

Saratoga/ Miracle Beach Residents Association (SAMBRA)

Minutes of Meeting

Held Tuesday, May 1, 2015 at Miracle Beach Elementary School, Black Creek

In attendance: *Note: names of people attending this meeting (other than the speaker) are withheld to protect privacy.*

Guest: Jill Hatfield, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes of Meeting held February 12, 2015 approved as read: M/S/C.

Financial Report - The Treasurer, reported a bank balance of \$912.06, Equity shares \$40.17. No expenditures since last meeting.

Old Business

1. Saratoga Beach Estates –talks between the developer and the Comox Valley Regional District are still taking place about this development, which plays a large role in sewage planning for the community.
2. Black Creek Oyster Bay water restrictions – SAMBRA residents will likely experience the same water restrictions this summer as last year. See link, below, from Ann MacDonald, General Manager of planning and development services, Comox Valley Regional District for more information about water and public input into the local area plan.
<http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/EN/main/departments/planning/major-projects/saratoga-miracle-beach-local-area-plan.html#water>
3. Hillsborough (Quinsam) Coal exploration permit for test hole drilling has been granted.

New Business

1. **Cattle and agriculture operations in the Black Creek watershed** – The Chair introduced guest Jill Hatfield, Regional Agrologist for the BC Ministry of Agriculture who responded to questions. Topics included:
 - Comox Valley already one of the most intensive cattle farming area on Vancouver Island (e.g. dairy farms)
 - Legislation to protect the environment includes: federal Fisheries Act (deleterious substances, destruction of habitat); provincial Environmental Management Act (conservation officer service, environmental practice and waste management); provincial Health Act (water quality); federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans regulations about riparian area setbacks when siting buildings which are administered by local government.
 - Legislation that pertain to operations includes: Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act, BC that addresses land clearing, animal husbandry, use of equipment. This Act also provides a complaint driven process for neighbours of a farm. People with concerns in the Comox Valley should contact Jill, who will try to remediate the problem. If this fails, the complaint can go to a tribunal with their decision binding on the farm.

- For concerns but no direct knowledge of problem, some options:
 - Report all Poachers & Polluters, BC Min. of Environment RAPP Line
 - SPCA for animal cruelty issues
 - Agricultural Land Commission, e.g. bringing in soil that may be contaminated
- Jill noted that many local farms voluntarily enroll in the Environmental Farm Plan which provides guidance on environmental practices for farmers.
- There is a significant amount of agriculture taking place in the Comox Valley, about 440 farms. See Ministry of Agriculture website for an Agriculture Land Use inventory (2013). Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) land comprises 23,429 hectares; 5,500 hectares not in ALR are being farmed. About 66% of this land is available for future farms.
- Public doesn't always appreciate agricultural contribution to the economy, about \$35-40 Million in this area alone.
- Water demand – operators are not required to prove water availability but should do so. Most livestock operations (not dairy) are dryland, no irrigation. Cannot take water from creek or river without a license, most operations would use dug wells. No current requirement for licensing of ground water but those regulations are being updated.
- Most big farms store water (e.g. dugouts, ponds) but this area doesn't have a lot of collective storage capacity.
- Water quality – waste management practices/rules apply to more than 10 animals. DFO studies indicate that flow quality of Black Creek is good. Not always a simple answer to water quality concerns, e.g. in one study in BC found that the sources of contamination were failing septic systems and wildlife feces.
- Most animals on Vancouver Island are grass fed and grass finished.
- Suggestion: invite farming representative to SAMBRA meeting.

Agreed: at October meeting, we will set agendas for future meetings. For instance, do we want to learn more about agriculture in our area?

Note: Jill's contact information is as follows: Jill Hatfield, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture; Telephone: 250 897-7518 E-Mail: jill.hatfield@gov.bc.ca

2. Black Creek/Oyster Bay Water Supply –The Comox Valley Regional District will present proposed rate and parcel increases at a meeting to be held at 7 PM, June 9th at Living Waters Fellowship Church.

Further Information about this meeting and the Local Area Plan process can be found on SAMBRA's website at WWW.SAMBRA.CA.

Adjournment: M/C: to adjourn the meeting at 8:52.

Next SAMBRA Meeting: Tuesday, October 13, 2015

Contact Curtis Scoville if you have items you would like placed on the agenda of the next meetings or have questions. Phone 250 337-1986 or email: YourSAMBRA@outlook.com