



# REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NORTH OKANAGAN

## REGIONAL AGRI-HUB WORKING GROUP

Thursday June 8, 2023  
Boardroom – 9848 Aberdeen Road, Coldstream, BC  
6:00 p.m.

## REGULAR MINUTES

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<b>Members:</b>	R. Smailes	RDNO
	L. Frank	RDNO
	A. Hopkins (electronic)	Director, Electoral Area F
	R. Fairbairn (electronic)	Director, Electoral Area D
	C. Fraser	Mayor, Township of Spallumcheen
	G. Popoff	Councilor, Township of Spallumcheen
	S. Meggait	Meat Producer
	D. Harvey	Retired Accountant
	P. Wendt	Poultry Producer
	L. Blakeway	Land to Table
	E. Davidson (electronic)	Meadow Valley Meats
	J. Funk (electronic)	Structural Engineer
	R. van Daltsen	Dairy Producer
	C. Haible (electronic)	Mushroom Producer
	M. Hodge	Hay & Cattle Farmer
	A. Gunner	Agricultural Economist
	A. Mohammad	Fruit Producer
	L. Horsfield	Community Futures
<b>Absent:</b>	L. French	Rancher
	M. Broersma	Dairy Farmer

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### CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### 1. Introductions of Working Group Members

The Agri-Hub Working Group members introduced themselves and provided a brief overview of their involvement in the food production, processing or agricultural industry.

## 2. Project Introduction

RDNO Staff and Mayor Fraser gave a history of the site and the Agri-Hub Feasibility Study that was done by the Township.

## 3. Working Group Terms of Reference

RDNO Staff called for nominations of Chair of the Agri-Hub Working Group. Gerry Popoff nominated Christine Fraser, Christine Fraser accepted the nomination. There being no further nominations, Christine Fraser was declared Chair of the Agri-Hub Working Group by acclamation.

Christine Fraser assumed the Chair seat.

RDNO Staff called for nominations of Vice Chair of the Agri-Hub Working Group. Dennis Harvey was nominated and accepted the nomination. There being no further nominations, Dennis Harvey was declared Vice Chair of the Agri-Hub Working Group by acclamation.

RDNO Staff gave an overview of the Terms of Reference of the Agri-Hub Working Group and highlighted the following main points:

- Ensure all communications go through the RDNO, the Chair or Vice Chair.
- The Working Group discussed having an informal process for delegations – Members are to recommend delegations to staff and the Chair to be added to the agenda.

## 4. Regional Agri-Hub Terms of Reference

RDNO Staff gave an overview of the reasons why an agri-hub is being considered within the region.

The Working Group discussed the following:

- Who owns the site? The Township of Spallumcheen.
- Has any Geotech work been done? There has been a lot done privately, not a lot from the Township.
- Discussion on the potential for a Branch line near/on the property to load and unload goods, it was acknowledged that such a use would need ALC approval.
- Will the ALC consider various uses on an application-by-application basis or do they want an entire site plan for the area? The ALC would like certainty that the proposed uses will benefit agriculture and not morph into a different commercial use. The Committee will need to explore different ways to achieve the certainty associated with such an application.
- Is there historical agriculture on the property, the well logs show it was owned by a meat packing plant. (60's/70's). Current beekeeper and cattle grazing.
- Discussion on the soil classification of the property

## 5. Business Development Planning Process

The Working Group discussed the following:

- The importance of engaging with experts, a resolution was passed:

*That RDNO staff request the \$30,000 of project funding for the Regional Agri-Hub Planning Process from the Township of Spallumcheen to be utilized on experts for facilitation and business plan development.*

- The goal is to present a strong business case along with the specific applications to the ALC for approval.
- Feasibility Study – will need to carry out a review on what other hubs have done through their process. Other hubs are more community-focused, and small, not very many are helping mainstream agriculture. Are any doing meat processing? Use those examples.
- Ministry has hired someone to study some of these agri-hubs: many are used by caterers.
- Land to Table is trying to figure out where the market opportunities are for small-scale fruit and veg producers. Their initial report is complete and available for review [https://landtotablenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/North-Okanagan-Market-Opportunity-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://landtotablenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/North-Okanagan-Market-Opportunity-Report_Final.pdf)
- Look into the business model of other agri-hubs: co-op, fee for service? Municipally owned?
- Opportunity to build larger scale, more than enough cold storage for multiple commodities.
- Marketing end gets done by those who have direct contacts. It needs to be a chain for the smaller producers, all pieces need to work together to make it feasible.
- Processing and refrigeration came out on top of the feasibility study – build the business case around that.
- The importance of being prepared if grant funding is announced for small-scale meat producers, anticipate lots of funding coming out for Agriculture.
- The Butcher Hub application has been worked on and will be submitted for the second intake; combining with other projects within the province. A Slaughter truck that can be repurposed as a utility truck that would work with the new Farmgate license structure. Uninspected up to 25 animal units with farmgate+. Good fit to apply for a small modular cut and wrap facility with cold storage. Prove demand, showing that this needs to happen, minimal infrastructure can be repurposed or moved to other communities.
- There is a lot of room for growth with local grocery stores. A lot of support for local products but not sure the rubber is hitting the road. A lot of advocacy can be done as an important part.
- Discussion on using a taxation model to pay for the agri-hub. Is there support for putting tax dollars toward supporting farm infrastructure?
- Economic Development, skills and training need to be a part of this could fail without business or human resources training.
- Community Futures (REACH) opportunity to assist with accelerating business through this hub. Reach new markets, diversify, and expand.
- Where is there market opportunity, school food – Regional districts support feeding

schools, hospitals, etc.

- Meat and refrigeration studies – how much does electricity cost for refrigeration: cooling it at +40,
- Consider solar with a long-term approach to payback. Small business doesn't have that option. Good relationship between solar and refrigeration. Questions regarding funding for clean energy, grants?
- Ideal for lots of small growers without food storage and the ability to store and know the shelf life then the product can be marketed.

## 6. Next Steps

The Working Group discussed the following:

- Requests for a workshop so we don't miss anything in terms of facility design and needs.
- The need for specialized discussions based on the different needs of different sectors.
- Township has some additional funds for the RDNO to hire out the Business Plan Development.
- Ensuring there is buy-in across the entire food chain.
- The feasibility study highlighted the need for an abattoir facility, dairy processing facility and cold storage.
- Distribution needs must be included in the conversation.
- Questions regarding what is included with typical cold storage – do they offer shipping, or does the farmer line up delivery to the end user?
- Relationship has to be built with potential processors. This area would be competing with another dairy processing area.
- Questions regarding a facility for transportation, equipment storage, wash bay for tankers that haul milk.
- Large farms are unable to move here with their farms because there is not access to processing.
- Results said they want to access wholesale markets if the market is there and if someone is willing to help them distribute. A lot of these markets require Canada Gap certification: food safety traceability. A processing facility would likely need to be GAP certified. Retail grocers require GAP certification. Grocery store shelves meet food safety guidelines. The GAP certification process is onerous for small producers to get through, and it is per commodity, pushing people away from diversifying their farms.
- Discussion regarding seed drying facilities; closest is south. Local farmers can't dry their seeds.
- Discussion on the former Helmut Sausage Kitchen facility on Silver star Road.
- Butcher Hub network – interesting to get producers and processors in a room – a few hours talking about how they can work together and find missing pieces. Building a network between those groups.
- Discussion on cross docking – a facility to drop products and a truck comes and picks it up (distribution hub). Eliminate a sales market and undertake cross-docking to make the hub more viable.
- Workshop format? Conversation on different needs, and sectors. There is a

desire to hold individual workshops based on commodity group.

- Concept of having a sector-specific value chain, different players along the value chain with someone who explains value chain structure, value, and governance. With an experienced facilitator. From producers, processors, distributors, marketers, and retailers.
- Go outside the Working Group for those workshops
- Processors, attracting processors and representatives from each industry.
- Focus on priority facilities, then review the market and economics, and the final step is the business plan.
- Site design, layout? Co-locate solar farm
- Discussion on the potential need for a non-profit partnership to access grant funding.
- Turn minds to meat processing waste - the bigger we go, the easier it is to ship off to Vancouver. Small scale could be on-site composting or other composters in the area.
- Discussion regarding non-profits and helping to buy local produce when in season.
- Discussion on the size of cold storage that would be needed

#### Summary of Action Items - RECOMMENDATION

That RDNO staff request the \$30,000 of project funding for the Regional Agri-Hub Planning Process from the Township of Spallumcheen to be utilized on experts for facilitation and business plan development.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.