

## News Bites

### Langford takes actions on Agricultural Land

Food policy and long-term planning are important pieces in creating regional food security. A key strategy in planning around food is the maintaining and enhancing the vitality of local farmlands.

On October 16<sup>th</sup> at a City of Langford Council Meeting, Mayor Stewart Young announced a new policy surrounding Langford's agricultural lands. The new policy states that "every development will contribute, at the time of rezoning, \$500/residential unit and/or \$500/3000 sq. feet of commercial floor area, to an Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) Acquisition Fund."

In an article printed in the Times Colonist on October 18<sup>th</sup>, Young explained that, "most often people buy ALR with the intention of trying to get it out for development," and that the first step in the process, is "a municipal assessment... because when the ALR was established in early 1970's, the province used a broad brush in designating what was agricultural land. Much of it has never been farmed and never will be farmed because of rocky or marshy conditions or steep slopes".

Langford City Planner, Leah Fraser, has told us that they are still quite early in the process, but have contracted a professional agronomist to undertake an assessment of all currently designated Agriculture Lands. This assessment should be completed by April. The next step will be to create an Agriculture Land Management Strategy.

Bea McKenzie is one concerned community member. She has lived in Langford for many years, and first took an interest in agricultural land ever since the concept first came about in 1974. At this time, she had a young child, and it just made sense to her to be conscious of farmland. "Back in the 70's, developers wanted to put houses on nice, flat land," Bea recollects. "The land slowly erodes away when no one stands up against it. But it's hard to get everyone motivated," she continues. "Now, they want more farm land because there is so little left—they feel they might as well as preserve it."

Ray Zimmerman, a volunteer for Sea to Sea Green Belt Society has developed maps that show the distribution of ALR from 1974 to present. His maps show that there is 30% less farmland in Langford than there was in 1974. To view the ALR Maps [www.sierraclub.ca/bc/programs/communities/ALR\\_maps.htm](http://www.sierraclub.ca/bc/programs/communities/ALR_maps.htm)

The efforts of the Langford Council and also to the Municipality of Saanich with its acquisition and support of Haliburton Farm ([www.Haliburtonfarm.org](http://www.Haliburtonfarm.org)) are examples of possible strategies that Municipal Governments can take to protect valuable food lands. "Some local governments are trying interesting approaches –the results could be beneficial, but it is really up to ensuring public support," Linda Geggie insists. "Ray and Bea are examples of people in the community who are participating in the process. It will be important for individuals, local businesses, developers, planners and organizations, such as the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) to work together to balance the needs of a growing region with the fundamental needs of ensuring a safe and secure food supply". Hopefully this initiative on the ALR by the

Municipality of Langford will indeed be a step towards this goal, and set a precedent for the other municipalities in the CRD.

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