 10:25 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

AGENDA

Moved by Director Newell
Seconded by Director Petersen

AG.2016-6-1

“That the Agriculture Committee Meeting Agenda of June 23, 2016 be adopted.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Agriculture Committee
Meeting Minutes
-May 26, 2016

Moved by Director Repen
Seconded by Director Brienen

AG.2016-6-2

"That the minutes of the Agriculture Committee meeting of May 26, 2016 be received."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATION

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE – John Stevenson, Regional Agrologist RE: Update

Chair Parker welcomed John Stevenson, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Stevenson congratulated the Regional Board in its development of an Agriculture Committee. Mr. Stevenson mentioned that he has been the Regional Agrologist with the Ministry of Agriculture for the past four years and his region includes Haida Gwaii to west of Fort Fraser. Mr. Stevenson spoke of the Regional Agrologist team in the Interior of BC that has a cross section of experience including dairy, ranching, green house, horticulture, field vegetables, fruit and vegetable specialists, etc.

The Regional Agrologists are the Ministry's front line point of contact for residents and provide support in regard to:

- Emergency Management events to assist in relocating livestock, etc.;
- Soil and stockpile reclamation plans;
- Basic land agriculture capability ratings.

Mr. Stevenson spoke to:

- Underutilized agricultural land in the region;
- Working to create and increase efficiencies and opportunities in regard to private land available in the region;
- Affordability of land in the region to assist in building farming operations;
- Providing links in regard to soil, climate and crop data information on the RDBN website;
- The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) developing a new Entrance Support Strategy to assist in the development of agriculture in B.C.;
- MoA Farm Advisory Service Program;
- MoA Strategic Outreach Initiative Fund;
- Farm management and the need to capitalize on moisture in the soils when the ground is most likely to have moisture for example in the fall;
- The importance of soil fertility;
- Niche markets such as Haskap Berry farming that are developing along with building strategic partnerships to enable different farming management.

Chair Parker brought forward the benefits of the Beyond the Market program and that there is lobbying taking place for the Provincial Government to support the program and the need to build on a program that has had successes. Director Miller noted that the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George is bringing a resolution forward to the 2016 UBCM Convention in regard to the Province supporting a Community Based Agricultural Extension Program.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE – John Stevenson, Regional Agrologist RE: Update (Cont'd)

Director Repen mentioned the experimental farm in the Okanagan and questioned why there is not an experimental farm or funding in the northern region. Discussion took place in regard to bringing concerns forward at the UBCM Convention.

Mr. Stevenson discussed the possibility of developing a Northern Agriculture Producers Association.

Director Miller asked what direction/discussion the Ministry of Agriculture has had in regard to food security. Mr. Stevenson noted that Minister Letnick recently provided the 2016 top ten priorities for the Ministry of Agriculture and in that list is food security for B.C. residents.

Director Benedict questioned the role of the Ministry of Agriculture in regard to the issues and impacts of elk, deer and geese to farm lands. Mr. Stevenson noted that in the fall of 2016 they are considering a 3-D fencing workshop to work towards protecting the farmer's investment from predators. Discussion took place in regard to possible funding and fencing compensation to assist with the issue.

Chair Parker thanked Mr. Stevenson for attending the meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Agriculture Forum

Discussion took place regarding the following:

- Time line for an Agricultural Forum:
 - October, 2017;
- including Agriculture at the 2017 RDBN Business Forum;
- Stakeholders;
- The importance and the need to support Agriculture in the region;
- Discussion topics:
 - Impacts of foreign ownership of agricultural lands;
 - Tree planting agricultural lands;
 - Food security in the north;
 - Hay exports;
 - Agri-tourism;
 - Crop diversification;
 - Shaping policy.

Agriculture Forum

Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Fisher

AG.2016-6-3

“That the Agriculture Committee recommend that the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors direct staff to investigate a date for an Agriculture Forum at the end of October, 2016; and further, that staff gather topics for discussion from the RDBN Board of Directors.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Discussion took place in regard to staff also including an Agriculture component in the 2017 RDBN Business Forum.

DISCUSSION ITEMS (CONT'D)

2. Connecting Consumers and Producers

Corrine Swenson, Manager of Regional Economic Development provided an update in regard to the Connecting Consumers and Producers Brochure and Facebook webpage. Chair Parker noted the importance of promoting the brochure and the Facebook page. Ms. Swenson mentioned that there will be promotional information provided at events throughout the region. Discussion took place in regard to providing a brochure to individuals included in the Connecting Consumers and Producers Brochure.

CORRESPONDENCE

BC Forage Council on
Farm Demonstration
Research 2nd Draft

Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Benedict

AG.2016-6-4

“That the Agriculture Committee receive the correspondence from the BC Forage Council regarding Farm Demonstration Research 2nd Draft.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Discussion took place regarding the need for farm research to be completed by researchers and not be the sole responsibility of the individual farmer.

Letter RE: Funding for
Regional Trials and
Assessment of Crops
and Agricultural Lands

Moved by Director Repen
Seconded by Director Miller

AG.2016-6-5

“That the Agriculture Committee recommend that the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors write a letter requesting that the Federal Government contribute sufficient funds to undergo regional trials and assessment of crops and agricultural lands in the northern region of B.C. with funding from the \$800 million Mountain Pine Beetle monies; and further, that the letter be sent to the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Honourable Norm Letnick, Minister of Agriculture, Nathan Cullen, MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley, Todd Doherty, MP Cariboo – Prince George.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Brien

AG.2016-6-6

“That the meeting be adjourned at 11:01 a.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Mark Parker, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant