MINUTES: Agriculture & Rural Affairs Advisory Committee
Thursday, May 28th, 2009
Ancaster Fairgrounds – Marritt Hall

Present: Cathy McMaster, Nancy Mills, Roy Shuker, Andrew Spoelstra, Carl Loewith, Doug Cranston, Councillor Robert Pasuta, Susan Coverdale, Dale Smith, Philip Krakar, John Mantel, Mel Switzer, Henry Swierenga, Wilf Arndt, Paul Mallard, Joe Gravina, Michele Sergi, Cathy Plosz

Absent/Regrets: Councillor David Mitchell, Councillor Lloyd Ferguson, Robert Saccomano, Paul Shaker

Visitors: Martin Gooch, John Vieira

CALL TO ORDER
Chair Carl Loewith called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Chair Loewith welcomed all committee members, staff and visitors.

1. CHANGES TO AGENDA – none

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – none

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Minutes of February 26th, 2009. Motion to approve by Cathy McMaster, seconded by Nancy Mills. CARRIED.

4. PRESENTATION – Feasibility Study for Establishing a Local Food Distribution Mechanism. Representatives from the George Morris Centre and Strategic Research Associates, consultants hired by the Friends of the Greenbelt, Hamilton and Niagara made a presentation to the committee outlining the scope of this project. The objectives of this study are to identify critical success factors associated with local food initiatives. Identify markets most likely to support a Hamilton Niagara local initiative. Identify preferred products, target markets and potential volumes and value. Quantify likely
support of producers and small food processors/marketing businesses. Identify operational and marketing arrangements best suited to the Hamilton Niagara areas. Finally propose recommendations on next steps and how to move forward. Research methodology will in the following steps:

- Literature review
- Primary research
- Data Analysis
- SWOT, Conclusions, Recommendations

Interim report will be done by June 30th, draft report July 24th, 2009 and final report August 31st, 2009. Feedback and input was shared between presenters and committee members that will be included and taken into consideration and this project gets underway.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1 Tree Cutting By-law – Cathy Plosz

Cathy Plosz made a presentation to the committee on the new proposed Hamilton Private Tree and Woodland Conservation By-law. 

**Background:** In May 2005, draft by-law released for comment. In June, 2008 report recommended revisions to 2005 draft by-law. Staff were directed to begin public consultation with open houses in September and October 2008.

**Public Consultations:** There were four public information centers with several presentations to stakeholder and postings on the web site.

**Response to Second Draft By-law:** Most supported the by-law. Most concerns centered on government interference in private property management, permits fees, bureaucracy, duplication and size of urban trees regulated along with heritage trees. It was very important that there be rural representation on tree permit committee. The public also wanted to ensure they would be allowed wood for their own use.

Cathy went on to discuss the proposed new by-law identify urban and rural policies and the differences. Permits, permit fees and exemptions were identified. A lengthy debate ensued over wording, definitions and concerns over making sure farmers were exempt from permit fees and permits for personal use. The committee was especially concerned that not only a rural representative be on this committee but that a rural farmer be on the committee. Next steps include bringing the by-law back to the committee in its proposed final draft. This report is scheduled to go to committee and Council in late October. **Motion:** The Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee request that the rural representative on the Tree Permit committee be a registered farmer. Moved by Mel Switzer, seconded by Andrew Spolstra. CARRIED.
5.2 Planning Division Update

Paul Mallard updated the committee on changes being made to directly support this committee and improve the development process for agricultural operations in Hamilton. Michele Sergi will once again be attending our meetings as the representative supporting the ARAAC committee from the Planning Division. Joe Gravina will be the Business Facilitator specifically charged with Agricultural development applications to ensure a one stop shop as requested by this committee. In 2008, staff put forward planning and engineering fees for agricultural operations at a reduced rate proposing ½ the cost of normal fees. All of this information was very positively received by ARAAC members, Michele and Joe were warmly welcomed to the committee.

5.3 City of Hamilton Grant Program – Review recommendations of Distribution of Funds to Non Profit Rural Agricultural Operations.

Sue Coverdale presented the criteria to be used in evaluating the applications and distribution of the $15,000 funds. Committee supported the criteria and again recommended that the grants be evaluated by Sue Coverdale, Henry Swierenga and Carol Pupo. Motion: The Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee supports the criteria established and the applications be sent out for completion to distributethe $15,000 grant funding. Moved by Doug Cranston seconded by Mel Switzer – Carried.

5.4 ARAC Committee Members Update

Sue Coverdale distributed the most up to date contact information for the ARAAC members, staff support and Council members. Any changes were documented and updated.

6. GENERAL INFORMATION

ARAAC Committee Member Update

- Doug Cranston asked questions about the upcoming focus group for the updated Economic Development Strategy
- Roy Shuker announced Betty Jean Crews will be in attendance at the next HWFA meeting
- Carl Loewith and his operations were awarded the Herd Management Award
- Ancaster Agricultural Society will be holding the gala on Friday night May 29th.

7. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.