



## General Purposes Committee

- Date: Tuesday, May 22, 2012
- Place: Anderson Room  
Richmond City Hall
- Present: Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie, Chair  
Councillor Chak Au  
Councillor Linda Barnes  
Councillor Derek Dang  
Councillor Evelina Halsey-Brandt  
Councillor Ken Johnston  
Councillor Bill McNulty  
Councillor Linda McPhail  
Councillor Harold Steves
- Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

### MINUTES

It was moved and seconded

*That the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Monday, April 16, 2012, be adopted as circulated.*

**CARRIED**

### COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- CITY OF RICHMOND: RESPONSE TO GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FREE BC RESOLUTION**  
(File Ref. No. 01-0370-01/2012-Vol01) (REDMS No. 3518727)

Margot Daykin, Sustainability Manager, Community Services, provided background information, and noted that genetically modified (GM) crops and food products in Canada are regulated at the federal level. Ms. Daykin also noted that currently there are no labelling requirements to identify products that contain genetically engineered (GE) ingredients.

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A discussion ensued about:

- the positions of the City's Advisory Committee on Agriculture (AAC), and the Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) with respect to genetically modified crops. It was noted that:
  - AAC was in support of: (i) education initiatives for GE product awareness; and (ii) initiatives by appropriate federal agencies to move towards labelling of products that contain GE ingredients; and
  - ACE was in support of: (i) the City in taking action that supports individual choice, and strengthens senior government management, including mandatory labelling, more rigorous testing, and educational programs to increase awareness; and (ii) a study on the economic impacts and benefits to Richmond;
- GE products making up approximately 60-70% of packaged food products, and a ban would impact food availability;
- the Richmond Food Security Society and GE Free BC Richmond Food Security Council's submission of an online petition (on file, City Clerk's Office) asking that Richmond City Council support a resolution to ban the growing of genetically modified crops within City limits. It was noted that there were 1025 signatures on the petition, of which approximately 200 were Richmond residents;
- a letter from Vancouver Coastal Health stating that there is no public health reason for a ban of genetically engineered trees, plants and crops;
- the definition of genetically modified plants, which is when DNA is taken from one species and inserted into another species;
- the process related to the approval of genetically modified seeds and plants for commercial distribution;
- the need for further information on GE products, as well as further input from the City's advisory committees;
- concerns related to how consumers may be purchasing genetically modified foods without knowing so; and
- concerns related to dated and limited information about GE products on government websites.

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At this point, the Chair asked for delegations from the audience:

Michelle Li, Richmond Resident, spoke in opposition to GE products, and requested the City to pass a resolution to protect future generations. She made reference to a study conducted on maternal and fetal exposure to pesticides associated to genetically modified foods in eastern townships of Quebec; and an article on genetically modified flax that had been contaminated (both on file, City Clerk's Office). In conclusion, the delegation requested City Council to consider the environmental health and economic benefits associated with a ban of GE products, and to adopt a resolution which other municipalities will follow.

Inga Hamley, spoke in opposition to GE products, and made reference to an article entitled *The Big GMO Cover-up*, written by Dr. Jeffery M. Smith (on file, City Clerk's Office). The article highlighted the dangers associated with genetically modified organisms (GMOs). She spoke about her belief that most scientists were prevented from raising issues related to GMO's due to the potential impacts on corporations, as well as trade agreements. She stated that the public was a guinea pig for a corporate agenda, and scientists who speak out on the issue are immediately blacklisted. Ms. Hamley noted that large biotech companies are left to determine if their own foods and products are safe, and expressed concerns about medical problems associated with GMOs, including childhood diseases, diabetes, damage to the liver, and an increase in allergies.

Robert Wager, Department of Biology, Vancouver Island University, spoke in favour of a scientific approach to the subject of GMOs, noting that he has been researching GM crops for over a decade, and has found that there are many prevalent myths on the subject. Mr. Wager then expressed his views and made the following statements:

- there is not one food regulatory body in the world that has found any harm from any GM crops;
- the idea that GM crops are not tested is completely false;
- the idea that GM crops represent a threat to reproductive organs is completely false; and
- there is no evidence of harm from consuming GM products.

In answer to a question, Mr. Wager advised that he does not receive compensation from any company associated with GM products. He also explained the difference between genetically modified and genetically engineered products, stating that modifying is when you change the DNA, and engineering uses techniques to move DNA from one species to another. Mr. Wager provided supporting scientific documents which are on file City Clerk's Office.

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Tony Beck, Society for a GE Free BC, spoke in opposition to GE products, noting that GE Free BC is about supporting local sustainable agriculture and local farmers. He stated that the key to progress on sustainable agriculture is to offer farmers an alternative to GE crops that is financially viable and supports local community. Mr. Beck spoke to some points identified in the staff report, and spoke about safety and testing and the concerns related to cross pollination.

Rikshana Engineer, Richmond Resident, spoke in opposition to GE products, and expressed her views that GE products are about patents, monopoly, and control. She spoke about the health risks associated with aspartame, and stated that the regulatory process for aspartame had been side-tracked. She then spoke about scientists who had been silenced and put out of business for speaking out about the harms associated with GE products, and expressed concern about the rights of people who do not want to eat GEOs. In conclusion, Ms. Engineer stated that monopoly is destroying farmers' livelihoods.

Dag Falck, Organic Program Manager, Nature's Path Foods, spoke in opposition to GE products, and stated that he is responsible for the integrity of organic products for Nature's Path Foods, and visits farms and suppliers world wide to investigate GMO contamination. He advised that the introduction of GM canola has contaminated all canola, therefore, Nature's Path Foods has stopped using canola oil in cereal products. Mr. Falck requested that the City take this opportunity to pass a resolution on the matter, and take steps to collect all the information that is needed.

Arzeena Hamir, 8480 Dayton Court, spoke in opposition to GE products, and requested that the City ban the growing of GE crops for the following four reasons:

- the general public does not want to knowingly consume GE food. Approximately 60-70% of processed foods are genetically modified;
- declaring Richmond as "GE Free" would provide a branding opportunity for local farmers and food manufacturers;
- the 1025 name online petition (on file, City Clerk's Office) that had been submitted by Richmond Food Security Society and GE Free BC Richmond Food Security for Richmond to be GE Free suggests broad support in Richmond and worldwide; and
- new studies from Europe are indicating that genetically modified ingredients impact the long-term health of both animals and humans.

Larry Tolden, Richmond Resident, spoke in opposition to GE products, and expressed his view that the term "genetically engineered" was not appropriate, as the matter did not have anything to do with engineering, rather it was similar to "blasting bits of foreign DNA into a cell with a shotgun". Mr. Tolden requested City Council to consider the effects of GE crops on future generations, and not to let loose something harmful into the food supply.

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Emily Pearson, Richmond Farmer, spoke in opposition to GE products, and stated that she was speaking on behalf of young farmers. Ms. Pearson spoke about health and economic viability in connection to GE products, as well as corporate power of large biotech companies. She advised that every GE seed being planted has chemicals that are going into the soil and water. With respect to economic viability, Ms. Pearson expressed concerns that as a farmer, she has no control over her neighbours' use of GE crops, which could cross contaminate her crops. She further noted that GMO patent holders have the right to come to her farm and check her crops, and if there has been cross contamination, they have the power to freeze her financial assets.

Michael Wolfe, 9731 Odlin Road, spoke in opposition to GE products, and made comments about biodiversity, monopolies and mono-culture. He stated that he found the term "symbolic gesture", as used in the staff report offensive. With regard to feedback from AAC and ACE, he expressed his opinion that both committees are "stacked in one direction". In conclusion, Mr. Wolfe spoke about creating sustainable agriculture to ensure that mono-cultures are avoided.

Wendy McDonnell, Richmond Resident, spoke in opposition to GE products, and stated that as a result of her academic studies, she had access to up and coming research on GE products. Ms. McDonnell advised that private companies are conducting the safety studies on GE products, and provided an example of a study which concluded that there were no adverse effects from feeding GE corn to dairy cows, however, the study only tested the milk. She further advised that independent studies found GE foods to be harmful to mammals. In conclusion, Ms. McDonnell expressed concerns about the GE corn crops in Richmond, and stated that she cannot grow corn for her children due to the risk of cross pollination. Ms. McDonnell provided a document on GM corn which is on file City Clerk's Office.

It was moved and seconded

- (1) ***That Option 1: Support Consumer Choice/Advocate for Strengthened Senior Government Management as described in the report titled "City of Richmond: Response to Genetically Engineered Free BC Resolution", dated April 26, 2012, from the Interim Director, Sustainability and District Energy be endorsed; and***
- (2) ***That letters be sent on behalf of Council to the Prime Minister, Premier and leaders of the Federal and Provincial opposition, and copied to relevant Ministers in the Federal and Provincial governments, Richmond MPs and MLAs, and Metro Vancouver requesting strengthened management of genetically modified plants, including the introduction of mandatory labelling requirements, more transparent assessment procedures and enhanced communication with the public.***

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The question on the motion was not called as discussion ensued about:

- the possible economic losses related to genetically modified crops, and how such crops may jeopardize the future of all farm businesses in Richmond;
- the need for transparency and awareness with regard to what is being grown in Richmond;
- concerns related to super-weeds that are Round-up resistant, as a result of GE crops;
- education and enforcement related to genetically modified crops; and
- consideration of the proposed resolution from Genetically Engineered Free BC and Richmond Food Security which would state that the City of Richmond is opposed to the cultivation of genetically engineered plants and trees.

During the discussion, the following **amendment** was introduced:

***That:***

- (1) ***Part (1) of the main motion be changed to Part (2), and that the following be added as Part (1):***

***“That the City of Richmond hereby opposes the cultivation of genetically engineered plants and trees in the City of Richmond, with the exception of the 3 existing dairy farm GMO corn crops found prior to this Resolution, and that from this Resolution forward, no further GM crops, trees, or plants should be grown in the City of Richmond. This also includes GM fruit trees, all GM plants and shrubbery, GM vegetables, GM commodity crops and any and all field tests for medical and experimental GM crops.”***

- (2) ***Part (2) of the main motion be changed to Part (3), and amended to include further copies of the letter to UBCM, LMLGA, and FCM, which would read as follows:***

***“That letters be sent on behalf of Council to the Prime Minister, Premier and leaders of the Federal and Provincial opposition, and copied to relevant Ministers in the Federal and Provincial governments, Richmond MPs and MLAs, Metro Vancouver, UBCM, the LMLGA, and the FCM, advising of these resolutions and requesting strengthened management of genetically modified plants, including the introduction of mandatory labelling requirements, more transparent assessment procedures and enhanced communication with the public”; and***

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(3) *the following be added as Part (4):*

*“The City of Richmond agrees to revisit this resolution as pertinent new information becomes available that affects this resolution.”*

**CARRIED**

The question on the main motion, as amended, which now reads as:

- (1) *That the City of Richmond hereby opposes the cultivation of genetically engineered plants and trees in the City of Richmond, with the exception of the 3 existing dairy farm GMO corn crops found prior to this Resolution, and that from this Resolution forward, no further GM crops, trees, or plants should be grown in the City of Richmond. This also includes GM fruit trees, all GM plants and shrubbery, GM vegetables, GM commodity crops and any and all field tests for medical and experimental GM crops;*
- (2) *That Option 1: Support Consumer Choice/Advocate for Strengthened Senior Government Management as described in the report titled “City of Richmond: Response to Genetically Engineered Free BC Resolution”, dated April 26, 2012, from the Interim Director, Sustainability and District Energy be endorsed;*
- (3) *That letters be sent on behalf of Council to the Prime Minister, Premier and leaders of the Federal and Provincial opposition, and copied to relevant Ministers in the Federal and Provincial governments, Richmond MPs and MLAs, Metro Vancouver, UBCM, the LMLGA, and the FCM, advising of these resolutions and requesting strengthened management of genetically modified plants, including the introduction of mandatory labelling requirements, more transparent assessment procedures and enhanced communication with the public; and*
- (4) *That the City of Richmond agrees to revisit this resolution as pertinent new information becomes available that affects this resolution,”*

was then called, and it was **CARRIED**.

## ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded

*That the meeting adjourn (6:06 p.m.).*

**CARRIED**

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Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the Council of the City of Richmond held on Tuesday, May 22, 2012.

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Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie  
Chair

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Shanan Dhaliwal  
Executive Assistant  
City Clerk's Office