



To: Tim Tanton
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: September 9, 2019

From: Eymond Toupin
Director of Infrastructure Services

Re: **Sandown Agricultural Lands – Long Term Operation**

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- 1) Direct staff to engage a communications consultant to develop a strategic communication plan to inform the public and obtain their feedback on a range of options for the long term operation and use of the Sandown agricultural lands; and
- 2) Direct staff to continue to maintain the Sandown agricultural lands through 2020.

BACKGROUND:

A Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) was initially issued for the long term operation of the Sandown agricultural lands as per Council's direction at the March 25th Committee of Whole.

The initial RFEI closed on Friday May 3rd, 2019 and one response was received before the deadline. The Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture Expression of Interest was submitted by Jen Rashleigh and Lindsey Boyle. Subsequent to the close of the initial RFEI, a proposal was submitted in early June by Hamish Crawford, founder of The Roost Farm Centre. These two proposals were considered by Council at the June 24th Committee of the Whole and at the July 15th Regular Meeting where Council resolved the following

272 *That Council direct staff to open the RFEI long term operator until the end of August 2019.*

The RFEI was reposted on the District and BC Bids websites with a close date of August 30th. Four submissions were received before the deadline as follows:

- 1) Addendum to the original May 1st Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture EOI submission from Jen Rashleigh and Lindsey Boyle
- 2) Proposed offer of lease of the lands referred to as "Sandown" submitted by John Upward, agent for the proponents
- 3) Proposed lease of property at the former Sandown racetrack submitted by Gary Sanga of Prevost Farms Ltd located in Duncan, BC
- 4) Sandown Conceptual Proposal submitted by Veryan Graham

This report presents and considers the four proposals received as well as other possible options considered at the June 24th Committee of the Whole for next steps and the long term operation of the Sandown farm.

DISCUSSION:

Option 1: Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture (SCRA) – Addendum to original May 1st Submission

The original Expression of Interest was based on Vision Sandown and on the Sandown Community Farm Plan. It proposed to take a phased approach to development by first assessing and building the soils on the site, developing an appropriate farm plan and bringing the land under production as it becomes available.

In their Addendum, the proponents indicated they have advanced the creation of a non-profit Society, and assembled a Board, and Farm Advisory. The Founding Board includes the following members:

- Dr. Ann Eastman former Manager for Emerging Sectors and Senior Manager for Innovation for the BC Ministry of Agriculture
- Dr. DeLisa Lewis Operator of Green Fire Farm (Cowichan Valley) and Assistant Professor Faculty Land and Food Systems (UBC)
- Ian Bruce Executive Coordinator for Peninsula Streams Society
- Ted Sheldon former Renewable Energy Advisor for the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines and Community Climate Action Advisor for the BC Ministry of the Environment
- Lauren Searle Marketing and Community Relations Manager

The Farm Advisory Board includes Dr. DeLisa Lewis, Lorea Tomsin, and Robin Tunnicliffe of Seabluff Farm/Saanich Organics. It is also indicated in the Addendum that the Fickle Fig has expressed interest in partnering with the Society and possibly moving their operations to the Sandown site. Depending on the nature of the proposed activities on the site, approvals from the ALC may be required for any non-farm uses.

The originally proposed plan was reduced in scope from the Sandown Community Farm Plan previously submitted by the STT. For example, fewer capital investments in buildings and infrastructure are envisioned for the site. Over the five year term the proposal included the following infrastructure investments:

- \$35,000 for the installation of an electrical service
- \$72,000 for roads
- \$30,000 for water service
- \$35,000 for a greenhouse
- \$15,000 for fencing
- \$21,000 for an on-site toilet and caretaker housing (trailer)
- \$210,000 for 'Fieldhouse Construction and Mortgage'

For the Fieldhouse Construction, it is unclear if the figures are debt servicing costs for a mortgage or actual construction costs.

Other major operating expenses are management and staff salaries representing nearly \$750,000, or an average of approximately \$150,000 annually and a total of approximately \$100,000 for accounting, consulting and professional services.

The originally proposed compost facility envisioned on the site was removed from the proposal in the Addendum. The potential use of compost material generated at the District green waste facility is mentioned but is qualified with the statement 'if is not seen as an excessive burden to the District.'

Significant expenditures dedicated to soil amendments/improvements are not evident in the financials although the proposal indicates the importance of building soil on the site. The proposal indicates bringing into production portions of the site in phases but it does not clearly or explicitly describe or allocate resources required to maintain and improve those areas not in production. The Addendum describes a team which has been assembled to provide expertise in soil management including:

- Dr. Kent Mullinix – Director, Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen
- Farm Managers from Tsawwassen Farm School and Richmond Farm School
- Above-mentioned Farm Advisory Team
- Dr. DeLisa Lewis
- Dr. Ann Eastman

In terms of revenues and funding sources, the original proposal relied on over \$1 million in funds from the District Agricultural Fund over the first five years. This represents all the funds which had previously been estimated would be generated by the commercial site and the cell tower. The updated property assessments for the commercial properties have been reduced from previous estimates resulting in reduced contributions to the agricultural reserve. The upper limits of estimated potential tax revenues were based on continued development on the commercial site. The full value of the potential revenues cannot be relied upon for budgeting as these will be a function of market conditions for these types of developments and the corresponding time of improvements on the commercial lands.

Also, in 2019, \$60,000 of the agricultural reserve has already been allocated to District projects on the site reducing the available funds to approximately \$50,000, not \$110,000 as indicated in the plan financials. The original plan had indicated an anticipated budget deficit of \$147,200 in 2019 which would have required District financial support, beyond the Agricultural Fund. The request for additional funding support from the District beyond the Agricultural Fund has been removed in the Addendum.

The original plan included a fairly ambitious fundraising campaign which anticipated raising \$500,000 over the five year term. The Addendum submission indicates \$50,000 in grant funding has been secured from Vancity. It also appears up to \$35,000 has been obtained from the Real Estate Foundation through CRFAIR. Also through CRFAIR, opportunities to obtain grants to support indigenous food system initiatives are also noted.

The Vancouver Island Community Investment Cooperative has indicated support for the SCRA proposal and a commitment to raise capital, i.e. provide loans to the initiative. The District would have to carefully consider the legal ramifications of allowing the Society to take out loans, particularly if they are leveraged against District assets.

District zoning requirements would have to be reviewed carefully for some of the proposed uses on the site including using an RV for a temporary caretaker's residence.

Other additions and amendments to the original SCRA submission include:

- 10 Year Term (5 Year originally proposed)
- Feasibility and Business Development for Value Added Product Focus: Cheese
- Potential First Nations / Reconciliation Partner (IISAAK OLAM Foundation)

Summary:

The proposal involves District investment in excess of \$1 million from the Agricultural Reserve in first five years of operation. Depending on the development and corresponding assessment of the commercial lands, the funds available in the Agricultural Reserve may be substantially less than the investment anticipated by the proponents.

The anticipated amount of investment in soil improvement over the five year period is unclear and does not appear to represent a significant portion of the operating expenses. The Addendum indicates the Society proposed as the long term operator has been formed. The proposed team includes individuals with experience managing established productive and intensive farm operations similar in size. It is not clear the team includes expertise/experience in establishing a new farm on land which requires significant investment of time, effort and resources for continued soil conditioning/rehabilitation before intensive agriculture can be successfully achieved.

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Very High	Attempts to address number of District agricultural objectives
2. Viability of the Proposal	Medium	Relatively detailed proposal, optimistic revenue streams and productivity of the land
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	High	Proposed team has significant depth, may lack experience establishing farm of this size requiring continued soil rehabilitation investment/effort
4. Costs to the District	Very High	Significant costs to the District in form of subsidy from Agricultural Reserve and potential for additional funds being required in the event of shortfall from operations

Option 2: Proposed Offer of Lease submitted by John Upward (Agent)

This Expression of Interest was submitted by John Upward, the agent representing the following proponents:

- E'lim Housing Society
- Gobind Farms
- Parsi Development
- Nanjo Projects, Inc.

Gobind Farms, an established farming enterprise on the Peninsula since 1980, currently operating 90 acres including 17 acres adjoining the Sandown property, employing approximately 30 staff, and operating a 12,000 ft² farm market building, is proposed to be the operator of the farm.

The other partner proponents are typically involved in housing developments, their specific involvement in the proposal is not explained or explicitly evident.

The proposed team also includes the following consultants:

- Phil Christie Agrolologist
- Aqua-Tex Scientific Ecologist
- Civil Engineer Westbrook Engineering

The proposal includes clearing of the northwest corner of the property and the construction of a flood control / irrigation pond. The proposal makes reference to a 'fresh water plan' which is presumed to refer to an integrated stormwater management plan. Although not explicitly stated in the document, it is assumed this would be a plan for the Tseycum Creek watershed but could also involve the McDonald Park Road Drain catchment as well. Consultation with First Nations is contemplated in the development of the stormwater plan.

The merits of modifying the stormwater management plan for the site would have to be weighed against the implications to the upstream and downstream catchment areas. Any significant modifications to these drainage systems should be a District-led initiative. Council should be aware that this proponent's agent is a resident in the downstream Tseycum Creek watershed. The possibility of a stormwater impoundment in the northwest corner of the property was considered by the designers of the stormwater management system and by the District. This concept was not pursued due to concerns with the potential height of the berm required to provide the necessary storage which may have triggered the Province's dam regulations. Further, modification of stormwater management system would require consultation with the ALC as the current system was approved by the agency.

Soil remediation and the installation of basic irrigation is also envisioned as part of the plan. The proposal requires a 15 year lease at no cost from the District with two 15 year lease renewals, terms to be determined. Other requirements include

- Two, 50mm (2") water service connections (estimated District cost \$35,000)
- Replacement of fencing along north boundary (estimated District cost \$13,000)
- Installation of fencing on west boundary (estimated District cost \$7,000)
- Payment of cell tower revenue to operator, Gobind Farms, throughout lease terms (currently representing approximately \$36,000 annually (50% of which currently goes to the Agricultural Reserve Fund), of \$540,000 over proposed 15 year term).

- Access to wood chip pile (i.e. compost from green waste facility), no specific quantity or value indicated

An addendum note is included indicating ‘subject to response to ads, various educational programs, mentoring and workshop will be offered on site.’ Construction of equestrian trails proposed through the wooded area are one of the later phases.

The submission indicates a willingness on the part of the proponents to discuss the proposal further with Council with the proviso that the proponents would require a 120-day ‘lock up period.’ This is surmised to imply no other proposals could be considered for the site for a period of 120 days.

Summary:

The proposal involves an investment in excess of \$500,000 in District funds to the proponent. The proposed team includes an established agricultural enterprise already located on the Peninsula operating a farm larger in size than Sandown. It also includes housing developers with an undisclosed role in the proposal. The proponents propose to undertake works on the site to clear additional lands, modify the drainage and construct a stormwater retention/irrigation pond, install irrigation, rehabilitate the soils, and plant fruit tree, vegetable and berry crops. The potential for educational, mentoring and workshops being offered on the site is also mentioned.

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Low	Would support private local agricultural enterprise, may require approval of modification to stormwater management plan by ALC, potential for some limited ancillary community benefits
2. Viability of the Proposal	Medium	Some details provided, potential concern with viability and impact of modifying the stormwater management plan
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	High	Established farm operator with knowledge/experience in local context, unclear role of housing developers on the team
4. Costs to the District	High	Proposal requires 15 year lease, with terms for an additional two 15 year renewals, the equivalent of approximately \$500,000 in District funds for the first 15 years plus unknown quantity of compost material

Option 3: Proposed Offer of Lease submitted by Gary Sanga (Prevost Farms, Duncan)

Prevost Farms is an established hay farming enterprise in the Duncan area since 2006. The submission indicates the intent is to put as much of the property as possible into hay production within approximately 3 years. The proponent indicates being 'not certain of the land conditions' which will be a determining factor for achieving this objective.

Future goals include sod production on a portion of the site for local landscaping supply. There is also a desire to create horse trails on the site.

Other future possibilities mentioned include pumpkin patch, corn maze, honey production, a u-pick Christmas tree farm with the aim of converting the land into a 'family friendly community resource.'

No financial terms are proposed.

Summary:

The proposal involves hay production for the site within 3 years, which is a reasonably realistic farm use of the property in its early stages of rehabilitation. Given no financial terms are proposed, it is assumed the land would intended to be leased at little or no cost to the operator. The operator has indicated not being familiar with the conditions on the site.

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Low	Would support private agricultural enterprise, potential for some limited ancillary community benefits
2. Viability of the Proposal	Medium	Few details provided, lack of knowledge of the site, hay production likely reasonable use of the land in the early stages of soil rehabilitation
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	Medium	Established farm operator with knowledge/experience in hay production, lack familiarity with the specifics of the site
4. Costs to the District	Low	No direct costs to the District required by the proponent, may be potential for modest revenues depending on lease terms

Option 4: Sandown Conceptual Proposal by Veryan Graham

Veryan Graham is a resident of Brentwood Bay and a Certified Horticulturalist with previous exposure to small scale farming. His objective is to own and operate a small farm on the Saanich Peninsula and he hopes to be able to lease a plot of land at Sandown.

The proponent suggests the creation of a not-for-profit society or division within the District of North Saanich to manage the proposed programs which include the following three main themes:

- 1) An agricultural education centre, potentially involving a partnership with the Pacific Horticulture College
- 2) Development of a food processing facility at Sandown in partnership with the CRD and the Province.
- 3) A seed bank

Other ideas proposed under the umbrella of training:

- Lease land to growers
- Donation of food grown to food banks
- Community gardens
- Operation of a café on the grounds to promote local food production

No financial terms are proposed.

Summary:

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Medium	Concepts proposed are loosely aligned with many District objectives
2. Viability of the Proposal	Very Low	Few details provided, no organization proposed, lack of funding/financial details
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	Low	Limited depth of experience with operating farm of similar size, scale, condition
4. Costs to the District	Very High	No financial details provided, anticipate significant investments on part of District would be required

Option 5: LTO Expression of Interest – Hamish Crawford

The proposal was submitted by Hamish Crawford in early June, 2019. Mr. Crawford is the founder of the Roost Farm Centre located at the intersection of East Saanich and McTavish Road. The Roost is a 10 acre farm operation. The Roost Farm Bakery opened in 2002 and since that time a garden market, café, winery, outdoor Bistro and event area have been added. Produce from the farm is used to make the food and wine items that are sold on the site.

The proposal is for a mixed farm growing barley, wheat, grapes, produce and eggs which would be used on site. The proposed infrastructure would consist of:

- An English style country road house for the market, bistro and bakery
- A winery
- A microbrewery

The proposal indicates plots would be offered, rent free, to farmers interested in growing produce under contract to the farm.

The proposed terms of the agreement are a longer term lease, 20 years appears to be suggested, at a nominal rent of \$1 per year. The length of lease is presumably to provide a reasonable length of time to recover investments made on the property and make the operation financially viable. The District could receive up to \$30,000 per year in property and business tax per year. The tenant would be responsible for developing the infrastructure and all improvements.

One of the conditions listed is that the farm would be permitted to connect to municipal sewer. The property is currently not in the North Saanich Servicing Area and would require a revision of the Regional Context Map of the OCP, an approval process which would involve the CRD before Council could consider adding it to the sewer area. Servicing of the Sandown site with municipal sewer had not previously been envisioned and there is no sewer in close proximity which could be used for connection at this time. The feasibility of providing of a sewer service would have to be investigated further and could be costly. Responsibility for the costs of providing sewer service is not indicated in the proposal. This element may be critical to the success of the proposed brewery and its significance to the overall proposal would need to be determined in discussions with the applicant.

The proponent is involved in the successful long term operation of a private farm with similarities to the proposed plan, albeit smaller in scale. The plan would allow for other farmers to utilize the site and provide a market for their produce.

Although not explicitly stated, it would appear that the proponent would be responsible for improvements to the land to allow the proposed crops to be grown on the site at no cost to the District. The value of these improvements may need to be reimbursed to the developer in the event the lease is terminated early. This would need to be addressed in the terms of a lease agreement.

Summary:

Excluding the potential cost of sewer servicing, this proposal would incur few costs to the District for the long term operation of the lands. The proponent would incur the costs of improving soils and bringing the land into production at relatively low risk to the District. Successful development of the on-site farm enterprises could generate property and business tax. This would allow the District's Agricultural Reserve to be utilized to the benefit of other

agricultural initiatives in the municipality. The proponent has demonstrated experience and success operating a similar private farm enterprise in municipality. The feasibility and cost of sewer servicing the site would need to be investigated further if critical to the proposal.

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Low	Would support local private agricultural enterprise and provide opportunity for on-site marketing/added value, may require approval of non-farm use(s) by ALC
2. Viability of the Proposal	Medium	Uncertain, few details provided
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	Medium	Successful experience managing smaller farm/business operation within the District,
4. Costs to the District	Low	Costs to District uncertain, dependent on requirement for sewer servicing, potential to be cost neutral or net revenue generating, relatively low risk to District

Option 6: CRD Foodland Trust as Long Term Operator

Council has recently considered indicating support for the concept of the creation and operation of a Foodland Trust by the CRD. The CRD is in the process of gauging interest in this service which has not yet been established. The Capital Regional District Regional Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study provides an indication as to how such a program may function. The following are the salient points from the study.

- The program envisions utilizing existing public lands capable of sustaining agriculture as part of the trust, i.e. the public lands would be donated to the trust.
- The study indicates ‘basic infrastructure’ may be needed on the trust lands such as fencing, irrigation and drainage. Upfront costs for this infrastructure is estimated to range from \$1,950 to \$6,450 per acre and would vary by site.
- The study indicates annual lease rates (payable to the trust) could range from \$100 to \$800 per acre, also a function of the site capability.
- The viability of the trust would be highly dependent on grants, donations and sponsorships for initial startup (\$275,000 is assumed in the first year) and \$60,000 annually thereafter.
- On-going costs include staff salaries (estimated at \$170,000), equipment, marketing and promotion and insurance estimated for a total of \$190,000 annually.
- The revenue and cost in the study are based on three scenarios, 5 acres of vegetable, 20 acres of hay, or 80 acres of mixed use.
- The anticipated program deficit is in the order of \$127,500 to \$143,500 annually which would be requisitioned from the participating municipalities. Assuming all the CRD opts in to the service, that is equivalent to \$0.70 per household annually, about \$3,200 for North Saanich. If only North Saanich, Central Saanich, Sidney and Saanich join the service, that is equivalent to \$8,800 annually for North Saanich.

Many details of the Foodland Trust service have yet to be determined. It is also unclear whether the Sandown agricultural lands would be suitable or appropriate to be included in trust lands. Additional investment may be required to bring the Sandown lands to a state suitable for the potential Foodland Trust. The trustees may only be interested in the most productive lands and there may not be interest in maintaining or upgrading less productive areas and, in the case of Sandown those could remain the responsibility of the municipality.

Long term operation of Sandown by the CRD Foodland Trust remains a possibility which may be of interest to the District. Similar to the Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture (SCRA) proposal, this option relies on significant external financial support. In this case, some of the financial support could come from other municipalities in the CRD. It does not appear the Foodland Trust would take responsibility for improving soil productivity as may be required on the Sandown lands. It is also unlikely the Foodland Trust would take responsibility for the non-agricultural portions of the site.

Continued improvement of the fertility of the soils at Sandown would allow for the possibility of its addition to the Foodland Trust in the future.

Summary:

This option would first require the successful creation of the CRD Foodland Trust service by the CRD. The District would then have to offer some or all of the Sandown lands for the Trust to consider for inclusion. It is likely further investments by the District to improve to the productivity of the soils would be required to facilitate its inclusion in the Trust. The long term operation of the site by the Trust would require on-going financial support from the member municipalities.

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	High	Community initiative which provides access to entrant farmers, concept supported by District
2. Viability of the Proposal	Low	Service does not yet exist, many details yet to be sorted out
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	Low	Unclear/unknown at this time
4. Costs to the District	Medium	Costs uncertain, could be distributed across member municipalities depending on structure

Option 7: Sale of the Property

The District could sell the parcel. Portions of the land used by the District for stormwater management would need to be registered/protected with statutory rights-of-way (SRW) or covenants as appropriate.

The District obtained an appraisal of the property in April, 2018 which was completed by D.R. Coell & Associates Inc. At that time, the property was appraised at \$2,870,000. The assessed value by BC Assessment for 2019 is \$3,149,000. The land would remain in the ALR and therefore continue to be subject to ALC regulations protecting the farmland. Notice of the proposed disposition would need to be published in accordance with the Local Government Act.

Summary:

Assuming a suitable buyer could be found, the land could generate significant funds for the District. Sale of the land would also remove financial burden of maintaining the property over the long term.

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Very Low	District would lose direct control of the land
2. Viability of the Proposal	Medium	Ease of sale of the land would be subject to market conditions
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	N/A	
4. Costs to the District	Very Low	Highest short term financial return to District, no long term cost commitments for maintenance/operation

Option 8: District Maintenance of the Property

The District will need to maintain the property until a suitable long term operation alternative becomes available. The District has retained an agrologist to develop a short term maintenance plan for the property. As part of that assignment, preliminary maintenance cost estimates have been developed for the agricultural lands. The maintenance activities are envisioned to include mowing, cultivation, seeding, rock picking, and incorporation of cover crops as green manure. The preliminary assessment indicates approximate annual costs of \$45,000 for a contractor to complete these activities the first couple years of operation. As the resources required to complete this maintenance are not available internally, these services will need to be procured by the District through external contracts. Additional external support in the form of an agrologist consultant to oversee these would also be required. Funds would be drawn from the Agricultural Reserve to complete these activities.

Summary:

Maintenance of the property by the District would allow for gradual improvement of soil conditions over time. This would help make the property more attractive for a broader range of long term operators for the agricultural site. This approach is also consistent with the recommendations in the Short Term Maintenance Plan developed for the District. Maintenance of the property by the District would not preclude any of its long term operation options. Another benefit of this option is that it does not preclude any of the potential future uses which have been contemplated for the site.

Overall qualitative assessment of proposal using evaluation criteria proposed by staff at the August 12th Regular Meeting.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Medium	District maintains control of the lands, does not preclude achieving any of its agricultural strategies in the long term
2. Viability of the Proposal	Medium	Default option until agreement with long term operator is in place
3. Qualifications/Experience of the Team	High	District has access to and can engage qualified agrologist and procure contract farm services as required
4. Costs to the District	Medium	District entirely responsible for operations and maintenance costs on the site, as land improves over time may be potential for some revenue or more attractive lease opportunities

Summary of Options

Option	Alignment with District Agricultural Strategies	Viability of the Proposal	Qualifications / Experience of the Team	Costs to the District*
1. Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture	Very High	Medium	High	Very High
2. Offer of Lease by John Upward (Agent)	Low	Medium	High	High
3. Offer of Lease by Gary Sanga (Prevost Farms, Duncan)	Low	Medium	Medium	Low
4. Sandown Conceptual Proposal by Veryan Graham	Medium	Very Low	Low	Very High
5. LTO Expression of Interest – Hamish Crawford	Low	Medium	Medium	Low
6. CRD Foodland Trust	High	Low	Low	Medium
7. Sale of the Property	Very Low	Medium	N/A	Very Low
8. District Maintenance of the Property	Medium	Medium	High	Medium

CONSULTATION:

The future of the Sandown agricultural lands is of significant interest to the community. Significant public input was obtained as part of Vision Sandown completed by the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) on behalf of the District.

The Sandown agricultural lands represent a significant investment in both land value and potential long term operating costs. There may be value in consulting on the primary aspects of the long term alternatives considered in this report if Council wanted to again involve the public in the decision-making process at this stage.

A communications consultant would need to be engaged to develop a strategic communication plan. This strategic plan would inform staff and Council on the communication and consultation activities and approaches appropriate for this project and their associated costs. The cost of developing a strategic communication plan is estimated at \$5,000.

Council can:

- 1) Direct staff to engage a communications consultant to develop a strategic communication plan to inform the public and obtain their feedback on a range of options for the long term operation and use of the Sandown agricultural lands; or
- 2) Allow the Sandown agricultural lands to be maintained by the District until a suitable long term operator can be identified; or
- 3) Direct staff to initiate discussions with one of the proponents, develop preliminary terms for a long term lease of the Sandown agricultural lands with that proponent and report back to Council on the outcome of those discussions; or
- 4) Direct staff to proceed with publication of notice of disposition of the property with the intent to sell the lands; or
- 5) Other

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The financial implications of each option are described in the body of the report. Costs associated with maintenance activities completed by the District have been included in the 2019 Operating Budget and would be drawn from the Agricultural Reserve.

The execution of a public engagement campaign would utilize funds from the District's communications budget.

CONCLUSION:

At the direction of Council, staff advanced the development of an RFEI for a long term operator for the Sandown Agricultural Lands. During the initial RFEI advertisement two proponents came forward with proposals for long term operation of the site. Council then directed staff to repost the RFEI with a submission deadline of August 30th which resulted in four submissions. These submissions as well as a range of other options available were evaluated for the long term operation of the site. The qualitative assessment indicates that none of the options appear to be distinctly more advantageous from one another although each presents a different combination of strengths and weaknesses. Continued operation and maintenance of the site by the District

would allow continued gradual improvement of the property with the potential to attract more advantageous long term operator proposals in the future. This approach would also not preclude any of the potential future uses which have been contemplated for the site and would also allow the District to consult with the community on priorities for future uses of the property. In consideration of the above, staff respectfully submits the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- 1) Direct staff to engage a communications consultant to develop a strategic communication plan to inform the public and obtain their feedback on a range of options for the long term operation and use of the Sandown agricultural lands; and
- 2) Direct staff to continue to maintain the Sandown agricultural lands through the end of 2020.

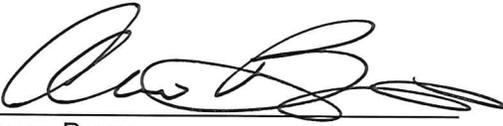
Respectfully submitted:

Concurrence,


Eymond Toupin
Director Infrastructure Services


Tim Tanton
Chief Administrative Officer

Concurrence:


Anne Berry
Director Planning and Community Services


Stephanie Munro, Director Financial Services


Curt Kingsley, Director Corporate Services