

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO**

**RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, June 6, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Acting Chair Mark Parker

Directors Judy Greenaway  
Clint Lambert – via Zoom – arrived at 10:15 a.m., left at 10:44 a.m.,  
returned at 10:46 a.m.  
Shirley Moon  
Chris Newell – left at 10:44 a.m.  
Stoney Stoltenberg  
Michael Riis-Christianson

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Megan D’Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator  
Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development  
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer  
Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning - via Zoom  
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services  
Christopher Walker, Emergency Program Coordinator

Others Gregory Bartle, Land Use Planner, Ministry of Agriculture and Food –  
arrived at 10:10 a.m.  
Shane Brienen, District of Houston – arrived at 9:48 a.m.  
Leroy Dekens, Village of Telkwa – arrived at 10:44 a.m.  
Martin Elphee, District of Fort St. James  
Audrey Fennema, Village of Fraser Lake  
Brian Frenkel, District of Vanderhoof  
Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle  
Charlie Rensby, Village of Burns Lake – via Zoom – arrived at 10:00  
a.m.  
John Stevenson, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
– arrived at 10:10 a.m.  
Andre Solymosi, General Manager, BC Vegetable Marketing  
Commission – via Zoom – left at 10:09 a.m.  
Derek Sturko, Chair, BC Vegetable Marketing Commission – via Zoom  
– left at 10:09 a.m.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

## **AGENDA**

Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director Newell

RDC.2024-5-1

"That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for June 6, 2024 be approved.

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **MINUTES**

Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes  
-May 9, 2024

Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director Moon

RDC.2024-5-2

"That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of May 9, 2024 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **DELEGATION**

### **BC VEGETABLE MARKETING COMMISSION – Derek Sturko, Chair and Andre Solymosi, General Manager Re: BC Vegetable Marketing Commission's Role in Northern BC and Re-Introduction of "Regulated Area" Restrictions**

Acting Chair Parker welcomed Derek Sturko, Chair and Andre Solymosi, General Manager, BC Vegetable Marketing Commission.

Mr. Solymosi provided a PowerPoint presentation.

#### BC Vegetable Marketing Commission

- Orderly Marketing of BC Vegetables
- Vegetables Currently Regulated in the South
- Role of the BCVMC
- Function of the BCVMC
- Role & Function of the BCVMC
- Benefits of Regulated Marketing
- North of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Parallel North Latitude
  - o What specific measures are being implemented to support local farmers in adapting to the new licensing requirements?

The following was discussed:

- Lack of consultation with northern producers prior to BCVMC's introduction of regulated areas north of the 53<sup>rd</sup> parallel
  - o BCVMC noted the need for consultation and have paused the implementation of regulations in the north
  - o Wanting to have a commonsense approach that works for the north
  - o Reached out to Farmers' Markets

## **DELEGATION (CONT'D)**

- Producers having to pay a \$250 fee
- BCVMC has authority to impose regulation in the north and chose not to in the past
  - o Climate change a consideration regarding the implementation of regulations in the north
    - Acting Chair Parker recognized climate change and noted that in northern B.C. there is one crop grown per season unlike southern B.C. where there can be 2-3 crops grown in a season
      - Northern communities have higher heating costs to grow produce during frost events that are often unpredictable and occur during the growing season
- Definition of regulated vegetables
  - o Producing 1 tonne of vegetables over a 12-month period is defined as a producer and needs to be licensed
  - o BCVMC intends to review the amount and apply the right model for the region
    - Have the opportunity to adjust for growing in the south and north of the province
- Regulations for other sectors of farming e.g. dairy, poultry, eggs, etc.
- Enforcement of regulations
  - o Starts with education and involuntary enforcement
  - o Enforcement relies on evidence
    - Class 1 to 5 enforcement – different fines apply
    - If it is extreme non-compliance - rely on litigation
    - Ability to seize product and restrict product license
    - Rather have voluntary compliance and be a positive influence on the industry
    - Generally, resolve amicably
- Vegetable production in the region supplies communities with fresh produce which is not in abundance and is required for food security
- Important to have freshly harvested produce and any surplus provided to lower income demographic
- Importance of consultation and meaningful communication with stakeholders prior to implementation of changes to regulations in the north.

Acting Chair Parker thanked Messrs. Sturko and Solymosi for attending the meeting.

## **AGRICULTURE REPORTS**

BC Vegetable Marketing  
Commission - Update

Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

RDC.2024-5-3

“That the Committee receive the Regional Agriculture Coordinator’s  
BC Vegetable Marketing Commission Amending Orders.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **AGRICULTURE REPORTS (CONT'D)**

### **IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program**

Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2024-5-4

"That the Committee receive the Regional Agriculture Coordinator's IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director Moon spoke of supporting a water sustainability and irrigation study and the significance of gathering information. She noted that agriculture is an important economic driver in the region and that money made by farmers remains in the community. Director Moon identified the importance of irrigations systems for small farmers and the significance of small farming businesses in the region.

### **IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program**

Moved by Director Moon  
Seconded by Director Newell

RDC.2024-5-5

"That the Committee recommend that the Board direct staff to investigate applying for the IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program and determine the 50% cost share ratio for community projects in Electoral Areas C (Fort St. James Rural), D (Fraser Lake Rural), E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural) and F (Vanderhoof Rural)."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **DISCUSSION ITEM**

### **Society Wildfire Groups**

The following was discussed:

- Several groups throughout the region are interested and have created wildfire group societies
- Funding for the societies/groups
  - o Grant funding options
    - Grant in Aid
    - Region-wide Grant in Aid
  - o Regional District grant writing support
  - o Rural Government Budget
  - o Private funding options
- Regional District liability to provide infrastructure
  - o Municipal Insurance Association insurance for emergency preparedness and planning and not response
  - o Option to rent/lease equipment to societies
- Chinook Emergency Response Society
  - o Funding
  - o Liability insurance

**DISCUSSION ITEM (CONT'D)**

**Society Wildfire Groups (Cont'd)**

- BC Wildfire Service engaging with local wildfire community groups
  - o Options for wildfire community groups to work with BC Wildfire Service
- Municipalities working with rural areas to purchase wildfire fighting equipment/trailers
- Workshop with interested groups, municipalities and electoral areas to come together to find solutions regarding funding and purchasing of wildfire fighting equipment/trailers
  - o Staff will investigate a joint workshop
- Signage at lake and river boat launches to identify the priority for fire fighting water tankers and air support.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Illegal Dumping

Director Moon spoke of local groups conducting clean up of illegal dumping areas in Electoral Area F and whose jurisdiction it is to clean up the sites. Staff will bring forward information at a future meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director Moon

RDC.2024-5-6

"That the meeting be adjourned at 10:48 a.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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Mark Parker, Acting Chair

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Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director  
of Corporate Services