

General Purposes Committee, May 11, 2009

Jim Wright, 8300 Osgoode Drive, Richmond

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Mayor and Councillors,

On Agenda Item 1, I have a suggestion about the "Not Supported Regional Growth Strategy Items," specifically 2E, "Proposed RGS Agricultural Lands," on page 7 of the staff report.

I suggest that the lands in the proposed *agricultural* zone in the Regional Growth Strategy should include all lands that are either zoned agricultural by Richmond or part of the Agricultural Land Reserve *unless* council makes specific decisions to exclude some of them before passing on its input to Metro Vancouver.

I will use the Garden City Lands as an example because it is the most glaring omission from the agricultural areas in Map 4, which is on page 29 of the February 2009 strategy draft. The map shows the agricultural areas in green and the industrial or commercial areas in pink. It shows the Garden City Lands in white, not green.

The Garden City Lands are zoned AG1, Agricultural, by the City of Richmond, so I suggest that it is natural for Richmond to ensure that the property is included as agricultural in the Regional Growth Strategy. If there's a good reason why the property should not be included, then I believe it should be up to our elected *council* to rezone the property as something other than AG1 or 2, Agricultural. I am asking that this be a *council* decision, not something that slips past, buried in an 85-page staff report.

And there are further reasons why the Garden City Lands should be designated as agricultural in the Regional Growth Strategy. They are in the ALR, and they are fertile farmland. The property has always remained in the Agricultural Land Reserve despite intense challenges to that status from powerful speculators, including the fattest application the Agricultural Land Commission has ever seen. In response, the commission has *repeatedly* affirmed that the Garden City Lands are prime farmland and belong in the reserve. It has *repeatedly* stated that the lands are *capable* of agriculture and *suitable* for agriculture. There is probably no parcel of land in Metro Vancouver that has been more emphatically shown to belong in the current Green Zone and the proposed agricultural zone.

Strategy 2.3 in the Regional Growth Strategy is to “protect the region’s supply of agricultural land and encourage its use for food production,” and I encourage council to firmly support it and not go along with toothless lip service. On a more specific level, I’m suggesting that council specify that the Garden City Lands must be added to the region’s agricultural zone.

One final point. The Garden City Lands were evidently left out of the existing Green Zone. No one seems to remember how that happened. In any case, the Agricultural Land Commission’s decisions have surely shown that the property does belong in the Green Zone. I suggest that council consider asking Metro Vancouver to include the Garden City Lands in the Green Zone *immediately*. That will ensure that the property gets included in the *proposed* regional agricultural zone if it goes ahead, and it will also ensure that Metro Vancouver will treat the Garden City Lands properly even if the Regional Growth Strategy gets stalled.

Thank you.