

**Mayor and Councillors**

Schedule 28 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, 9712, 9717

**From:** Webgraphics  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 9 May 2017 18:07  
**To:** Mayor and Councillors  
**Subject:** Send a Submission Online (response #1017)

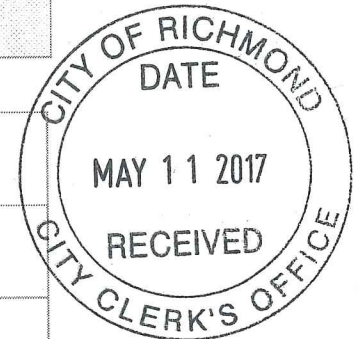
**Send a Submission Online (response #1017)**

**Survey Information**

Site:	City Website
Page Title:	Send a Submission Online
URL:	<a href="http://cms.richmond.ca/Page1793.aspx">http://cms.richmond.ca/Page1793.aspx</a>
Submission Time/Date:	5/9/2017 6:08:05 PM

**Survey Response**

Your Name	John Roston
Your Address	12262 Ewen Ave., Richmond, BC
Subject Property Address OR Bylaw Number	Bylaw 8500, Amendment Bylaw 9707 and 9712, Bylaw No. 9000, Amendment Bylaw No. 9706
Comments	The ongoing "mega home on farmland" debate has often obscured the main objective of the bylaws proposed in the initial City staff report on the problem – to preserve as much farmland as possible for the farmers of tomorrow so that it isn't built upon or contaminated thereby taking it out of production forever. The staff report showed how this objective could best be met by limiting farmland house size to 5,382 sq. ft. and ensuring that the setback from the road does not unduly encroach on farmland. Most of our City Councillors have focused on the feedback from the farmers of today, almost all of whom have been farming for many years and own the land they farm. These farmers have realized an enormous windfall profit on their land value due entirely to its attractiveness to wealthy investors who are not interested in farming and want instead to build mega homes. The farmers of today have convincingly pointed out that the farmers of tomorrow will be forced to lease their land since purchasing will be out of the



question even if today's astronomical prices are lowered somewhat by restricting house size. When speaking to City Council, the farmers of today are wearing two very different hats. They are both farmers and landowners. As farmers, they share the very difficult job of farming with the farmers of tomorrow. As landowners, they do not share anything with the farmers of tomorrow, but rather share a desire to preserve the value of their property with many in Richmond who have owned land for a number of years. As one farmer at the April 24th City Council meeting put it, "the elephant in the room is land value." Several other farmers were honest enough to say that their prime concern is keeping farmland prices high to provide for their retirement when they eventually sell or to provide a large inheritance for their children or to serve as collateral in obtaining large loans from a bank. An understandable sentiment shared with many other landowners, but it has nothing to do with farming. In their fear that any meaningful limit on farmland house size will result in a collapse of farmland prices, the landowner farmers persuaded a majority of our City Councillors to double the limit on house size to 10,764 sq. ft. and to increase the setback from the road by moving it back a further 82 ft. onto farmland. While the Councillors spoke of "supporting our farmers" and minimizing any impediments to their farming, these dramatic increases have nothing to do with facilitating farming and will only result in more prime farmland being taken out of production forever. Perhaps to display their wealth, some wealthy investors will build the largest possible house. Permit it and they will build it. The landowner farmers' fears of a farmland price collapse are unfounded. Rather, the staff report limits will slow the rapid escalation of prices and stop further encroachment on prime farmland. Farmland will remain far more attractive to wealthy investors than ordinary residential land. Farmland provides panoramic vistas and privacy; it isn't subject to the 15% foreign buyer tax and it benefits from a 50% rebate on school taxes. The staff report proposals allow farmland houses to be 1,195 sq. ft. larger than the largest house permitted on an 8,000 sq. ft. residential lot. Farmland houses can also be set back further from the road. The reluctance of some City Councillors to adopt the staff report limits is discouraging when we realize that these limits are only a first step in providing farmland to the farmers of tomorrow. The limits preserve farmland, but don't ensure that it will be made available for lease to farmers. Despite an existing significant tax reduction that wealthy investors receive for leasing their farmland to

farmers, many of them refuse to do so. A new group, the Farmland Owners Association, is trying to encourage farmland leasing by facilitating contacts between landowners and farmers. Laudable as that is, City Council needs to ask staff to find a more persuasive and effective mechanism.