



Some Ideas!

Agricultural Advisory Committees

Agricultural Advisory Committees (AACs) around the province are proving to be an effective way for local governments to link with their farm and ranch communities. Each AAC, however, functions a bit differently. As more AACs are appointed and their years of experience grow, there are some common factors that can contribute to a well run committee providing useful advice to their council or regional board.

Here are a few basics that can play a role in adding to a committee's effectiveness.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. A local government has to make a clear commitment to the AAC ... it is *their* committee.
2. It is important to develop a clear "terms of reference" for the committee, while at the same time providing for a degree of flexibility in the role of the committee to meet local needs. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands has developed a model terms of reference that may be of assistance.
3. The AAC should establish guidelines concerning conflict of interest. If established at the outset, new members will clearly understand situations, where they should absence themselves from discussion. Where applicable, the guidelines listed under the Community Charter should be followed.

AAC APPOINTMENTS

4. Appointments to the committee should represent committed and progressive members of the farm or ranch community.
5. An effort should be made to draw from a cross-section of commodity types and industry associations that are important within the municipality or regional district in which the AAC serves.
6. When forming an AAC, a local government may wish to draw upon a local Ministry staff person, a local farmers' institute or other agricultural group for advice on the membership of the AAC. This can be a helpful way to 'get in touch' with the agriculture community.
7. Having a municipal councillor or regional board director appointed to sit on the AAC as a council / board liaison person can contribute to building strong relationships between the AAC and council or the regional board.
8. Consider designating a member of the agricultural community as Chair of the committee as this can help lead to fruitful discussion and effective decision making amongst the committee members.

INTER-RELATED ISSUES

9. If the agricultural area includes other major land uses such as rural residential, forestry or recreation, consider including other representatives on the committee from these interests.
10. Where there are inter-related issues and a local government has several committees, consider having joint meetings or "cross-over" committee members. For example, if a strong relationship exists between environmental and agricultural issues, a person may be appointed to sit on both the Agricultural and Environmental Committees. Other examples where joint meetings or cross-over members may be considered include planning advisory, parks and recreation, transportation, healthy community or economic development committees or commissions.

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
STAFF
ASSISTANCE

11. Dedicating a local government staff person to assist the committee can help ensure the committee functions smoothly. The staff person could help distribute agendas and other information in a timely fashion, book meeting rooms, provide background information, record minutes or notes of decisions by the committee and forward them to council or the board in an appropriate manner.

MINISTRY & ALC
ASSISTANCE

12. The role of the Ministry and Agricultural Land Commission staff should be considered. Some committees have invited local Ministry and Commission staff to sit on the AAC as non-voting staff resource persons. Others call upon them to attend meetings periodically, depending upon the topic under consideration, or to sit on an agricultural area plan steering committee. The Ministry and the Commission will make every effort to assist the Committee in any way considered appropriate by the AAC and the local government they represent.

MEETING
SCHEDULES

13. Farming and ranching are time sensitive both from a daily and seasonal perspective. The AAC, when determining its meeting schedule, should carefully consider the most appropriate meeting times. There may be certain times of the year (e.g. planting/harvesting) when meetings are intentionally less frequent.

ROLE OF
THE AAC

14. In some cases, the role of the AAC largely consists of providing advice on official community plan or zoning bylaw amendments and applications involving the ALR that are forwarded by council or the board. Other committees may also assist with a variety of other tasks such as: supporting agricultural awareness efforts; functioning as a steering committee to aid in developing an agricultural area plan; reporting on drainage or irrigation issues; commenting on local agriculture-recreation relationships or assisting with the development of other policy initiatives associated with agriculture.

15. An AAC is appointed to provide clear, timely and well thought out advice on agriculture and related topics to their council or regional board. It must be clearly understood that the AAC is an advisory committee of their local government. Councils and Regional Boards, however, are often faced with difficult and complex decisions involving a number of community interests. As a result, there will be times when an AAC's advice is only partially followed or not acted upon at all.

16. In the case of new AACs, it may take time for the committee to "find its feet" and for council or the board to feel comfortable with its new committee. It is important for all concerned to show a high degree of patience.



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