
TO: Paul Thompson
Manager of Long Range Planning

DATE: October 18, 2013

FROM: Greg Keller
Senior Planner

FILE: 0360 20 AAC

SUBJECT: Proposed AAP 2014 - 2016 Action Plan

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Board endorsement of the proposed 2014 - 2016 Agricultural Area Plan Action Plan.

BACKGROUND

Following the adoption of the Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) by the Board on October 23rd, 2012, the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) met to review and discuss the Action Items identified in the AAP. Action Items represent specific recommended actions for implementation of the AAP's goals and objectives intended to support and remove barriers to agriculture/aquaculture in the region.

The result of the AAC's review was to narrow down the 128 Action Items contained in the AAP to 68 prioritized Action Items, which represent those that were of highest priority to consider within the first work plan.

In the analysis, staff considered which Action Items clearly fell within the RDN's core business area, which Action Items could be considered at a later date should the Board wish to include new activities within work plans, which Action Items may require the RDN to consider expanding its current service levels, and which Action Items are most appropriately addressed by other agencies and organizations. Action Items were then reviewed based on the cost, impact on RDN staff and resources, and available in-house expertise.

The Action Items were then grouped into six projects based on similar characteristics and what could reasonably be considered within the first work plan. These six proposed projects form the basis of the proposed 2014-2016 Action Plan and address a number of Action Items within a range of RDN Resource Requirements and AAC priority levels.

Following staff's analysis, a draft Action Plan was presented to the AAC at its September 27th meeting. The AAC received and endorsed the Action Plan which is attached as Attachment No. 1 for the Board's consideration.

DISCUSSION

The proposed 2014 – 2016 Action Plan includes six projects. Some can be completed with existing staff resources and are already part of day to day operations while others could be completed with existing staff and resources if deemed a priority by the board and existing resources are allocated. A summary of the six projects included in the proposed Action Plan is included below.

Proposed 2014-2016 Action Plan Projects

Project 1: Bylaw and Policy Updates (Addressed 14 Action Items)

A comprehensive review of all RDN Bylaws and policies related to agriculture and aquaculture to remove obstacles and barriers and ensure consistency.

Project 2: AAC Terms of Reference (Addresses 2 Action Items)

A review of the AAC Terms of Reference to consider allowing the AAC to provide comments on all applications to the Agricultural Land Commission and to consider adopting the Agricultural Land Commission's policy of rejecting applications that are not consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy, Official Community Plans, and Zoning Bylaws.

Project 3: Agricultural Promotion and Economic Development (Addresses 18 Action Items)

A multi-faceted approach to exploring the way in which agricultural information is distributed, promoting agriculture in the region, and encouraging responsible economic development.

Project 4: On-farm water-related infrastructure (Addresses 2 Action Items)

An investigation of the construction of on-farm water-related infrastructure to determine if there are barriers and opportunities that may have an impact on farmers and to consider what role the RDN could play in addressing any issues or opportunities that arise.

Project 5: Invasive Species Management (Addresses 1 Action Item)

To gain a better understanding of invasive species management in the region and consider what role the RDN could play.

Project 6: Composting Facility (Addresses 3 Action Items)

An exploration of composting and the nutrient requirements of the agriculture and aquaculture industries to determine if there is demand and support for a communal method of composting that ties in with existing organic waste composting facilities.

Of the projects identified above, projects 1 and 2 are well positioned for immediate action. In particular, Project 1 involves amendments to RDN policies and bylaws that could have significant short-term

positive effects on agriculture and aquaculture in the region. In addition, this project represents Action Items that are completely within the RDN's control and could result in action on the ground in the near future. Changes to policies and bylaws could directly benefit the agriculture and aquaculture industries.

Projects 3 – 6 require further investigation as the initial step is understanding what other agencies and organizations are currently doing to address the issue and what role the RDN could play. It is intended that these projects be further refined and reconsidered in more detail in future work plans once more information is available.

Should the Board adopt the proposed 2014-2016 Action Plan, staff will include the identified projects and Action Items in annual work plans as time and resources permit. Action Items, which remain at the end of 2016, will be brought forward for reconsideration in subsequent Agricultural Area Plan Implementation Action Plans.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board endorse the attached 2014-2016 Agricultural Area Plan Action Plan.
2. That the Board not endorse the attached 2014-2016 Agricultural Area Plan Action Plan and provide staff with further direction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No immediate impact on financial resources is expected as a result of the proposed Action Plan. However, should the Board endorse the attached Action Plan, staff will consider the identified projects in future work plans and budgets. The Board will have an opportunity to consider staff and resource implications in the preparation of future work plans and budget deliberations.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The AAP is a regional plan that contains a number of recommended actions intended to encourage and facilitate positive change and investment within the agriculture and aquaculture industries across the region. The proposed Action Plan outlines the actions necessary to implement the AAP which is in keeping with the Board's Strategic Plan which supports implementation of regional plans with action on-the-ground. Implementation of the AAP is consistent with the Strategic Plan Economic Viability Objective which states *"to strengthen the local agriculture economy so that local food systems are productive and viable, and contribute to the cultural identity of the region"*. Taking action on the AAP would also help the Board seek out opportunities to advance sustainable approaches to the agriculture and aquaculture industries.

The proposed AAP Action Plan is well aligned with the direction provided by the Board's Strategic Plan.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

Following the adoption of the AAP, the next step is to consider implementation of some of the plan's recommended actions. The proposed 2014 - 2016 Action Plan addresses 40 of the 68 prioritized Action Items through six projects that if completed would result in significant progress being achieved.

Implementation of the AAP is consistent with the Board's Strategic Plan and could result in action on-the-ground and a positive contribution to the agriculture and aquaculture industries in the region.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive and endorse the proposed Agricultural Area Plan 2014-2016 Action Plan as Attached.

Report Writer

General Manager Concurrence

Manager Concurrence

CAO Concurrence