

Present:

Councillor Bose, Chair
Councillor Bains, Vice Chair
D. Bondar
H. Dhillon
S. Keulen
S. Rai
M. Schutzbank
R. Vanderende

Absent:

R. Brar
B. Favaro
P. Harrison
R. Sihota
R. Tamis
W. Kim

Staff Present:

M. Kischnick, Senior Planner
S. Ward, Drainage Manager
S. Meng, Legislative Services Coordinator

A. ADOPTIONS**1. Adoption of the Agenda**

It was Moved by M. Schutzbank
Seconded by S. Rai
That the agenda of the Agricultural and Food
Policy Committee meeting of October 15, 2024, be adopted.
Carried

2. Adoption of the Minutes – September 10, 2024

It was Moved by H. Dhillon
Seconded by S. Keulen
That the minutes of the Agricultural and
Food Policy Committee meeting held September 10, 2024, be adopted.
Carried

B. DELEGATIONS**1. Deirdre Goudriaan and Anisha Sandhu, Seeds of Change Surrey**

The delegation provided a presentation regarding the development of Food Strategy and Food Charter in Surrey. The following information was highlighted:

- Seeds of Change Surrey (SOCS) aims to develop a resilient, just food system in Surrey, ensuring equitable access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food.
 - There is a critical need for Surrey to integrate food system planning into municipal policies to address food insecurity, environmental sustainability, and community well-being.
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- Despite a significant agricultural land base, Surrey faces issues like high food waste, long community garden waitlists, and lacks a comprehensive food strategy compared to other municipalities in BC.
- Effective food systems require collaboration across city departments, community agencies, and advocacy from local organizations like SOCS to implement impactful policies and strategies.
- SOCS urges the inclusion of food systems planning in Surrey's 2025 Agricultural and Food Policy Committee work plan, emphasizing collaboration with city staff to enhance food security and sustainability efforts.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following information was provided:

- Food waste is often left in the fields, but partnerships exist to address this issue. A coordinated focus is crucial for creating a central plan that can be monitored and evaluated to enhance the overall food system, rather than having disparate efforts.
- A strong example for Surrey is the Sustainability Charter, which includes a dashboard to track impacts across departments. This approach could help demonstrate progress on key food system goals.
- The Food Policy Council is the champion of Vancouver, and there is other community agencies similar to SOCS who participate.
- Surrey needs support for resources and capacity within the city, along with a coordinated strategy that involves all departments.

Councillor Bains joined the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

The Committee provided the following comments:

- A committee member mentioned that Surrey lacks a coordinated food policy framework, leading to disjointed planning across various departments. A food charter could unify these efforts, ensuring food considerations are integrated into all municipal decisions, particularly in balancing transportation and agricultural land use.
 - A committee member mentioned concerns regarding significant challenges with traffic and distribution that required hiring an extra delivery person, indicating that delivery logistics are becoming increasingly difficult and likely affecting others in the industry as well.
 - A committee member mentioned that Surrey has substantial agricultural land that remains largely unfarmed, so the focus should be on enhancing agricultural production rather than prioritizing community gardens.
 - The Chair mentioned that Surrey needs a dedicated agricultural planner to ensure all policies consider the food system and prevent negative impacts on farming. While community gardens may not solve food security, they provide valuable hands-on experiences, especially for youth. As the city densifies, integrating a food system perspective in all plans is vital for enhancing agricultural productivity.
 - A committee member mentioned that Surrey should create a clear vision for protecting agriculture and integrate food considerations across all departments. This requires changing the city's cultural perspective on food systems and using the farm plan strategically to address future challenges
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like water availability, ensuring all decision-makers understand agriculture's importance.

- The Planner noted that food and food systems may be included as a focus area in the upcoming Agricultural Plan Review. This topic will be discussed further during the development of the Terms of Reference for the Agricultural Plan Update with the Committee in the new year to discuss further.
- A committee member mentioned that advocating for food systems change at the federal and provincial levels is essential for Surrey to boost local food production. A clear vision and significant funding are needed to establish Surrey as a top food producer in BC by 2070.

It was

Moved by H. Dhillon

Seconded by M. Schutzbank

That the Agricultural and Food Policy

Committee recommend General Manager of Planning and Development to add food system planning into the discussion of composing the 2025 Annual Work Plan where it is integrated in the Agricultural Plan Update.

Carried

Councillor Bose left the meeting at 6:57 p.m. and Councillor Bains assumed the role of Acting Chair.

C. STAFF PRESENTATIONS

1. Irrigation Feasibility Study for the Serpentine-Nicomekl Lowlands Samantha Ward, Drainage Manager

The Drainage Manager provided a presentation regarding Irrigation Feasibility Study for the Serpentine-Nicomekl Lowlands. The following information was highlighted:

- The City of Surrey is conducting an irrigation feasibility study for the Serpentine Nicomekl Lowlands, recognizing that while it doesn't authorize or manage water licenses, nor is it required to provide irrigation services, recognizes that irrigation could support local agriculture which in turn may result in increasing production and crop yields.
- The study will assess irrigation demand through community feedback, review potential water sources, evaluate environmental impacts, and conduct a cost-benefit analysis, with partial funding from the Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program.
- The city has secured \$125,000 in grant funding, matching its contribution for a total study budget of \$250,000, and aims to issue a draft report by November, with updates to be shared with the committee throughout the process.

Councillor Bose joined the meeting at 6:59 p.m. and assumed the role of Chair.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following information was provided:

- The study will focus on the floodplain of the Serpentine Nicomekl River.
- The usage of the water license on the Nicomekl River has not reached its limit, typically ranging from 50% to 70% at the City's 3 irrigation stations each year.
- The provincial database tracks approved water licenses, including uncommitted ones, which can vary over time. The City has observed unpermitted water extractions from both rivers and their associated ditches.
- There are several potential options for water supply, including diversion of surface water from the Fraser River, on property lagoons, rainwater harvesting systems, and groundwater extraction.

The Committee provided the following comments:

- A committee member mentioned that climate change should be added to the study's terms of reference to account for its impact on water levels, farming seasons, and future water demand.
- A committee member expressed concerns regarding lagoons which once established can become environmental habitats that can complicate water management.
- Chair mentioned that the study should encompass different methods of irrigation.

It was

Moved by S. Keulen

Seconded by M. Schutzbank

That the Agricultural and Food Policy

Committee receive the Irrigation Feasibility Study for the Serpentine-Nicomekl Lowlands presentation for information.

Carried

D. OTHER BUSINESS

1. 2025 Annual Work Plan Markus Kischnick, Senior Planner

The Senior Planner summarized the 2025 Annual Work Plan. The following information was highlighted:

- The 2025 work plan includes a schedule of proposed updates to the Committee on the agricultural plan, zoning bylaw regulations, and Official Community Plan (OCP) policy and regulations, to be presented to Council in November.
- Key tasks involve updating the outdated agricultural plan and engaging a consultant, with committee feedback essential for shaping future agenda items. A presentation on new provincial housing legislation's impact on agriculture will be given at the next meeting.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following information was provided:

- In response to questions about City planning for parkland in growth areas due to new housing legislation, the Planner stated that planning is underway to address parkland pressures from population growth. While new tools and financial mechanisms are available, financial constraints pose challenges for parkland acquisition and development in Surrey and other cities.
- An agricultural innovation workshop is scheduled for January to gather input for the Agricultural Plan and OCP. Details about speakers and expected outcomes will be discussed with the committee.

The Committee provided the following comments:

- A committee member mentioned that the need for parks and recreational spaces can't be overlooked amidst increasing density; it's essential to provide residents with access to areas beyond just farmland.

It was Moved by Councillor Bains
Seconded by R. Vanderende
That the Agricultural and Food Policy Committee:

1. Support the 2025 Annual Work Plan; and
2. Recommend that Council receive the 2025 Annual Work Plan.

Carried

E. INTEGRITY OF THE AGRICULTURAL LAND

This section had no items to consider.

F. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agricultural and Food Policy Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, November 12, 2024 with proposed location in Meeting Room 125 A and B at Surrey Operations Centre.

G. ADJOURNMENT

It was Moved by S. Keulen
Seconded by H. Dhillon
That the Agricultural and Food Policy
Committee meeting be adjourned.

Carried

The Agricultural and Food Policy Committee adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Jennifer Ficocelli,
City Clerk and Director of Legislative Services

Councillor Bose, Chairperson