

Schedule 146 to the Minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of Richmond City Council held on Monday, May 15, 2017 and Wednesday, May 17, 2017.

To Public Hearing	
Date:	MAY 15, 2017
Item #:	7
Re:	BYLAWS 9706, 9707, 9702, 9717

Mayor and Councillors

From:
Sent: Monday, 15 May 2017 15:11
To: Mayor and Councillors; City Clerk; McPhail, Linda; McPhail, Linda; Steves, Harold; Day, Carol; Au, Chak; McNulty, Bill; Dang, Derek; Loo, Alexa; Johnston, Ken; Brodie, Malcolm
Subject: House size and setbacks restrictions on the ALR



Honorable Mayor and Council,

The spirit of each of your bylaws is co-existence: Coexistence of different kinds of people, professions, cultures and life choices. In case of house sizes on the ALR, you should be passing bylaws that ensure the co-existence of agriculture with the "principal dwelling" on the ALR.

I am not sure increasing the setback to 60 feet (instead of 50 feet) and allowing ALR owners to increase the size of the principal dwelling above 1000m2 for "cultural reasons"(Bylaw 9706) will in any way help farming interests on the ALR.

The planning report talks about how 74% of Richmond's ALR is made up of small parcels of land (less than 2 hectares) and that a house size of more than 500m2 on these smaller parcels is fueling residential speculation . This speculation is displacing farming as principal use because the size and price of the house often outstrips any concerns about land health and farmability . In addition, the report mentions that on smaller ALR land parcels, a size of the principal dwelling greater than 500m2 often makes the backlands "unfarmable and inaccessible" (PLN 130, Page7, Planning report, 13th April 2017.

Furthermore, the display boards in the public consultation process also explained that 39% of Richmond's ALR parcels that front a road have a lot width of less than 33m /108 ft) and these narrow parcels with a thriving city at the doorstep are the ones that have most potential of being developed and sold as mega mansions.

As I listened to speakers on the 19th and 24th of April, 2017, I felt that the people who spoke were not so much arguing for their right to keep their farming families together; but for their right to keep the house size on farmland as big as possible so that the price of the farmland can stay as high as possible per acre.

I also heard concerns, even from long time farmers, that a smaller house size (500m2) would make the price of farmland drop. However, the staff report offers a counterpoint to this fear in the consultation report from Mr Wozny (Attachment 4:PLN 150-151). As a steward of farmlands it is your duty to make the effort of

convincing farmers that the land prices will not drop if the size of the house is restricted to a square footage that promotes the co-existence of farming with an appropriate house size to support farming families.

I want to let the council know that I am not against multi-generational farming families living together. In fact, the presence of extended families and grandparents on farmland is a safety net not just for farming families but for Richmond as a whole. What I have contested is the size of the house required to support a multi-generational family comfortably.

I was drawn into the issue of house size on ALR because of concerns about food security and how the lower taxation system on ALR that is meant to keep farmland from becoming prohibitively expensive is being misused to drive the cost of farmland so high that prospective farmers cannot buy it.

However, at this point I am concerned that huge farm estates on Richmond's ALR will pose a risk not just to farming interests but to the safety and well being of all families in this city.

There is no guarantee that as the farming family grows, family members will choose to continue to farm or want to stay together. When the time comes to sell this huge farm house, if the only concern is that the house be sold to the highest bidder; no questions about farming intentions or interests can be asked of the buyer. It is quite likely that people who will be able to afford this huge estate are least likely to have the knowledge, interest or connection to farming.

Speakers at the planning committee hearing and council meeting in April mentioned that the injection of speculative wealth into farmland may bring a windfall of community donations for example to the hospital or the school.

However, is equally likely that when agriculture gets displaced as primary use from the ALR parcels, land could get trapped in unscrupulous hands. Activities such as gambling or drug trafficking could become the new and dangerous reality of Richmond. Despite best intentions and efforts, no amount of community policing or even real time policing will be easily able to tame these monstrous and inscrutable purposes and our community could become caught in this dangerous reality. And no community member, whether they are from a farming family or a non-farming family, or even from a family speculating on farmland deserve to be caught in this dangerous and unpredictable outcome.

I think the city needs to do more in order to promote agriculture than just limit house size, however these actions cannot be in lieu of restricting house size. I have heard often how east Richmond is neglected in comparison to west Richmond and that needs to change. The city could develop a farm directory for Richmond with contact information and produce that the farm sells to the public. I often drive back from the Richmond

ice centre and see boards about locally grown mushrooms being sold in Richmond and wish that this kind of information was more readily and widely accessible.

To Mayor and Council: Whatever house size and setback restrictions you decide to put on ALR land parcels, please make sure that it will ensure that farming can co-exist with the farmhouse on Richmond's ALR. If land needs to come out of the ALR, it should be for building a diversity of multi-family homes which this city urgently needs.

Sincerely,