

Report

Date November 1, 2023
Subject Establishment of the Agricultural Advisory Committee

File: n/a

PURPOSE

For Council to endorse the Terms of Reference to establish the Agricultural Advisory Committee and proceed to recruit potential volunteers for Council's subsequent selection.

BACKGROUND

Although the intention to create an Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) was originally announced at the inaugural meeting on November 2, 2022, where Mayor Douglas stated that he would be recommending that Council appoint Councillor Justice as their representative once the committee was established, Council deferred establishing the committee until 2024 due to time and staff capacity constraints. Accordingly, the Terms of Reference (ToR) are now presented for Council's endorsement and for inclusion of the administration of the AAC within the annual business planning process as part of the Planning & Building department business plan.

DISCUSSION

The draft ToR is appended to this report in Attachment 1 and sets out the composition and focus areas for the committee, along with other administrative details. The ToR should be read with the [Council Advisory Body Policy](#), which sets out the general governance principles for advisory committees, with which the ToR is consistent.

Committee Membership & Recruitment

The ToR identifies sectors and areas of expertise relevant to agriculture from which membership should be drawn. Specifically, representation is sought from young Agrarians, Cowichan Agricultural Society and First Nations, each of whom would be asked to designate a member to represent them on the committee. As per s.6.6 of the Council Advisory Body Policy, these organizations would be able to change their nominated representative at any time without triggering the need to readvertise and bring candidates to Council for selection, noting that Council would not have control over the choice of particular individuals representing these three groups at any given time.

Should Council wish to retain a full level of control and select all members itself, it may delete from the "Appointment and Term" section of the ToR the wording **highlighted in yellow** by passing an appropriate resolution as per Option 2 in this report. In this case, the committee would not benefit from the flexibility afforded by s.6.6 of the Council Advisory Body Policy, nor would the individuals associated with the named groups necessarily be recognized as speaking *on behalf* of those groups.

Advertising for the remaining positions would take place through various channels with the intention of bringing a complete list of potential members to Council in Q1 2024 for endorsement. If there are more candidates than seats, Council may have to vote on the inclusion or otherwise of individuals or amend

the ToR to expand the number of seats. The inaugural meeting of the AAC would likely take place in Q2 2024.

Agriculture and Food Security Strategic Plan

A significant component of the ToR is the creation of an Agriculture and Food Security Strategic Plan, which is also identified as a “major project” within the schedule of projects associated with the Official Community Plan implementation (see staff report from the [July 19 2023 Special Council Meeting](#)). Identifying this project as a core component of the committee’s work plan will ultimately entail its consideration within a future year’s business planning process to determine the level of priority, target timescale and allocation of funds. It is suggested that this should not be contemplated until the committee has advised Council on the scope, scale and objectives of such a plan.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council:
 - (1) Approve the Terms of Reference for the Agricultural Advisory Committee as presented in the Planning Manager’s November 1, 2023 report, included as Attachment 1;
 - (2) Appoint Councillor Justice to serve as the Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee;
 - (3) Direct staff to incorporate the Agricultural Advisory Committee administration into the annual business planning process; and,
 - (4) Direct staff to advertise for volunteers for Council’s subsequent selection of committee members at a future meeting in 2024.
 - *The resolution would direct staff to move forward with membership recruitment with the ToR as drafted and integrate the AAC into the annual business planning process.*
2. THAT Council:
 - (1) Approve the Terms of Reference for the Agricultural Advisory Committee, subject to the deletion of provisions highlighted in yellow in Attachment 1 in the Planning Manager’s November 1, 2023 report;
 - (2) Appoint Councillor _____ to serve as the Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee;
 - (3) Direct staff to incorporate Agricultural Advisory Committee administration into the annual business planning process; and,
 - (4) Direct staff to advertise for volunteers for Council’s subsequent selection of committee members at a future meeting in 2024.
 - *The resolution would direct staff to move forward with membership recruitment subject to the ToR as may be amended by Council and integrate the AAC into the annual business planning process.*
3. THAT Council refer the terms of reference for the Agricultural Advisory Committee to the Committee of the Whole for further discussion and recommendation.
 - *Should Council identify a substantially different approach, staff would recommend that this matter be referred to the Committee of the Whole for an in-depth conversation on potential changes and to provide staff with an opportunity to consider all implications, prepare revised ToR and advise accordingly on implications to a future meeting of Council.*

IMPLICATIONS

This committee will require a moderate ongoing input of staff time in terms of facilitating quarterly meetings; noting that advisory committees cannot direct staff to carry out additional work beyond the supporting activities outlined within the *Council Advisory Body Policy*. Clearly, the proviso that the committee may also meet “at the call of the Chair” would draw more heavily on staff time if numerous additional meetings are held beyond quarterly frequency. To account for the administration of the AAC as a new responsibility competing for staff resources, part (2) of the recommended resolution formally includes its consideration within the annual business planning process on an ongoing basis.

An allied project to create an Agriculture and Food Security Strategic Plan would represent a significant commitment of staff time, primarily within the Community Planning division. Unless another significant project is deprioritized, initiation of this work is likely to take place in 2025. It will also require an allocation of financial resources, primarily for consultant assistance to lead and facilitate such a project. No scope of work yet exists on which quotations could be solicited; however, staff preliminarily estimate that a reasonable project budget is in the region of \$100,000.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

- (1) Approve the Terms of Reference for the Agricultural Advisory Committee as presented in the Planning Manager’s November 1, 2023 report, included as Attachment 1;
- (2) Appoint Councillor Justice to serve as the Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee;
- (3) Direct staff to incorporate Agricultural Advisory Committee administration into the annual business planning process; and,
- (4) Direct staff to advertise for volunteers for Council’s subsequent selection of committee members at a future meeting in 2024.

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Attachment: Agricultural Advisory Committee Draft Terms of Reference