
**Electoral Area “E”: Columbia Valley, Cultus Lake
and Lindell Beach**

Advisory Planning Commission Meeting #3

**October 20, 2010 6:30pm
Columbia Valley Fire Hall**

Present:

APC: Rolf Soth, Loretta Gretler, Gord Spencer, Lauren Spilsbury, Bruce Millar,
Don Parshyn, Paul Huesken, David Huesken
FVRD: Director David Lamson – Electoral Area “E”, Dawn Smith – Planner,
Lisa Grant – Planner
Public: One member of the public observed the meeting.

1. Welcome

Gord Spencer opened the meeting at 6:30pm and welcomed the APC members.

2. Agenda Review

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed and supported with no changes needed by the APC members.

3. Approval of September 9, 2010 meeting notes (APC meeting #2)

APC members were given copies of the meeting notes from APC meeting #2 and asked to notify staff if there were any changes that needed to be made. Staff advised APC meeting #3 meeting notes will be emailed to APC members.

4. Discussion

Service & Development in Sleepy Hollow-Cultus Lake

Dawn Smith reviewed services provided by the Regional District which, in areas such as East Cultus Lake include wastewater treatment (septic and sewage) and water/well and septic treatment. Rural servicing was reviewed including on-site septic and on-site water (usually a well). For the majority of properties in this area a rural standard is applied.

Discussion revolved around maintenance of on-site services and if the Regional District should be a part of distributing information. Ultimately, Fraser Health regulates these systems and should have a role in informing residents about maintenance. The importance of protecting the aquifer’s health was discussed at length. Staff summarized past discussions from APC meeting #1.

Servicing for resort recreation was discussed separately, as staff and APC members recognized the different level of servicing. Generally, these areas have a higher density threshold than rural areas (i.e. smaller lots). Some considerations included:

- Requirements for community water and waste treatment.
- A year round/full time occupancy servicing level should be applied
- Servicing should be low impact and held to a high environmental standard
- Lot clustering, reduced road widths, limited impervious surfaces and multi-purpose green spaces should be applied to new developments
- Other green building considerations are collection/detention of stormwater drainage and shared geothermal heating.

APC members noted that the volunteer fire department service needs support through younger residents. Services that support viability include natural gas, highspeed internet which make home based businesses viable, a 2nd access road to market and labour were important values to APC members. The OCP should seek ways to address these concerns.

APC members also discussed services that should be added to the area; and these included a noise bylaw especially for the Cultus Lake area which could include dog noise, a dog control bylaw and a burning bylaw for Lindell Beach. Staff explained that localized bylaws are possible.

Commercial Lands

While located close to the Provincial campsites and the lake, the Cultus Lake and Lindell Beach commercial lots are struggling. APC members discussed if the lands are viable and types of land uses that may be more compatible. APC members discussed the need for flexibility for land use in the Cultus Lake area, including residential, mixed use and commercial uses. Moreover, the OCP should also identify other areas where commercial activity should be located in proximity to resort recreation developments around the Cultus Lake south area along Columbia Valley Highway.

Aggregate Use

APC members noted that agriculture, water quality and public safety should be priority land uses in the Columbia Valley area over aggregate and industry/industrial uses. APC members realize that gravel extraction is essential for public safety.

Blue Creek was given as an example of a creek that needs gravel removed to protect properties from flooding and other creek related issues. The APC recognized the importance of removing this gravel and that community members benefitted from being able to obtain local gravel for use on their property.

However, commercial and/or large scale gravel extraction was not supported by the APC. Members felt that these large operations should not be supported in the community because of access constraints, and potential negative impacts on the aquifer by removing gravel which acts as a natural filter.

Overall, APC members suggested that gravel extraction should only take place when it is a public safety concern such as Blue Creek mitigation works. Reviewing the Aggregate Pilot Project Map, APC members felt that the red zones should remain for Columbia Valley.

Agriculture and Viability

Agriculture viability was presented as the second topic for the evening. Lisa Grant reviewed open house comments and survey responses, existing Area 'E' Official Community Plan policies, Local Government Act and Agricultural Land Commission policies, legislation and Agriculture Capability Mapping.

Agriculture in Columbia Valley was a topic that created discussion with many strong opinions, although consensus was not always reached, some common themes emerged. Throughout the APC meetings and at open houses, residents and APC members expressed economic challenges faced by Columbia Valley residents; and further that current OSP agriculture policies do not support the community and issues they are facing. Issues identified included an aging population and youth leaving the community and the desire for greater flexibility of land uses. The large parcels, restricted agricultural land uses and resulting high cost of land was seen by many members as a barrier for families to move to the Columbia and also creates challenges for economically viable farming options. Some members expressed apprehension about the future of the local services such as the volunteer fire department, should local residents not participate in the fire dept due to the aging population or out-of-town work.

APC members stressed the importance of preserving rural character and protecting agriculture while providing flexible options and addressing community needs. Staff gave APC members a list of important values in regards to agriculture which were obtained from the community survey and community open house these values included the working family farm, family, sense of community, viability and preserving rural character. APC members added quality of lands (soils) and small farm lifestyle with the need for supplemental income to the list of values important to agriculture.

The role of the OCP, Local Government Act, Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands were explained by staff. APC members received a handout which showed that there has been 18 ALR Applications from 2000-2010 in Electoral Area "E". Of the 18 applications, 13 were for subdivision, 1 was for inclusion, 4 were for exclusion and 2 were for non-farm use. There were 2 on-going applications that were both categorized as ALR exclusion and subdivision. (See Appendix A)

Staff reviewed activities designated as farm use by the ALC on ALR lands which consisted of farm retail sales, winery or cidery (licensed in BC), storage, packing, product prep. or processing of farm products, agri-tourism, timber production, harvesting silviculture and forest protection, agroforestry, horse riding, training and boarding, construction, maintenance and operation of farm buildings including greenhouses, intensive livestock operations, mushroom production and aquaculture and a variety of compost and fertilizer processing, storage and application.

Staff also reviewed permitted uses within the ALR which require endorsement by local government bylaws these included accommodation for agri-tourism, one secondary suite, one manufactured home, home occupation, bed and breakfast, operation of a temporary sawmill, biodiversity conservation, passive recreation, heritage, wildlife and scenery viewing purposes, open land park, breeding pets or operating a kennel, education and research facilities, production and development of biological products used in integrated pest management programs, aggregate extraction, telecommunications equipment, unpaved airstrip or helipad, production, storage and application of Class A compost,

ecological reserve, park, protected areas, wildlife management area and a recreation reserve. It was noted that some of these uses may be of interest to Columbia Valley residents, and provide an opportunity to expand business opportunities within the ALR lands. APC members may want to consider whether the OCP policy should endorse specific uses to be expanded and/or offered in the Columbia Valley through future zoning amendments.

Approaches to Agriculture & Viability

As a recent draft OCP, Electoral Area 'F' was shown as an example. Staff explained how some policies are specific to that Electoral Area and others are general in nature. This is done to ensure the OCP is consistent with ALC policies and legislation. The following are potential approaches discussed by the APC:

Agriculture Plan

An agricultural plan is done in partnership with the Province, local farm industries and Regional District staff. This would provide a more in-depth examination of agriculture in Columbia Valley and create a plan specific to this area. Discussion centered on the possibility of an Agricultural Plan being created and APC members felt that the OCP may be able to achieve the same outcomes as an agricultural plan. However, as discussion proceeded throughout the evening, if an agricultural plan is investigated it should address: challenges berry producers have with deer, re-examine soil capabilities, ALR boundaries and agri-tourism options.

Criteria for Non-Farm Use

Flexible land use options are considered necessary for farms to be viable. This is especially true during the low income periods farmers face. APC and community members want to remain on their farms but struggle as the industry changes or readjusts, as is evident with the blueberry and hog industries. Staff explained temporary use permits for industrial and commercial operations and time limitations of such a permit of 2 years with opportunity to consider a onetime renewal. This type of permit could provide a level of flexibility while maintaining agriculture capability of a farm. It was stressed a non-farm use application is needed and the use should not involve investment in structures or other works. APC members suggested farm machinery as a potential use under this criterion. It was also stressed that the process should be streamlined. APC members were generally supportive of this type of approach.

Greater Recognition of Agri-Tourism

Staff presented the concept of Agri-Tourism with a focus on culinary on-farm experience and accessory small scale accommodation (ie. detached cabin) type uses and gave the example of the Circle Farm Tours as a success story in Agassiz. APC members showed support for agri-tourism.

Housing Options

Housing in the ALR has been an ongoing topic at past APC meetings. Mobile homes are considered to be an unfavorable form of housing. Alternative options were discussed including a garden suite or granny suite. Both of these are seen as more favorable and a 'greener' form of housing. Staff explained that these forms of housing may be considered because the overall housing footprint is smaller (almost like a homeplate concept) and may share services. This would allow more land to be used for agricultural purposes. Generally the APC was favorable of this approach if subdivision and homesite severances are not an option, however some members did raise an interest in even greater

subdivision opportunities. APC members felt that the Regional District should permit secondary suites in land use bylaws. APC members felt transition of ownership is an issue that needs to be addressed in the OCP, meaning the ability for family farms to offer housing and/or legal parcels to their children to continue and assist with farm operations.

Subdivision

Current Regional District regulations and successful ALR applications over the past 10 years were reviewed by staff. Some APC members felt subdivision options should be more relaxed, especially for homesite severance applications and those lots divided by roadways. This is seen as a way to retain youth in the community and provide greater opportunities for property owners. However, there was not a consensus within the APC that land fragmentation is the best option for Columbia Valley and it was noted that the ALC ultimately must approve subdivisions and historical decisions by the ALC have not supported further subdivision or fragmentation of land holdings in the area.

APC members were reminded that as more lots, especially 5 acres lots, are introduced the character of the area will change. This could increase the tension between agriculture operations and non-agriculture lots. Options for subdivision are limited because the ALC must approve applications.

Staff will continue attempts to contact the ALC and obtain a letter of response from the ALC on secondary housing options, including homesite severance and subdivisions.

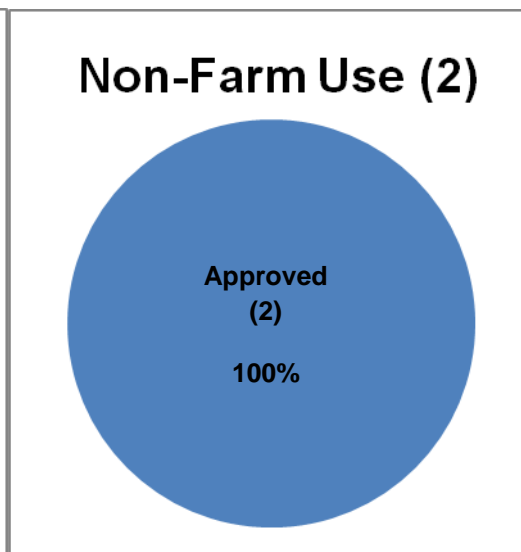
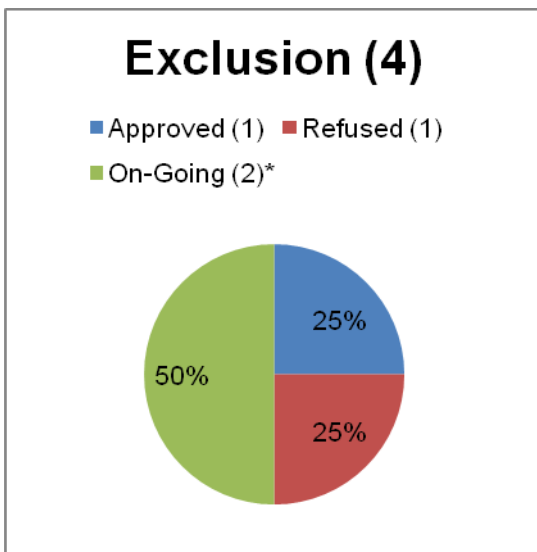
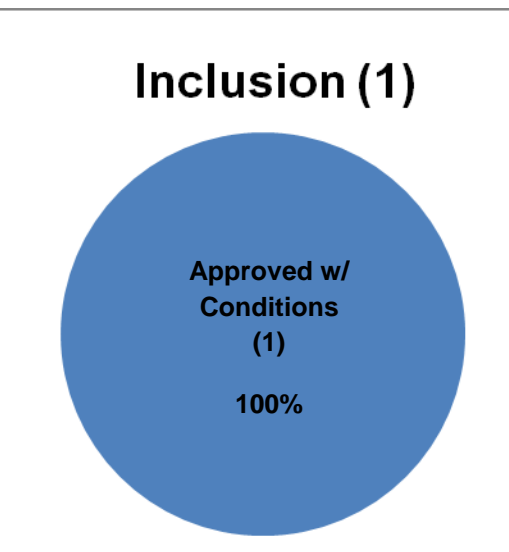
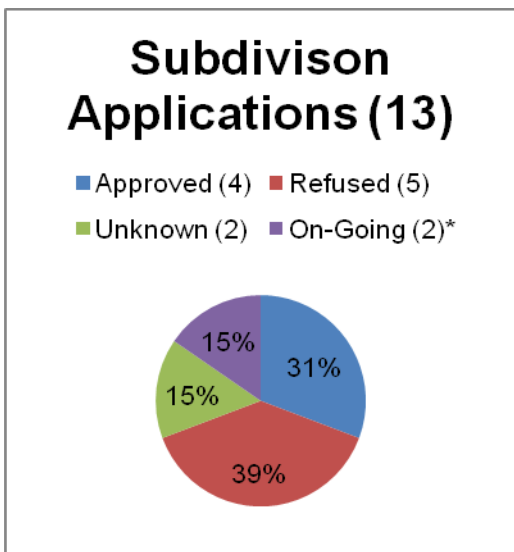
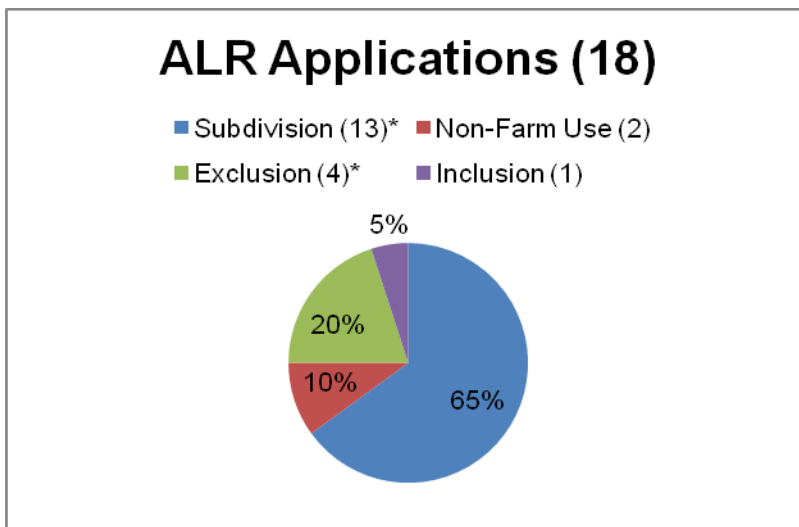
5. Next Meeting

The next APC meeting date is expected to be in January 2011, after draft policies have been drafted by FVRD staff for the OCP and stakeholder groups have been consulted.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:00pm. FVRD staff will prepare draft notes for distribution and public access on the FVRD website.

FVRD ALR Applications Electoral Area “E” 2000-2010



*2 On-Going Applications are both categorized as ALR Exclusion & Subdivision.