

November 7, 2017

Dear Richmond City Staff, Mayor and Councillors,

Our goals are to Preserve Farmland, Eliminate Speculation, and Enhance Farming Viability.

The current bylaw is not working for the following reasons:

Preserving Farmland

While staff has done a good job to limit the residential home plate, the 75 metre setback will be devastating to farmland on most small farms such as along No. 2 road. Traditionally farmers on these small farms have made the most of their farming land with small homes setback at approx 25 metres, the furthest outbuilding setback at 50 metres, and farming fields starting at 35 metres. (Figure 1). Using the Kaz farm area as an example, 5 farms in a row were actively farmed until recently when the two southernmost farms were sold and torn down.

The smaller farms are typically long and narrow not short and wide as depicted in the staff report. The staff report shows a usable area beside the farm home plate when in fact most of the farms would have a very narrow strip of land beside the home plate which would be farm access and not practical for farming. (Figure 2)

The third southernmost Kaz 1.5 acre farm has recently been sold. The two beside it being built have houses at 50 metres and the fill extends at least 75 metres back. Kaz farm next door has confirmed that the fill on the new homes has caused drainage problems in their field and they have lost crops. When the recently sold Kaz farm and eventually the rest of them are developed, the new houses at 50m and fill to 75m will extend far into the active farming fields and we will see significant loss of farmland. (Figure 3)

Eliminate Speculation

During the public consultation process we collectively referred to farm real estate values were noted as being between \$650,000 per acre to \$1.5 million per acre at the time. Since the council decision in May, ALR properties have soared to heights of 3.73 Million per acre.

Examples:

1. 11240 No. 2 road OLD HOME (3rd Kaz farm plot) 1.5 acres for 2.33 Million per acre = \$3,498,000
2. 10520 Blundell OLD HOME 1.2 acres for 3.73 Million per acre = \$4,480,000
3. The listing for the 4 acre property at 6571 No. 7 Road (boasting plans for 12000sq ft English Country mansion and private driving range and no tax) was shown during public consultation and was initially listed for 2.72 Million. Since the council decision they increased the price to 4.5 Million. 65% Increase for same property .
4. 9231 No 6 road OLD HOME with BLUEBERRIES Feb 2017 5 acres = \$3,100,000 -Before council decision
6551 No 6 road OLD HOME with BLUEBERRIES May 1 2017 5 acres = \$3,280,000 -Before council decision
7251 No 6 road OLD HOME with BLUEBERRIES CURRENT 5 acres = \$7,998,800 - 158% increase for same type of property in same farming area since May council decision

The bylaws did not dampen the market; ALR properties have increased anywhere from 65 - 158% since the council decision in May. Most all real estate ads list "opportunity for 11000sq ft dream home" and no mention of farming.

Enhance Farming Viability

The experts such as Wozny were hired to calculate the optimal house size to reduce speculation while not harming farmers' equity. This number was around 300m². Some council members were worried that if a house size limit such as this were put into effect that the farmers would lose equity and it would "bankrupt" them. Wozny is an expert and showed this would not be the case; the fear was unfounded. A prime example would be 9711 Finn Road which has a 3000sqft heritage house on a 5.4 acre property. This house cannot be developed as it is heritage, and the price is \$3.78 million which is around the \$700,000 per acre mark - much closer to what was sustainable in Richmond before the heavy pressure from the hot real estate market and no foreign buyer tax on farmland. (figure 4)

As long as a house can be built on a property it will retain property values consistent with the real estate market. A beautiful new 3000 - 4000sqft home can be built on farmland to increase its value for developers as on any city lot, but it won't be as heavily speculated as an 11000sqft mansion. A 3000-4000sqft home could be justified as a farming home. It could even be rented to a family who wishes to farm in the future. The options for an 11000 sqft home are very limited as we see daily with more and more being converted into hotels. (figure 5). Section 18 of the ALC act states that a local government may not: (i) permit non-farm use of agricultural land or permit a building to be erected on the land except for farm use,
http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_02036_01#section18

Again using No. 2 road as an example, the new 16000sqft home being built at 11300 is owned by Manpreet Gill who is a Realtor. The builder is Harmeet Singh Grewal who is also a realtor, and recently sold the 11240 Kaz farm two doors down. I spoke to them; they are not farmers. They have a dream to build dream mansions (their words) and they filled over most of the farmland. Again, this type of development- filling over once farmed land for dream mansions cannot be justified as a farm house which would be in violation of Section 18 of the ALC act.

Even if council believed whole heartedly that large farming operations need extended family to live with them to make picking affordable, how can this practice be justified on a small vegetable farm? How can an 11000sq ft home be justified on a 3/4 acre or 2.5 acre farm when you need as much land as possible to be viable?

As long as a developer has the ability to build homes 2-3 times larger than those across the street, we will continue to see rapid development of ALR and loss of farmland. We must close this loophole.

One recommendation I would make, if nothing else, is to extend the 500m² current limit on 1/2 acre parcels to homes on farms up to 2.5 acres which would be fitting with the smaller home plates.

Lastly, ALC policy on soil disturbance maximum of 2000m² includes the entire septic system. The current bylaw of allowing the septic field outside of the home plate would be legal on the 1000m² home plates however it is in violation of ALC to allow the field outside of the 2000m² home plate. (see attached ALC policy). When this is reviewed, if the septic field remains outside of the 1000m² home plate, as per current bylaw, imposing a septic field setback of 60 metres would help steer the septic toward the side yard setback and not in the farming field.

Vegetable farming on small farms is viable. Vegetable farms in West Richmond yield up to \$40,000 per acre and it is inappropriate development to place fill over class 1 clay soil to build an 11000sqft mansion. There are future jobs on this soil, as well as future food for our children.

Respectfully yours,

Laura Gillanders of Richmond FarmWatch

Figure (I)
June 2015

- Shows farm houses at approx 25-30m
- Shows farming fields starting at approx 35m
- Shows how much farmland we lose w 75m setback



Figure (Z)
June 2015

- Shows lot divisions, 50x150 m farmed properties = 1.5 acre
- 5 farms all previously farmed - 2 are currently being developed.

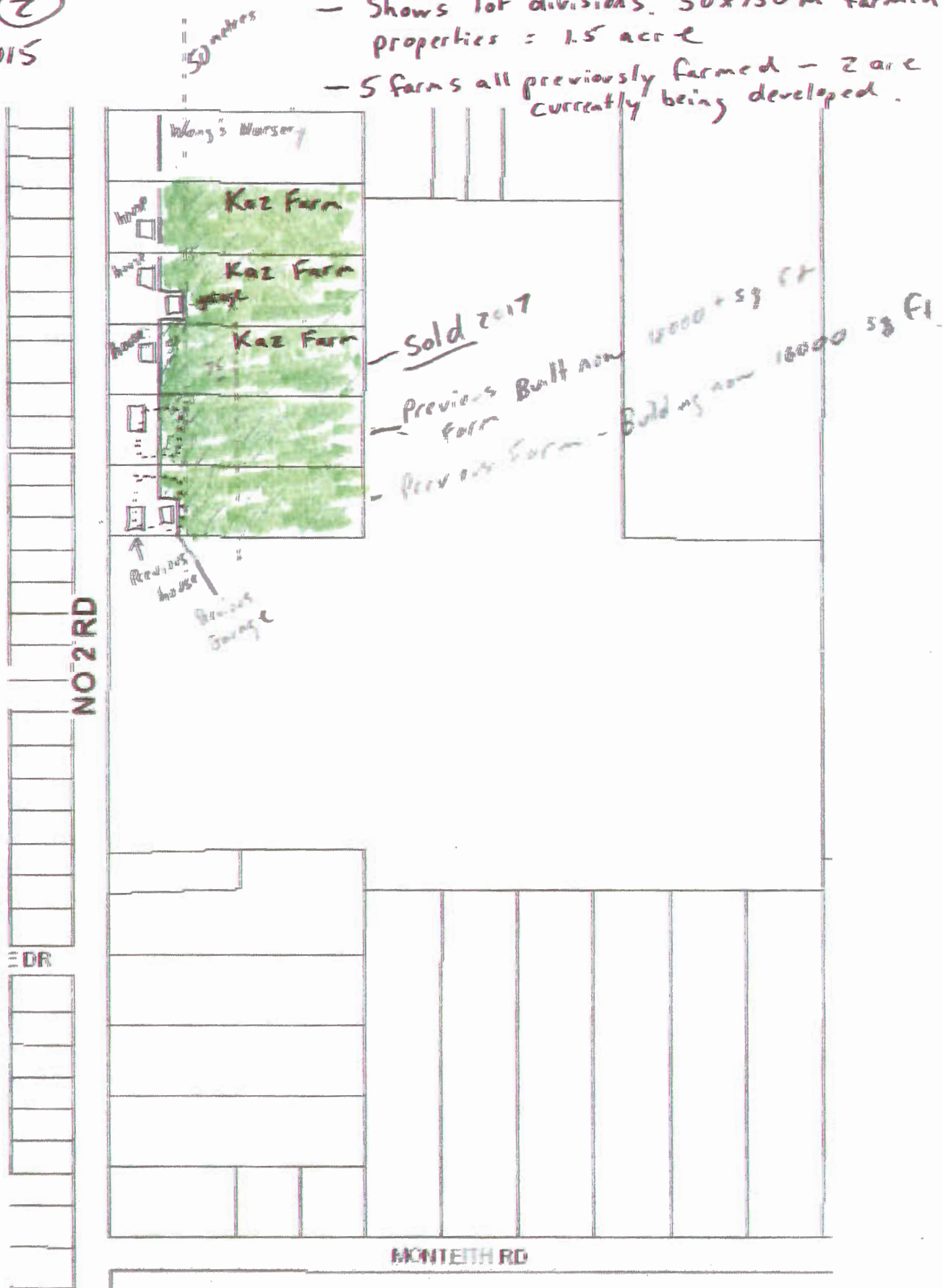


Figure (3) - The future of No. 2 rd farms with new bylaw
 - loss of farmland from 2 years ago

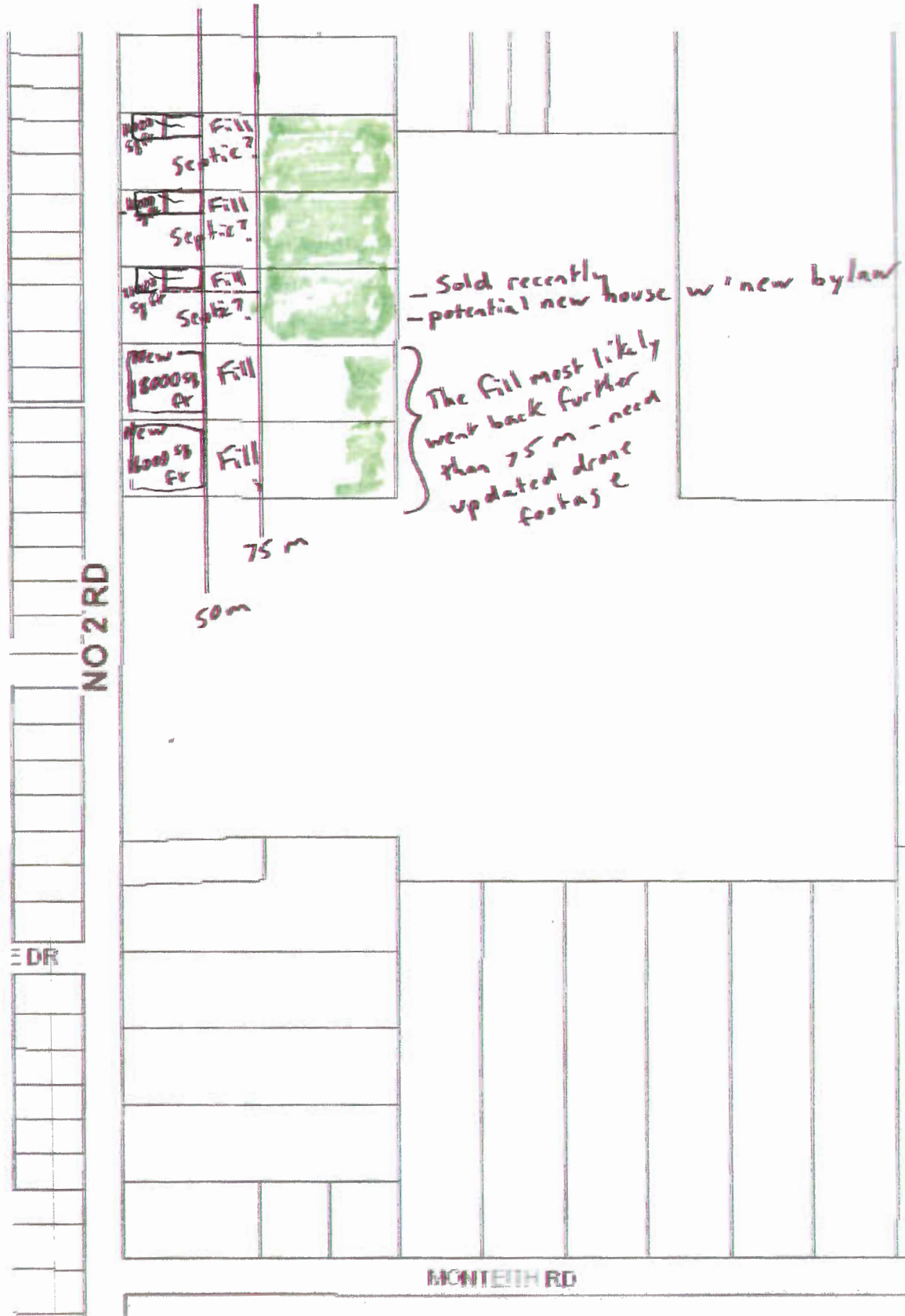


Figure 4

11240 No. 2 road with potential for 11000 sq ft house = \$2.35 Million per acre

9711 Finn Road not developable with 3000 sq ft heritage house on 5.4 acres = \$700,000 per acre

My Recently Viewed Listings



11240 NO 2 ROAD
Richmond, British Columbia V7E2E7

\$3,598,000

1 1

Single Family House



9711 FINN ROAD
Richmond, British Columbia V7A2L3

\$3,788,888


4 3

Single Family House

Figure 5

Large 4100 sq ft home including garage. This is the type and size of home that could be built on nearby lots to all of the small farms on No. 2 road and Blundell for example. This would be in alignment with Wozny's number as well as the Ministry of Agriculture guidelines.



 <p>Agricultural Land Commission Act</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Policy L-15 January 2016</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PLACEMENT OF FILL OR REMOVAL OF SOIL: CONSTRUCTION OF A SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE</p>
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This policy is intended to assist in the interpretation of the [Agricultural Land Commission Act](#), 2002, including amendments as of September 2014, (the "ALCA") and BC Regulation 171/2002 ([Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation](#)), including amendments as of August 2016, (the "Regulation"). In case of ambiguity or inconsistency, the ALCA and Regulation will govern.

REFERENCE:

Agricultural Land Commission Act, 2002, S.B.C. 2002, c. 36, Section 18

18 Unless permitted under this Act,

(a) a local government, a first nation government or an authority, or a board or other agency established by a local government, a first nation government or an authority, or a person or agency that enters into an agreement under the [Local Services Act](#) may not

(ii) approve more than one residence on a parcel of land unless the additional residences are necessary for farm use

INTERPRETATION:

It is Agricultural Land Commission ("the Commission") policy that construction of a residence includes the construction of accessory buildings, structures, services, utilities and landscaping requirements directly related to the single family residential use. The Commission recognizes garages, carports, workshops, sheds, water lines, wells, sewer lines, sanitary disposal systems, power conduits, reasonable landscaping and driveways as buildings and services normally associated with the construction of a residence. Please note that unless allowed by policy, the Regulation, the ALCA, or an order of the Commission, workshops must be related to the residential use and must not be a non-farm business. Residential spaces connected by breezeways (for example) do not constitute a single residence for the purposes of this section of the ALCA.

Where it has been determined by the local government through the building approval process that placement of fill or removal of soil is both necessary and reasonable for the construction of a residence, the acceptable volume of fill or soil removal is that needed to undertake the construction of the residence, accessory facilities and services. For example, if 1.0 metre of fill is required to satisfy flood protection requirements but a land owner wishes to deposit 3 metres of fill to enhance a view or for another non-farm related purpose, only 1 metre of fill would be allowed without approval of a non-farm use application to the Commission. The placement of fill or removal of soil should not exceed 0.2 ha of the parcel in total for all the above residential related uses. It is the policy of the Commission that a driveway should not exceed 6 metres in width and may

be constructed with an all-weather surface. The area of the driveway is included as part of the 0.2 ha area as described above.

Unless defined in this policy, terms used herein will have the meanings given to them in the *ALCA* or the Regulation.