



Agricultural Advisory Committee of Clarington Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, April 10, 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), John Cartwright, Mitch Morawetz (DRFA),
Councillor Zwart, Eric Bowman, Lloyd Vandergaast, Brad Found,
Craig Rickard, Tom Barrie
Regrets: Richard Rekker, Jennifer Knox, Chris Ennis
Staff Present: Sylvia Jennings, Alicia da Silva, Ajay Kumar Algarsamy, Colin
Davidson, Ed Lisinski – Planning and Infrastructure Services; Ken
Mercer, Steve Burns – Community Services
Guests: Allison De Vos – Invest Durham, Bryan Fairfield – MF Farm
Drainage, James Blair

1. Welcome and Introductions

H. Zekveld welcomed everyone to the meeting. Committee members, staff, and attendees made self-introductions.

2. Land Acknowledgement Statement

H. Zekveld recited the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Approval of Minutes of March 13, 2025

025-008 Moved by Eric Bowman, Seconded by Lloyd Vandergaast.

That the Minutes of the March 13, 2025 meeting be approved.

Carried

5. Presentations / Delegations

5a. Tile Drainage Systems – Bryan Fairfield

Bryan Fairfield from MF Farm Drainage presented to the Committee on the uses and benefits of tile drainage systems on agricultural lands. Due to continued loss of agricultural land, the importance of increasing productivity per acre now that there is less land was emphasized. Tile drainage is a strategy that can help increase crop

yield and agricultural efficiency by controlling the water in a field. According to B. Fairfield approximately 30% of agricultural land in Durham Region is tile drained.

B. Fairfield noted that Tile drainage is essentially a water management system for farm fields. Gravity is used to move excess water away from the field and into nearby waterways, creating a healthy “root zone”, boosting yield, preventing runoff and soil erosion, and extending growing season. Land that is most affected by a high water table or has a disadvantaged soil profile may require tile drainage to be agriculturally productive. Permits and permissions from municipalities and conservation authorities are required to install tile drainage.

B. Fairfield provided an example of the success managing tile drainage permissions is the City of Kawartha Lakes, where most of the land was previously unable to be farmed. A Drainage Superintendent is responsible for coordinating and overseeing permits and permissions.

B. Fairfield discussed challenges to implementing tile drainage systems, including meeting new conservation authority standards. Conservation authorities have delineated wetlands based on aerial surveys. Landowners are required to get permits before doing any alteration where there may be a wetland. To determine if a wetland exists on agricultural land, typically an ecologist and consulting company must be hired. According to B. Fairfield this creates a barrier for farmers seeking to install a tile drainage system. Committee members discussed competing interests between development, agriculture, and the environment. Concerns with a lack of opportunity to maintain or improve productivity were discussed.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

6a. Farm Tour Planning

A working group has been formed to plan an upcoming farm tour. B. Found discussed ideas for an initial farm tour that would be for 2-4 hours on July 17, 2025 at his farm. Invitees could include council, MPs, MPPs, and Municipal staff. Committee members suggested potential topics to be discussed could include conservation and drainage of farmland, the ongoing planning of future developments, emergency service management in rural areas, and migrant housing regulations. A question of potential budget arose for light refreshments at the event. Budget from the Region of Durham or Economic Development may be available. After the initial event, farm tours could be a recurring program. Committee members suggested a well-received first is important to encourage future tours.

Staff will coordinate to determine how to advertise the event and coordinate the guest list. The current aim is for approximately 50 attendees. Farm tour planning will be kept on the agenda for the next AACC meeting.

7. Communications

7a. In the Know Workshop – Free Mental Health Training

Free mental health training will be provided on April 24th from 9am-3pm at the Goodwood Community Centre by the Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing. The training is meant to provide those in the agriculture industry training in identifying signs in peers about mental health.

7b. Updates from Council or Planning and Development Committee Meetings

H. Zekveld and M. Zwart described various updates from the Planning and Development Committee meeting and subsequent Council meeting.

- Councillor Woo has a point of contact at CN Rail if committee members have concerns.
- Mayor Foster passed along thanks for the valuable advice that is given to Council from the AACC.
- Councillor Elhajjeh inquired about Committee knowledge on beekeeping practices. This matter appears to have been resolved.
- Concerns with the building department were raised at the Planning and Development Committee. A staff member from Building Services to future Committee meeting to build dialogue.

A reminder was given to Committee members of Procedural By-Law Section 9 to ensure rules of debate and conduct are being followed.

An opportunity to invite Mayor Foster to a future Committee meeting was discussed. Committee members are encouraged to bring potential questions or topics for discussion with the Mayor to next month's meeting.

8. Liaison Reports

8a. Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee – T. Barrie

The Region of Durham is providing funding for Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) projects including soil conservation. The Region's consultant, WSP, will provide a final North Durham On-Farm Diversified Use Study report to the Committee soon.

8b. Durham Region Federation of Agriculture – M. Morawetz

No update.

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

The North Durham On-Farm Diversified Use Study is being presented to local councils in the next month. On April 28, high school culinary students will tour butcher and meat packing facilities to encourage careers in the field. A. De Vos offered support for farm tour planning. Committee members who would like her assistance are encouraged to contact her by email.

9. New Business

9a. Clarington Business Department Questions

In response to questions from Committee members about building permits, the Deputy Chief Building Official will attend a future meeting for an open dialogue. The Committee suggested topics or questions. Committee members suggested additional training in agricultural areas could be beneficial.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, May 8, 2025

11. Adjournment

025-009 Moved by E. Bowman, Seconded by T. Barrie

That the meeting adjourn at 9:24pm.

Carried