

Priorities Committee Meeting_Mar13_2018

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Overview of the Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility

Report Purpose

Provide Priorities Committee with an updated Regional Plus concept for the Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility.

Council History

October 25, 2016 – Council approved the Regional Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility concept with an adequate site large enough to allow for future growth.

April 19, 2016 – Council directed administration to create a functional plan and return with options for the facility.

May 12, 2015 - Council directed administration to take the next steps as outlined in the study, and solicit potential partnership for facility development and/or operations.

April 21, 2015 - Priorities Committee referred the Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility Solicitation Process to the May 12, 2015 Council Meeting for formal direction.

January 20, 2015 – Council direct Administration to bring back to the April 21, 2015 Priorities Committee Meeting a draft process to solicit partnership interest in building and operating a Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: Municipal infrastructure which will diversify agricultural business.

Governance: Partnership and support of stakeholder groups.

Social: Incorporates indoor and outdoor community amenities, programs, and services to support the diverse needs of our residents.

Culture: Highlights community agricultural heritage.

Environment: Incorporates the natural environment and efficiently uses resources.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: Planning and Development Services; Economic Development and Tourism; Transportation and Agriculture Services; Recreation, Parks and Culture; Facility Services; Corporate Finance

Summary

Agriculture remains an important part of Strathcona County's economic, social, and cultural fabric. The significance of agriculture is reflected in the community through the number of agricultural related recreations and social activities that take place throughout the year. There is currently limited "agri-recreation" infrastructure in Strathcona County.

The development of a multi-purpose agricultural facility is supported by the Strathcona County Strategic Plan through the vision of being "a champion for advancing diverse agricultural business" and through the vision statement:

"... a model of ecological integrity, protecting our environment and preserving our agricultural heritage. Investment in infrastructure, quality services, cultural and recreational programs and facilities is a priority that sets us apart."

In March 2013 the Multi-Purpose Agriculture Facility Feasibility Study was initiated and accepted by Council in January 2015 (Enclosure 1). The Agricultural Service Board was a key stakeholder through the entire process. The feasibility study identified the following benefits:

- Help the County to achieve its overall vision.
- Address community demands for multi-purpose agricultural facilities.
- Position Strathcona County as an ideal location for regional, provincial or national events.
- Portray the rural-urban balance that exists within Strathcona County.
- Have a positive economic impact in regards to construction and ongoing operations.

Through the public engagement process of the feasibility study, the following guiding principles were developed for the Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility project.

The facility and site will:

- Enable residents to be healthier, active, vibrant, and creative through participation in agricultural and related opportunities.
- Help the County become a champion for advancing diverse agricultural business.
- Help the County preserve its agricultural heritage.
- Create a heightened sense of community throughout the County.
- Be open to the general public.
- Be multi-purpose in nature, meeting the needs of agricultural groups including, but not limited to: 4H, equine, livestock, trade shows, rodeo, hosting special events, and enabling other non-traditional agricultural activities to occur.

Expression of Interest

Due to the uniqueness of a multi-purpose agricultural facility, there was consideration to seek out partnerships before making a formal decision to proceed with the construction of the facility. Similar facilities throughout the Province have been constructed through partnerships with Agricultural Societies or Exhibition Boards. These partnerships have allowed groups who have different strengths and abilities to come together to access available grants and provide a strong operating model to the facility. The four key areas that we were seeking partnership support in are as follows:

- components – ownership, construction, use or naming rights for different sections of the facility and/or site
- operations – a group that would operate the facility/site; much like an Exhibition Board
- land – a group or individual may provide the land to house the facility
- in-kind – companies may offer services, such as engineering, construction materials or construction expertise.

Upon completion of the Expression of Interest, four different entities came forward, however, none were looking to enter into a partnership on the project.

Functional Plan

The next step in the progress of the project was to complete a Functional Plan which would establish the conceptual designs, scale and relationship among the components of the project. The key parts of the plan were as follows:

- Functional Programming
 - Confirmation of requirements
 - Operating Model
- Conceptual Design
- Review of Funding Options
- Site Selection

Functional Programming

In order to confirm community need, the project team performed in-depth interviews with groups and organizations in our community. Sixty-six organizations were contacted and 38 participated in validating the findings of the Feasibility Study (Enclosure 2). Discussions with these organizations ranged from potential time usage to facility requirements that meet the needs of each. Organizations that were contacted spanned local, regional, and provincial groups and covered various agricultural events, activities, and disciplines. Non-agricultural groups were also contacted to ensure that conceptual design options would meet the “multi-purpose” function.

Conceptual Designs

Based on our research, operating principles, and the expertise brought by an architectural consulting firm, three conceptual design options were created and presented to Council on October 25, 2016. Options ranged in size, scale, and amenities which meet the requirements of the community and potential facility users. Through the discussion with Council at the October meeting, it was determined that the Regional concept was preferred with the following additions to be considered for the site:

- had to be able to expand to the Provincial Facility concept
- needed to be a minimum of 160 acres in size
- needed to be available for use as soon as possible by local user groups
- had to be open year-round
- had to be multi-purpose in use.

From that meeting, the Regional Plus concept was developed to best meet Council’s direction. These additions inflated the budget from the estimated \$31M to \$47M as per Enclosure 3. The estimated budget numbers are based on a Class D costing and final budget numbers will not be known until the detail design of the site is completed.

Site Selection

In order to determine the most suitable locations, administration first took into account the criteria outlined in the Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility Feasibility Study.

In order to capture the many unique aspects of an agricultural facility, considerations for manure management, access to water and power, and livestock safety were taken into account. In addition, the expertise from other departments, research, review of existing facilities, and internal and external feedback have helped to refine the criteria used in rating potential sites.

Key criteria include:

- accessibility to major transportation routes
- proximity to urban centres
- economic benefit to Strathcona County

Locations, both publicly and privately owned across Strathcona County, have been considered in this analysis. Not all of the top rated parcels were selected for further analysis based on concerns, barriers, and complications which were outside the scope of the evaluation criteria. Land negotiations have occurred with the purchase of the land finalized on February 28, 2018. The land that was purchased is 150.6 acres surrounding the Bremner Heritage Site (Enclosure 4). The development of a multi-purpose agricultural facility had been identified in the Bremner House Heritage Site Master Plan in 2009 as it complemented the site. By purchasing this land adjacent to the existing Bremner Heritage Site, the total acreage is 271.40 acres.

Timeline

A draft timeline for the project has been developed (Enclosure 5). This timeline is based on Council supporting moving ahead with the Regional Plus concept at this time.

Communication Plan

Interested stakeholders will be updated through the County website.

Enclosure

- 1 Facility Feasibility Study presentation
- 2 Facility Proposed Usage
- 3 Facility Estimated Budget
- 4 Purchased Land Map
- 5 Draft Timeline for Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility