



Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

Minutes

Meeting #: 14
Date: June 6, 2024
Time: 10 am
Location: Ben Franklin Place, The Chamber, Main Floor, 101
Centrepointe Drive, and by electronic participation

Present: Chair George Darouze, Vice-Chair Clarke Kelly, Councillor
David Brown, Councillor Matt Luloff

Absent: Councillor Catherine Kitts

1. Notices and meeting information for meeting participants and the public
Notices and meeting information are attached to the agenda and minutes, including: availability of simultaneous interpretation and accessibility accommodations; *in camera* meeting procedures; information items not subject to discussion; personal information disclaimer for correspondents and public speakers; notices regarding minutes; and remote participation details.
Accessible formats and communication supports are available, upon request.
Except where otherwise indicated, reports requiring Council consideration will be presented to Council on Wednesday, June 12, 2024 in Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee Report 14.
The deadline to register by phone to speak, or submit written comments or visual presentations is 4 pm on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, and the deadline to register by email to speak is 9:00 am on Thursday, June 6, 2024.
These “Summary Minutes” indicate the disposition of items and actions taken at the meeting. This document does not include all of the text that will be included in the full Minutes, such as the record of written and oral submissions. Recorded votes and dissents contained in the Summary Minutes are draft until the full Minutes of the meeting are confirmed by the

Committee. The draft of the full Minutes (for confirmation) will be published with the agenda for the next regular Committee meeting and, once confirmed, will replace this document.

2. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were filed.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

3.1 ARAC Minutes 13 - Thursday, May 2, 2024

Carried

4. Infrastructure and Water Services

4.1 Tompkins Diversion Municipal Drain – Appointment of Engineer

ACS2024-IWS-WL-0005 - Osgoode (20)

Report recommendation(s)

That the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee recommend Council appoint Mr. Andy Robinson, P. Eng of Robinson Consultants Inc. as the Engineer of record to prepare a report under Section 78(1) of the *Drainage Act* to inform Council on the current status of the Tompkins Diversion Municipal Drain and whether one or more of the projects listed under subsection 78(1.1) is required for the better use, maintenance or repair of the drainage works or lands or roads.

Carried

4.2 Blaser Municipal Drain – Appointment of Engineer

ACS2024-IWS-WL-0004 - Osgoode (20)

Report recommendation(s)

That the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee recommend Council appoint Mr. Andy Robinson, P. Eng of Robinson Consultants Inc. as the Engineer of record to prepare a report under Section 8(1) of the *Drainage Act* in response to a petition received under Section 4 of the *Drainage Act*, as described in this report.

Carried

5. In Camera Items

There were no *in camera* items.

6. Information Previously Distributed

- 6.1 ROMA 2024 Conference Delegate Report (Riley Brockington)
ACS2024-OCC-CCS-0051

7. Open Mic Session

There were no open mic session.

8. Notices of Motions (For Consideration at Subsequent Meeting)

There were no Notices of Motion.

9. Inquiries

There were no Inquiries.

10. Other Business

- 10.1 Motion - Councillor Brown - Living Snow Fence Pilot Program

Motion No. ARAC 2024-14-01

The Committee heard from the following delegations, in support, prior to considering the motion:

1. William van Geest
2. Andrea Sissons and Pam Chiles from Rural Woodlands Ottawa

Following questions of the delegations the Committee carried the motion as presented.

Moved by D. Brown

That the Rules of Procedure be Suspended to consider this motion such that it may rise to Council in a timely manner.

WHEREAS trees provide a wide range of benefits to the environment, including by sequestering atmospheric carbon, providing habitat space, reducing erosion, and more; and

WHEREAS planting trees and preserving Ottawa's tree canopy are priorities for the City as established in the Climate Change Master Plan; and

WHEREAS in rural Ottawa, artificial snow fences are commonly installed in the winter to reduce wind and blowing snow on rural roads; and

WHEREAS according to the Ottawa Fatal Collision Review Committee 2020 annual report, rural Ottawa has the highest percentage of fatal collisions within the City, representing 37% of all fatal in Ottawa collisions despite having only 9% of all reportable collisions; and

WHEREAS the installation of winter snow fences provides significant benefits for drivers' safety during the winter in rural Ottawa; and

WHEREAS the cost of installing wood slat snow fences in 2018 in Ottawa was approximately \$8.14 per meter plus maintenance costs; and

WHEREAS wood slat snow fences can create potential risks to farm equipment when fence components are not fully removed from the site; and

WHEREAS other municipalities make use of trees and shrubs as "living snow fences;" and

WHEREAS once established, living snow fences are far more effective than artificial snow fences at providing safety benefits; and

WHEREAS living snow fences could play a significant role in improving the natural environment and character of rural Ottawa, including through sequestering roughly 5.5 tonnes of carbon per km of windbreak; and

WHEREAS according to data from Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, windbreaks can reduce wind erosion on farms and can improve crop yields by up to 15%, meaning that these living snow fences more than offset the reduction of arable land that is necessary for their installation; and

WHEREAS the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has estimated that similar living snow fences return ecosystem benefits worth \$1,023/hectare, including through atmospheric regulation, pollinator services, reduced soil runoff, habitat creation and protection, improved water quality, and more; and

WHEREAS other municipalities in Ontario – including Peel Region, Dufferin, Grand River, Wellington County, and more – are running programs that provide incentives for living snow fences; and

WHEREAS the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) has indicated an interest in administering a pilot program for living snow fences; and

WHEREAS the RVCA and other conservation authorities already administer programs such as the Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP), which provides grants and annual land retirement payments to property owners who undertake stewardship projects like windbreaks; and

WHEREAS the RVCA has prepared a detailed proposal, in partnership with neighbouring conservation authorities and in consultation with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; and

WHEREAS the RVCA has indicated that the current funding envelope under the RCWP is sufficient to support a modest pilot program; and

WHEREAS there are a wide range of funding sources that the City could explore leveraging for the purpose of providing incentives for a living snow fence program, such as ALUS Canada, which is a national, non-profit charitable organization that partners with local organizations and community leaders to implement nature-based solutions on farmland, including through the planting of trees and windbreaks as living snow fences; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City engage with the RVCA and other conservation authorities to design a living snow fence grant program for rural Ottawa on a pilot basis with the goal of delivering this program during 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the program be designed and structured in such a way as to compensate landowners for allowing for trees, shrubs, and other natural features to be planted on their property so as to provide for a living snow fence and some natural habitat space; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that compensation provided to landowners be set at a rate that is appropriate given the costs of forgoing the land's productive use; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that benefiting properties be eligible for a maximum of \$15,000 per property followed by an annual land retirement payment consistent with the corn row fencing program at 2.5 times market value of unharvested crops for a minimum of 10 years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the program be structured in such a way that the City will be responsible for covering program costs and the conservation authorities will administer the program (including with respect to grant allocation, planting, and maintaining new features) on behalf of the City; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, prior to pilot program implementation, staff be directed to survey how other municipalities throughout Canada operate similar programs so as to use lessons from those municipalities when designing the pilot; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that initial funding for this pilot project be drawn from existing funding under the Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that staff be directed to engage with a wide a range of government and non-governmental partners, including organizations such as ALUS, in order to secure additional funding for the program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City staff report back to Council through the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on lessons learned from the pilot in Q4 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that as part of this report, staff recommend whether the living snow fence pilot program should be expanded into a permanent City program.

Carried

11. Adjournment

Next Meetings

Thursday, July 4, 2024 - Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

The meeting adjourned at 10:19 am.

Original signed by K. Crozier,
Committee Coordinator

Original signed by Councillor G.
Darouze, Chair