



* Subject to Advisory Committee approval *

Agricultural Advisory Committee of Clarington Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Microsoft Teams
or Meeting Room 1C, Municipal Administrative Centre
40 Temperance St., Bowmanville, Ontario
Members Present: Henry Zekveld (Chair), Tom Barrie, Richard Rekker, John Cartwright, Mitch Morawetz (DRFA), Councillor Zwart, Eric Bowman, Jennifer Knox, Lloyd Vandergaast, Brad Found, Craig Rickard, Chris Ennis
Regrets: None
Staff Present: Jane Wang, Sarah Parish, Sylvia Jennings – Planning and Infrastructure Services; Laura Knox, Paul Pirri – Clarington Economic Development
Guests: Allison De Vos, Lori Talling – Invest Durham, Charles Stevens, Ian Parker

1. Welcome and Introductions

H. Zekveld welcomed everyone to the meeting. Committee members, staff and attendees made self-introductions. H. Zekveld read section 6.12 Public Participation and Delegations of the AACC Terms of Reference to provide clarity around the necessary procedures for public participation.

025-005 Moved by Richard Rekker, Seconded by Brad Found

That delegations from Charles Stevens and Ian Parker be added to the Agenda.

Carried

2. Land Acknowledgement Statement

H. Zekveld recited the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

3. Declarations of Interest

None

4. Approval of Minutes of January 9, 2025

025-006 Moved by Jennifer Knox, Seconded by Richard Rekker

That the Minutes of the January 9, 2025 meeting be approved.

Carried

5. Presentations / Delegations

5a. Update on Planning Permissions for Farm Worker Housing – Sarah Parish

S. Parish, from the Municipality's Development Review Division provided an update on the planning permissions for farm worker accommodations. While the planning team was doing additional background research for a proposed Municipally initiated Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment, as described at the January 2025 AACC meeting, a previous interpretation was found from 2022. Former Acting Director of Planning, Faye Langmaid, interpreted temporary, seasonal farm dwellings as normal farm operations, which means that they are subject to the non-residential zoning provisions. This will allow multiple buildings on a property, provided that the lot coverage maximum isn't exceeded, and all other applicable zoning provisions are met. Further changes to the planning permissions will be explored through the upcoming Official Plan Review and Comprehensive Zoning By-law Update.

This former interpretation has been communicated to the By-law and Building Divisions, and a Council Briefing Note has been circulated to Council and other senior and management teams. Farm operators can now submit building permits for work to comply with outstanding Fire Orders. All temporary farm worker accommodations will still be required to comply with the Ontario Fire and Building Code, since these are provincial regulations. Building permits are being expedited, as the Municipality understands the urgency.

S. Jennings reported that the subcommittee, which was formed at the previous AACC meeting, did not meeting because this interpretation was found. This meant that there was no draft Zoning By-law or Official Plan amendment for the subcommittee to comment on.

5b. Delegation on Farm Worker Housing – Charles Stevens and Ian Parker

C. Stevens thanked Sarah and the Municipality for their work resolving the planning matters. He reported that the Municipality has done all that it can on the matter, and it's now a provincial issue, which primarily needs to be addressed through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Solicitor General. C. Stevens has been in contact with local MPPs and Ministers including Todd McCarthy, David Piccini, and Rob Flack. He reported that the issue is due to a change in how farm worker housing is classified in the Ontario Fire Code, which he is advocating to be reversed. He noted that it cost one farmer \$50,000 to bring three trailers up to code, and described the renovations required, and this issue in general is costing agricultural operators millions of dollars. He emphasized that the Committee likely can't affect this further.

C. Stevens answered questions from the Committee related to occupants per bunkhouse and his understanding of other farm operators' ability to come into compliance in time for the upcoming growing season. He noted that most operators will be able to bring migrant workers for the upcoming season, but the available options are expensive. He noted that the fire department is working with operators that are making efforts to come into compliance. He suggested that the fire department should also be coming onto farms to educate migrant workers on fire prevention.

I. Parker supported C. Stevens' delegation and reiterated that the fire orders are the main issue now that the planning issues have been addressed. He noted that if work as per a fire order is not completed, a temporary measures report, stamped by an engineer, may be submitted and approved to allow buildings to be occupied with interim measures. This provides operators more time to fully come into compliance but is also expensive.

5c. Allison De Vos and Lori Talling – Growing Agri-Food Durham

L. Talling and A. De Vos from Invest Durham presented an update to the Committee on the Growing Agri-Food Durham 5 Year Action Plan. During consultation with the Committee while drafting the plan, Invest Durham committed to reporting back to the Committee annually.

L. Talling and A. De Vos described activities completed and planned related to the 10 goals of the Plan:

- Advertising campaigns put on for local food week, farm to fork dining, and “Gather at the Farm”
- A farm tour was hosted for municipal staff to educate them on a variety of farm activities
- Worked with the northern Durham municipalities to streamline permissions for agricultural-related and on-farm diversified uses
- Advocated for agricultural infrastructure at the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority
- Worked to attract an abattoir
- Hosted agricultural leadership workshops
- Partnered with agricultural organizations to expand agricultural knowledge in the community and Durham councils
- Partnered with Durham College and tech companies to develop new agri-tech
- Partnered with Durham College to expand urban agriculture

Committee members commended Invest Durham's work and asked questions regarding their non-agricultural work. H. Zekveld thanked them for their presentation.

5d. Paul Pirri and Laura Knox - Clarington Economic Development

P. Pirri and L. Knox presented an update on the Clarington Economic Development team's work. Their new action plan was approved in January 2025, with three key goals: investment readiness, strengthening local sectors and adopting best practices. Agriculture is listed as a sector strength. They reviewed their background and roles in the team. They are currently creating marketing materials and policies and advocating for land servicing so that the Municipality is “investment ready.” They noted the long-standing importance of the agricultural industry and that they will be focusing on growing on-farm diversified uses, agri-tech, and agri-tourism.

Committee members noted barriers to supporting farm operators, including poor internet service and “red tape” related to getting permits to host events. P. Pirri noted that if there’s any specific items the Committee would like Economic Development to be working on, to please bring them forward. H. Zekveld thanked them for their presentation.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

6a. T.H.E.E. Farmer’s Parade of Lights

The Farmer’s Parade of Lights was rescheduled due to weather. Attendance was significantly lower, but the parade was still a success. In previous years, attendance has been up to 10,000 people.

025-007 Moved by Jennifer Knox, Seconded by Tom Barrie

That the Agricultural Advisory Committee of Clarington thanks the Municipality, Durham Region Police, and the Works Department for their support of the T.H.E.E. Farmers’ Parade of Light.

Carried

6b. Reporting Hazardous Materials on Farms to Clarington Fire

As discussed at the previous AACC meeting, a previous system farmers used to outline hazardous materials on farms has not been used by Clarington Fire for a number of years. Committee members suggested that the Clarington Fire and Emergency Services department should provide a template that farmers could fill out that would show where hazards are including chemical storage, fuel storage, gas shutoff, and major electrical services.

6c. Request OFA to Examine Fire Code

In response to earlier discussion on this matter, the Committee determined that no further action is required at this time.

6d. Council Farm Tour

Committee members agreed that a Council Farm Tour would be a good opportunity to increase awareness and address concerns from the farming community. T. Barrie noted that in his experience organizing the DAAC Farm tour, it can be difficult to find host farms, although it may be easier with smaller tours of 20 people or less. To increase the number of people who are familiar with agricultural issues, Municipal Staff members could also be invited on the tour.

This item will be brought back to the next meeting to discuss the issues to cover on a tour. Councillor Zwart noted that there may be an issue that technically if four or more members of Council attend an event, it may need to be called a Council meeting. She will investigate with the Clerk department.

Committee members suggested that the Chair’s upcoming Annual AACC Update to Council is also an opportunity to capture the farming community’s concerns.

7. Correspondence, Council Items and Referrals

None.

8. Liaison Reports

8a. Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee – T. Barrie

T. Barrie provided the update. DAAC received the presentation on Growing Agri-Food Durham from Invest Durham. DAAC is working on an updated Ag 101 training for Durham councils. The 2025 Farm Tour will feature Chris Ennis' Kubota operation.

8b. Durham Region Federation of Agriculture

No Report.

8c. Durham Agricultural Economic Development Update – A. De Vos

A. De Vos provided the update. She noted that there is still time to register for the agricultural leadership training and described the upcoming topics.

9. New Business

9a. AACC Annual Report to Council

S. Jennings shared a draft of the AACC Annual Report to Council that will accompany the Chair's delegation. Committee members suggested revisions, and S. Jennings will share the Report with the Committee for additional suggestions.

10. Date of Next Meeting

March 13, 2025

11. Adjournment

025-007 Moved by John Cartwright, Seconded by Brad Found

That the meeting adjourn at 9:31 p.m.

Carried