

Speaker 5

Schedule 154 to the Minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of Richmond City Council held on Monday, May 15, 2017 and Wednesday, May 17, 2017.

My name is Sharon MacGougan. I live at 7411 Ash Street.

Mayor Brodie and Councillors,

I speak against Bylaw 9717, which would allow 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,764 sq. ft) homes to continue being built on farmland. According to 2017 city statistics, most of the applications received are for homes around this size. How does this protect farmland?

I am in support of Bylaw 9710, allowing 303 m (3,261 sq. ft) houses or, alternatively, Bylaw 9711, which allows 389 m (4,187 sq. ft). I would ask council to refer these bylaws to staff to best determine which size would best address speculation on farmland.

I also support Bylaw 9706, making it easy for real farmers to exceed limits if need be.

New farmers cannot afford to buy farmland because land prices are too high. This is good for incumbent farmland owners, whether they are farmers or non-farmers. But what about today and tomorrow's new farmers? The ones who don't have land already. If those farmers are shut out, then don't we become a "society of incumbents"? (Andy Yan, Vancouver urban planner)

What kind of society is this?

Non-incumbent farmers are forced to lease land in order to farm. That sounds okay and probably works in some cases. But not in all cases. I heard one non-incumbent farmer speak about not being able to find land to lease. She couldn't contact absentee owners and those she did manage to find wouldn't allow her to have animals.

Not have animals? It's illegal to have farm animals in urban areas in Richmond. So, where do farmers have animals? Non-incumbent farmers are at the whim of non-farming country estate owners who may or may not be even in the country.

I wrote a letter to the editor about this, and it appeared in the Richmond News last Friday. I received a response from a citizen who is more expert in these matters. I learned that my concerns are “right on.”

I saw a picture of an ALR “country estate home” in a recent Richmond Real Estate Weekly. There’s an “expansive outdoor patio with multiple seating areas” that looks out at farmland. I try to imagine active farming going on, with the accompanying smells and sounds and dust. I can’t. Luxury homes and farming are not a good mix.

This is not a new problem.

I read Richmond’s 2003 Agricultural Viability Strategy. The co-drafters include city staff, members of Richmond’s Farmers Institute, the Agricultural Land Commission and the BC Minister of Agriculture. They made recommendations designed to protect farmland. For example, to:

Recommendations: 3.8.4 (d)

i — Discourage non-farm uses of ALR land.

To me, this says stop mansions on farmland. And:

ii — Develop a City-based Agricultural Land Registry to assist farmers to find agricultural land available for farming.

These are good ideas. Let’s do them.

New farmers should not be at the mercy of owners of farmland who may have “fears that allowing farming on the lot would reduce property values”. (Policy Planning Department 2000 Agricultural GIS Project)

And, looking ahead, the Guiding Principle of Richmond's 2021 Agricultural Viability Strategy Vision says:

“Urban development in the ALR will be minimized”.

How is that possible if no change takes place?

In the April 29 edition of The Globe and Mail, Site Economics consultant Richard Wozny asks, “What would we think of someone who hoarded food? Why is real estate any different?”

Please do not accept Bylaw 9717.