MINUTES: Agriculture & Rural Affairs Advisory Committee
August 23rd, 2007
Ancaster Fairgrounds, Marritt Hall Board Room


Absent/Regrets: Carol Pupo, Councillor Lloyd Ferguson, Kevin Laidley, Henry Swierenga, Carl Loewith, Mel Switzer, John Mantel, Andrew Spoelstra

Visitors:

CALL TO ORDER
Vice - Chair Doug Cranston welcomed the members and called the meeting to order.

1. CHANGES TO AGENDA – none

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – none

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Minutes of June 28th, 2007. Philip Krakar asked that we correct his comments under 5.2. As follows: “To work with the Province on changing tax policy could be risky; it is a nice simple system with Quebec being an example of a disaster application process for farmers.” Delete application process. Nancy Mills moved the minutes, seconded by Roy Shuker. CARRIED.

4. PUBLIC DELEGATION – Liberty Energy Resources - Trevor Pettit and CEO Wilson Nolan have began a community outreach program to discuss their proposal to develop an innovative and sustainable renewable energy plant on 32.3 hectare site located at 675 Strathearn Avenue. Mr. Nolan gave the committee an overview of Liberty Energy, it is a division of McCarthy Family
Farms, a fourth generation family held farming company in Bakersfield, California. The company has developed projects in the U.S., Australia, Paraguay and Saudi Arabia. Liberty is developing another renewable energy centre parallel to the Hamilton project using identical technology in Southern California. The local project will produce 10 MW of electrical power for delivery to the local power grid. The project has been in the process for three years and anticipates environmental approvals by early 2008, construction by the end of 2008 with operations starting in 2009. The facility will use waste biomass, which includes biosolids and biomass. Biomass will include grass and garden clippings, clean lumber, urban forest waste and horticultural waste. Biosolids are recovered from sewage treatment and are commonly referred to as sewage sludge. Currently this sludge is being transported long distances via diesel trucks to landfill in the United States and Quebec or applied to agricultural lands. Liberty staff emphasized that they are committed to operating this facility in a safe and environmentally sensitive manner. They will be working with all levels of government on an ongoing basis to ensure this plant is in compliance of strict environmental regulations. Committee members asked several questions that were addressed in detail. City Council has received a presentation and proposal from Liberty Energy to manage the City’s sewage sludge. Council has given staff as part of their Bio Solids master plan permission to negotiate with Liberty Energy to potentially process our sewage sludge at their facility. Staff and Council will look at all proposals to determine what would be the best solution for our sewage sludge including Liberty Energy’s plant and proposal. Trevor Pettit invited committee members to join Liberty for a tour of their Lakeview (Mississauga) facility. Trevor Pettit will forward the information on the tour to the committee through Sue Coverdale for those that wish to attend.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1 Community Liaison Committee for the Airport Employment Growth District Secondary Plan and Servicing Master Plan Study – Request for ARAAC member representation – Guy Paparella has requested that a member of the ARAAC committee sit on the community liaison group bringing the agricultural and rural expertise to the table. This will be a 2 – 3 year commitment with one meeting per month plus some public meetings. Doug Cranston accepted this role with back-up from other committee members as required. Doug will initiate any back-up assistance from other members.

5.2 Final Draft Agricultural Action Plan – Present Final Amendments and Timelines - Sue Coverdale gave the committee an overview of the final draft action plan and presented the 11 task identified as part of the plan. This action plan will be presented to Council – Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, October 9th at 9:30 a.m. at the Hamilton Convention Centre
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Albion Room. **Motion:** Roy Shuker put forward a motion to support the Final Draft Action Plan for presentation to Council. Seconded by Philip Krakar. **CARRIED.**

5.3 **Eat Local Project – Update Sarah Megens** – The Eat Local Map has been a huge success. Circulation of the maps seems to be in high demand. Sarah talked to the group about Hamilton’s Community Food Continuum and the stages to address food security. Stage One are actions to provide temporary or immediate relief to hunger by initiating food banks, emergency food, free meal programs, subsidized meals and student nutrition programs. Stage two is building capacity and empowering individuals and community through education, skill building, collaboration through participation in many initiatives such as community kitchens and gardens, local farmers markets and several food accessibility initiatives. The final stage would have a focus of long term sustainability that could include a food charter, support for the local agricultural and food systems, environmental protections and policy change for a living wage. Food Security is identified by five elements: availability, accessibility, acceptability, adequacy and finally action. The committee discussed all of the various aspects and all agree that the agricultural community needs to support these initiatives.

6. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

6.1 **ARAAC Committee Member Update**

Roy Shuker advised the group that the HWFA would be hosting an all candidates meeting for the Provincial Election on September 11th at the Rockton Agricultural Society. Roy also updated the group that the HWFA would be setting up a booth at all three fairs with an “Eat Local” theme.

Paul Mason updated the group on the status of the Provincial approvals of the City of Hamilton Rural Official Plan. Most of the issues have been resolved or agreed upon with likely some mandatory changes but the process will now be delayed until the City of Hamilton meets with First Nations representatives from the local native community. This will be a consultative process only that will take place within the next few months. Once that has been completed the Province will approve the plan with the agreed upon changes.

Councillor Mitchell advised the group that Mel Switzer and Dale Smith will represent the rural community on the new combined Committee of Adjustment.
Councillor Mitchell and Councillor Pasuta told the committee that a public meeting will be held on September 13th with regards to the proposed Pesticide Bylaw. Sue Coverdale will inform Clerks Department that Roy Shuker will attend this meeting and speak on behalf of the Agricultural and Rural community. The committee feels strongly that agricultural lands should be exempt and that an education program not enforcement is the right way to go with this bylaw.

The committee was informed that Mel Switzer had recently had an accident and broken his hip. He is doing very well with his recovery; Sue Coverdale will send a card on behalf of the committee.

Councillor Mitchell reminded the group that the 40th annual Winona Peach Festival begins tomorrow August 24th until August 26th.

7. ADJOURNMENT – Nancy Mills moved the meeting be adjourned.