

STAFF REPORT:

REPORT TO: Council

MEETING DATE: August 9, 2010

REPORT NO.: SPS.10.11

SUBJECT: Agricultural Advisory Committee

PREPARED BY: Peter Tollefsen, Director of Special Projects (Sustainability)

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive the Staff Report SPS.10.11 “Agricultural Advisory Committee”, and

1. That Council support the comments made in a letter from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, February 2, 2010 to the Minister of Natural Resources regarding the Provincial response to livestock kills by predatory animals; and
That this Council resolution be forwarded to the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and other municipalities for their information and action.
2. That Council authorize staff to research a local program to augment the Canada-Ontario Environmental Plan as part of the 2011 Town Budget review.
3. That Council authorize staff to research and report back to Council, as part of the 2011 Town Budget process, on a Town wide tree planting project for Earth Day 2011.

B. Background

At the June 22, 2010 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting a number of recommendations were made. (3). See attached meeting notes. On:

Recommendation: No.1 Discussion took place regarding the Livestock Protection Act. See item 2 of the attached meeting notes. In front of the Committee was correspondence from Clarence Haverson, Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs Feb. 22, 2010 to municipal clerks & livestock valuers forwarded to the Committee by Council for comment. David Finbow, Director of Planning was in attendance at a meeting to discuss livestock protection. As you can see from the meeting notes the Agricultural Advisory Committee agreed with the response to the Minister of Natural Resources from

the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. (Attached). Staff agree with the Committee's recommendation that Council consider a resolution supporting the comments made by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Recommendation: No.2 Discussion took place regarding the Environmental Farm Plan, see item 3 of the attached meeting notes. Staff have recently met with Ray Robertson, Manager, Grey County Agricultural Services Centre and will be providing more information to Council on a local program to augment the Canada-Ontario Environmental Plan as part of the 2011 Town Budget review.

Recommendation: No.3 Discussion took place regarding a Town wide tree planting project for Earth Day 2011. See item 4 of the attached Meeting Notes. Regarding the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan the Town recently received a grant from TD Green Streets for the planting of trees in Rights of Ways and school yards this October. Another initiative could be built upon for Earth Day 2011 and staff will investigate and report back to Council as part of the 2011 Town Budget process.

C. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan

Investigating Environmental Farm Plans and a Town wide tree planting program will align with Goal 3: *"Preserving and enhancing natural and environmental features, and cultural heritage of the community"*.

D. Environmental Impacts

These programs if implemented will improve the environment.

E. Budget Impact

Will be addressed as part of the 2011 Budget process.

F. Attached

Attachment 1 – Notes and Recommendations, June 22, 2010 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting

Attachment 2 – Letter from the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs to municipal clerks & livestock valuers Feb. 23, 2010.

Attachment 3 – Letter from the Ontario Federation of Agricultural to the
Minister of Natural Resources Feb. 2, 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Tollefsen, Director of Special Projects (Sustainability)

For more information, please contact:

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Notes and Recommendations (3)

The Blue Mountains

Agricultural Advisory Committee

Meeting of Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Present: James McKinlay (Chair); Jeff Wilson, Jacquie Hendry, Grant McMurchy.

Regrets: John Ardiel, Sid Dykstra

Staff: PeterTollefsen, Rob Potter

1. Agricultural Farm Tour

Peter reported he has booked a 48-seat bus and expects more than 40 people will attend. There is good representation from all Town departments. There will be at least one member of the news media attending. The starting and end point for the Tour has been moved the Beaver Valley Community Centre due to construction at the Town Hall.

The objective of the tour is to educate Town staff about the agricultural community.

James noted a question had been raised about the need for biosecurity measures. Grant pointed out that Bay Growers will require everyone to wear a hair net. Peter will check with Jim Dolmer, of Bay Growers, about whether the Town needs to supply hair nets. No other concerns were noted. Peter will check on whether there are any possible insurance issues.

Issues and Objectives

The Committee agreed that Communication is the primary issue to address. The Tour should serve as a way to open more lines of communication and make Town Staff and Council more aware of the issues and challenges facing the farm community. James suggested each host be prepared to do a short introduction at their farm.

Some of the items to be addressed by the farmers include:

- Chervil and sainfoin
- How load limits on local roads can impact farmers
- Centurion cycling event (timing)
- Environmental issues/stewardship
- Awareness that a farm is actually a sophisticated business -- farmers fill many roles
- Economics of farming
- Share the Road with farm vehicles
- What products are available from local farms

- Why and how agricultural chemicals are used, controlled, etc.

2. Livestock Protection Act

The Committee discussed a letter to the Minister of Natural Resources by Bette Jean Crewes, President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, dated February 2, 2010, regarding losses of livestock to predators.

David Finbow, Director of Building and Bylaw, discussed this matter with the Committee earlier this year. After review, he suggested the Committee request Town Council to support the OFA position as stated in this letter.

The Committee discussed concerns relating to the various farm sectors. Some of the concerns raised:

- Public and governments don't understand the costs related to protecting livestock and crops from predators
- The province and some municipal inspectors don't respect the efforts farmers make to protect their livestock and crops
- Regulations and/or interpretation of the regulations can put unreasonable demands on farmers
- Farmers can only claim for compensation for dead livestock on their farm but predators will often drag their prey into the bush
- Inconsistency in enforcement and interpretation in some areas. Generally good in The Blue Mountains

RECOMMENDATION: No. 1

Moved by Jacquie, seconded by Grant

THAT Council consider a Resolution supporting the comments made in a letter from Bette Jean Crewes, President, Ontario Federation of Agricultural, February 2, 2010, to the Honourable Linda Jeffrey, Minister of Natural Resources, regarding provincial response to livestock kills by predatory animals and, should Council agree, THAT said resolution be circulated to other Municipalities, appropriate federal and provincial government ministers and agencies and political representatives. CARRIED

3. Environmental Farm Plan

James gave a brief outline of the Canada-Ontario Environmental Farm Plan program. It is a voluntary program that provides financial assistance to farmers and rural landowners to allow them to undertake projects such as stream rehabilitation, livestock control near watercourses, energy efficiency upgrades and chemical storage. James noted that the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan will be launched soon and setting up a local program could be one of the early projects.

One question to be considered is whether the program should be limited to farm properties or should it apply to others. Would it apply to rental properties which are in farm production? After discussion the Committee agreed a local program that augments the federal-provincial program would be worthwhile.

RECOMMENDATION: No. 2

Moved by Jacquie, seconded by Jeff

THAT The Blue Mountains Council consider a local program to augment the Canada-Ontario Environmental Farm Plan program with funding support to be included in the 2011 Town budget, and THAT potential partnerships be considered as a means to leverage additional funding. CARRIED

4. Earth Day

James suggested the Town consider supporting a tree planting program for next spring, possibly in relation to Earth Day (in April). He noted that similar programs are in place in other communities, offering seedlings at very affordable prices.

Jeff expressed concerns that such a program might have drawbacks and that it needs to be carefully thought out.

RECOMMENDATION: No. 3

By Grant, seconded by Jacquie

THAT The Blue Mountains Council support a town-wide tree planting project as a way to support Earth Day 2011 under the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan and THAT a target number be set at one tree to be planted for each ratepayer. CARRIED

5. Broadband Internet Connectivity

Rob asked the Committee members for their thoughts about the need to expand Broadband Internet service in the rural areas. Members agreed that the existing services are not good enough and put them at a competitive disadvantage in doing business. The lack of high-speed service is also a disadvantage to rural youth who don't have ready access when trying to do schoolwork or social networking.

6. New business

Succession Planning – Peter noted that, following the May 13 report and delegation to Council, Council had requested a report on Succession Planning for the Agricultural Advisory Committee. The Committee agreed it would be preferable to have about eight members. James suggested the Committee should aim to have nominees for the next four-year term in place before the Municipal Election on October 25, 2010.

Sustainable Path – Partnership Agreements were distributed for Members' consideration

Small abattoirs – Jacquie explained that many small abattoirs that serve the livestock industry are struggling because of more-stringent regulations. Jacquie will distribute further information to the Committee Members, through Peter, and this item can be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

Ministère de l'Agriculture,
de l'Alimentation et
des Affaires rurales

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Farm Finance Branch

Date: February 23, 2010

To: Municipal Clerks & Livestock Valuers

From: Clarence Haverson
Director, Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act

Subject: Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act

Over the last several months, a number of municipalities have expressed concerns over increasing wolf/coyote populations as well as increasing claims and compensation requirements under the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection program.

In order to assist municipalities, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) will organize a half-day training session on interpretation of the Livestock, Poultry, and Honey Bee Protection Act upon request. If you are interested in hosting a regional (or regionally based) training session in your municipality, please contact Shain Russell-Cameron by March 26, 2010. Her contact information is:

Shain Russell-Cameron
Policy Advisor
1-888-466-2372 x64044
Email: shain.russelcameron@ontario.ca

Producers experiencing recurrent wildlife attacks on their livestock should be encouraged to contact the Ministry of Natural Resources for technical and operational advice in managing this conflict. OMAFRA has a number of information tools and programs that promote best management practices to help farmers protect their livestock against predator damage. Information on preventative measures can also be found on our website at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/sheep/predator.html>.

I would like to remind municipalities that producers are expected to make every effort to prevent or minimize livestock losses from predation through good husbandry and the use of deterrent strategies. Also several valuers have asked about the actions that can be taken when they feel farmers are making multiple claims with little or no action to implement preventative measures



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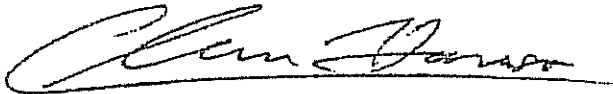


CC Ag Adv Committee
Bylaw

that they deem appropriate. Section 4(c) of the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act (LPHBPA) allows municipalities to deny liability in whole or in part where the valuer finds evidence that the owner had not taken reasonable care to prevent the killing or injuring of the livestock or poultry by dogs or wolves/coyotes.

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact:

Shain Russell-Cameron
Policy Advisor
1-888-466-2372 x64044
Email: shain.russellcameron@ontario.ca



Clarence Haverson

cc. Rick Norkooli
Mary Ellen Norry Car



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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February 2, 2010

The Honourable Linda Jeffrey
Minister of Natural Resources
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 6630
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1W3

Dear Minister;

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is troubled by a recent article in the Brockville Recorder and Times about the serious coyote problem in Ontario. Most troubling is the attitude of an MNR official quoted in the article that demonstrates a lack of understanding of Ontario agriculture, and the numerous steps undertaken by Ontario's livestock producers to minimize predator losses.

To tell farmers and the general public that simply using "good farming practices and common sense" to mitigate losses and personal injury is trite and demeaning. Ontario's livestock producers are already employing every legal option at hand to minimize predator losses; losses that are seriously impacting their income. Rural residents are extremely anxious about the very real possibility of being attacked by coyotes. To then be told that all would be well if they simply used "good farming practices and common sense" is arrogant and insulting.

The assertion that "protecting newborn lambs and calves, getting rid of deadstock, installing fences and employing dogs and donkeys" will solve the problem is naïve. Farmers already take these steps to protect their animals from predator attacks. It is a very significant expense for our farmers. And yet predator losses continue to increase at an alarming rate.

Fences do not offer the degree of certainty implied. To provide any degree of certainty, fences must be buried below ground level to keep coyotes from digging under the fence to gain access to livestock. Furthermore, fences need to be higher than conventional (4½') to deter coyotes. The OMAFRA Factsheet "FENCING OPTIONS IN PREDATOR CONTROL" recommends fences higher than 5' to "discourage coyotes from jumping over". In any case, the factsheet repeatedly notes that improved fences may help to reduce predator losses, but never eliminate them. Our Predator Task Team recognized this potential but also recognized the significant cost of such specialized fences. We have called on the government to assist farmers in alleviating this cost.

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Guard dogs or donkeys can be effective, but like fencing, they do not prevent losses to coyotes. A US Department of Agriculture publication on predator management unequivocally states that "guard animals don't solve the problem, however; they just prevent isolated attacks". Only certain species of dogs are effective as livestock guard dogs, and they are expensive to acquire and costly to maintain. Multiple dogs are required as flock or herd size increases, adding to their cost. Coyotes have learned how to lure dogs away from the livestock they are guarding, to allow others from the pack to attack the unguarded livestock. Donkeys only work for small flocks, as multiple animals tend to bond with each other, not the livestock they are intended to protect.

Your official further suggests that coyote culls will not be effective due to the "robust reproductive biology" of coyotes. And yet, we are also told that sarcoptic mange will soon devastate the population. How so? Minister, we have been told for over two years now that mange would solve the problem. It has not.

Our farm community is suffering losses and fear from an increasing coyote population. The response of your Ministry to date has been inadequate. The article demonstrates a naïve and arrogant attitude that, if systemic, would certainly explain the lack of action.

We respectfully repeat our request for an urgent meeting with you to address this serious problem. We have several solutions the farm community would embrace to deal with the growing coyote population in Ontario.

We look forward to your earliest reply.

Sincerely,



Bette Jean Crews
President

Encl.

cc: The Honourable Carol Mitchell, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors
OFA County Federations