

Schedule 3 to the Minutes of the Regular
Meeting of Council held for Public
Hearings on Monday November 15, 2010.
CITY OF RICHMOND PUBLIC HEARING
NOVEMBER 15, 2010
AGRICULTURAL SETBACKS

To Public Hearing
Date: <u>NOV. 15, 2010</u>
Item # <u>1</u>
Re: <u>BYLAW 8609</u>

My name is Deirdre Whalen and I reside at 13631 Blundell Road, Richmond. Thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation to this public hearing. I am really concerned about the City's proposal to rescind their recently accepted bylaw that established 50 m. maximum setbacks for all residential buildings and structures in areas zoned Agricultural.

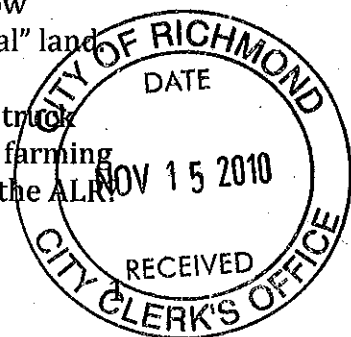
I have lived in the ALR on the "other side of the 99" since 1975 and I've seen a lot happen during this time. I've seen the cow fields disappear beside Knight Road so business parks could be built. I've seen a lot of golf courses built in East Richmond in the last 30 odd years. I've seen farm land turned into junk yards and dumping grounds for concrete, gravel, bits of sidewalk, building waste, bricks, etc. And lately, in the last 10 years or so, I've seen a proliferation of large "country mansion" style homes with very little in the way of "country" left over. That's because the "country" part is either built on or paved. So I was really heartened when I hear the City of Richmond was finally going to establish maximum setbacks.

If you come to my neighbourhood you can see what the lack of setbacks have done. Good areas to check are down Blundell, Sidaway and No. 6 Roads. Many large new houses are being built (one is 14,000 sq. ft). Now, I have no problem with large houses; I understand some folks need to house their extended families. Even so, in the majority of cases, coach houses or granny flats are also being built. These accessory buildings are usually behind the primary residence. Paved driveways and turnaround areas invariably connect and surround the buildings. On small acreages, there is not much unpaved ground left over, maybe a front yard and a hedge. On larger acreages, people can build even more structures including swimming pools and tennis courts-that means more concrete and more pavement.

See, my big problem with the lack of setbacks is that our agricultural land is being paved over. "Pave paradise, put up a parking lot" is really becoming a reality here in East Richmond. If the setbacks are eliminated altogether, you can bet that people will build even more and bigger mansions than you see today. Then coach houses and accessory residential structures will be added on the rest of the property and they will be connected together by paving over the land.

Let's not minimize the fact that plants give us oxygen as well as food. Pavement and buildings don't. And it surprised me to find out that even though we all know pavement can't support agriculture, paved acreage is still called "agricultural" land.

What happens if there is no land left for growing food or trees, or plants, or truck gardening or any kind of farming? What happens if there is no room left for farming chickens, pigs, cattle or horses or for dog kennels, all approved activities in the ALR?



What happens if a "traditional" farmer ends up trying to farm next door to these country estates? I'll tell you what happens-complaints come into the City from the newcomers about it "smelling like a farm," I'll tell you what will happen-the land will eventually get rezoned.

We are fooling ourselves if we think that eliminating the setbacks will not result in "no net loss" of agricultural land. A real life example is the Highway to Heaven on No. 5 Road. The land is still technically agricultural but not many houses of worship are growing anything. Most of the land is fallow or paved for parking lots. In addition, think of this-if the Buddhist temple expansion goes through, over 400 parking spots will be needed, all paved, all still called "agricultural," all still deemed to be "no net loss of agricultural land."

I read recently that the Mayor of North Vancouver is encouraging residents to turn their front yards into gardens to grow food. And here we are in Richmond contemplating allowing our residents to pave their farmland. How farcical.

I understand there are potential farmers in Richmond who would farm on smaller acreages if they could only afford them. But land is so expensive the only people who can afford it want to build their pseudo country estates. Establishing maximum setbacks would free up back land that small lot farmers could lease. It would also ensure the land is planted in order to provide greenery, environment for wildlife, food, oxygen and act as a carbon sink for our car-dependent culture.

In closing, the City should be firm and establish setbacks. And in the case of a property not being amenable to the setback guidelines, they could discuss the issue with staff and perhaps negotiate a variance. But a few exceptions should be no reason to throw out a 50 m. setback.

We need to preserve as much agricultural land in Richmond as possible and by establishing maximum setbacks the City will be doing just that.

Respectfully submitted,

De Whalen

13631 Blundell Road
Richmond V6W 1B6