

Report

Date February 4, 2026

File:

Subject Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes January 2026

PURPOSE

To provide the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AgAC) minutes for receipt, along with associated recommendations for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND

The AgAC held its scheduled meeting on January 20, 2026. The draft minutes are attached to this report and require additional input from staff before Council considers the committee's requests.

DISCUSSION

5.1 ALC Application ID 105604 4017 Sahtlam Road

The AgAC passed the following motions with respect to item 5.1:

THAT the Agricultural Advisory Committee recommends:

THAT Council authorizes the Agricultural Land Commission application ID 105604 for placement of fill on 4017 Sahtlam Road to be forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission with a recommendation that it be approved, with the following conditions:

- 1. Substantial fulfilment of Development Permit Area (DPA-3) Natural Environment guidelines for watercourse protection is demonstrated prior to reclamation activities occurring on the subject property.*
- 2. That annual progress reports be submitted and shared with the Municipality of North Cowichan.*

Condition 2 was added by the AgAC on its own initiative. The Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) can and does require annual monitoring reports as part of some of its approvals, so the recommendation is reasonable. It is up to the ALC whether they will actively share such reports with North Cowichan, as requested. Council will be prompted on the inclusion of this as part of the staff cover report when this application is presented to Council.

5.2 ZB000275 6848 Somenos Road

The AgAC recommended that Council approves the zoning application to permit a second dwelling, but passed the following subsequent resolution:

THAT the Agricultural Advisory Committee recommends:

THAT Council directs staff to consider opportunities to strengthen protection of agriculturally-productive land and preservation of farmable parcels in a future zoning bylaw update.

The further resolution is indicative of the AgAC's concern that applications of this nature for additional family residential structures, while seemingly reasonable when considered individually, are collectively eroding agricultural potential and productivity if no controls on building siting are articulated.

It is not immediately clear what further provisions the zoning bylaw could articulate in this regard, but it may include regulations such as "homeplate" provisions, which would broadly be consistent with OCP policy. The request from the AgAC is itself something of a reiteration of OCP policy. Should Council adopt this recommendation, staff will explore options in the context of the next zoning bylaw update that addresses agricultural policy and rural zoning. It is not known when this will take place, but it could be part of any of the following:

- General zoning bylaw update project
- Response to potential recommendations from a future Strategic Agricultural Plan (SAP)
- Changes to A-zones prompted by other direction or needs

In the unlikely event that Council does not wish to adopt this recommendation, which has been included in the consent agenda motion, it may pull this report from the consent agenda and modify the motion by striking out part 2.

Backyard Hens

The AgAC passed the following motion with respect to item 5.3:

THAT the Agricultural Advisory Committee recommends that backyard chicken regulation is addressed in a comprehensive manner as part of the upcoming Strategic Agricultural Plan review and that staff be directed that no bylaw amendments take place before that time.

The AgAC expressed a number of concerns during the discussion, most notably regarding biosecurity. Ultimately the committee concluded that the issue cannot be adequately bottomed-out through discussion in one or two committee meetings and is likely to engender considerable community interest.

The resolution effectively requests that Council not proceed with its proposed zoning bylaw amendment at this time, and uses the upcoming SAP process to address this issue in a fulsome manner. It replicates the AgAC's previous recommendation to Council arising from its August 20, 2025 meeting:

THAT the Agricultural Advisory Committee recommends to Council that any future consideration of changes to backyard hen regulation is referred to the AgAC for potential inclusion in the upcoming Strategic Agricultural Plan review.

This request is reasonable, although it contradicts the current direction given to staff by Council and has therefore not been included in the consent motion. If Council wishes for public engagement (beyond a public hearing) to be carried out as part of moving towards allowing backyard hens on all lots, this could be significantly resource-intensive in terms of staff time and effort. Addressing the issue as part of the SAP project would allow for this zoning bylaw amendment to be consultant-led, which would be more efficient given that the SAP consultant will be conducting public engagement on a range of other agricultural and food security issues. Should Council wish to change course as recommended by the

AgAC, a draft motion is provided in Option 2 below in the event Council removes this item from the consent agenda and adds it to the regular one for discussion.

OPTIONS

(Recommended Option)

(1) THAT Council:

1. Receives the draft minutes of the January 20, 2026 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting; and
 2. Directs staff to consider opportunities to strengthen the protection of agriculturally productive land and preservation of farmable parcels in a future zoning bylaw update.
- Part 2 provides further material for consideration in a future zoning bylaw update and will be addressed by staff at the appropriate time.

(2) THAT Council:

1. Receives the draft minutes of the January 20, 2026 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting;
 2. Directs staff to consider opportunities to strengthen the protection of agriculturally productive land and preservation of farmable parcels in a future zoning bylaw update; and
 3. Directs that any future consideration of changes to backyard hen regulation is referred to the AgAC for potential inclusion in the upcoming Strategic Agricultural Plan review.
- Part 3 would direct staff to pause the zoning amendment currently subject to Council direction and integrate it into the lengthier SAP process.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications	Concerns or Impacts to North Cowichan
Social	• No significant impacts or concerns
Environmental	• No significant impacts or concerns
Financial	• No significant impacts or concerns
Policy/Legislation	• No significant impacts or concerns
Strategic Priority	• Aligns with the typical role of an Agricultural Advisory Committee
Communication	• No significant impacts or concerns
Staffing Implications	• No significant impacts or concerns

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

- (1) Receives the draft minutes of the January 20, 2026 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting; and
- (2) Directs staff to consider opportunities to strengthen the protection of agriculturally productive land and preservation of farmable parcels in a future zoning bylaw update.

Report prepared by:



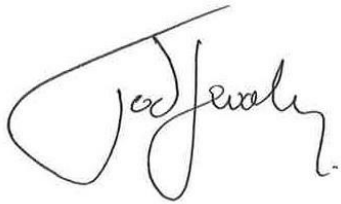
Chris Osborne MCIP, RPP
Manager, Planning

Report reviewed by:



George Farkas
General Manager, Corporate Services and
Community Relations

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:

- (1) Draft Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes, January 20, 2026