



AGENDA ITEM
Agricultural Service Board Structure
April 28, 2022

BACKGROUND

Agricultural Services Boards (ASBs) act as an advisory body to municipal councils. The role of the ASB is to develop and promote agricultural programs within the community and advise County Council on matters related to agriculture within the municipality.

At the March 1, 2022, ASB meeting the following recommendation was approved:

Recommended that the County Manager be directed to prepare a report and recommendations for Council’s consideration at a future Council meeting regarding the restructuring of the Lacombe County Agricultural Service Board and its Terms of Reference.

This recommendation was subsequently approved by Council at its April 14, 2022, meeting.

ANALYSIS

Section 3 of the *Agricultural Service Board Act* outlines the parameters for the establishment and make-up of an ASB. Council is to determine the chair, number of board members, voting status, and the term of office for members of the board. Lacombe County’s ASB is comprised of seven County Councillors.

The composition of ASBs varies across the province as municipalities adjust board membership to reflect local needs. In the last ten years, there has been a shift in the composition of ASBs. The membership shift of ASBs is outlined below:

County Council Only ASBs	Council Public Combination ASBs
2011: 32	2011: 35
2022: 19	2022: 48

There are advantages and disadvantages to both ASB compositions. Administration has outlined the pros and cons of both board structures below:

Council Only ASB:

Advantages:

1. Greater meeting frequency and emergent agriculture items can be addressed at Committee of the Whole and Council meetings.
2. Continuity between the ASB and Council. All of Council is involved and familiar with ASB matters, expediting decision making.

3. County Council has a complete view of the municipality and can apply this to ASB decision-making.

Disadvantages:

1. Councilors may not be as effective in determining “on the ground” agricultural issues.
2. Councilors with a limited agricultural background may not be able to contribute as effectively to the ASB.

Council and Public Member ASB:

Advantages:

1. Provides Council direct input from agricultural producers and those in the agriculture industry.
2. Greater knowledge base for agriculture-related policy direction.
3. Increased resident participation in municipal policy and program development.

Disadvantages:

1. Scheduling is a challenge as public members’ schedules need to be considered in addition to Council’s.
2. Public members can be prone to introducing external politics to ASB meetings.
3. Attracting public members can be a challenge.
4. Emergent agriculture items often still go through the Committee of the Whole or Council as meeting frequency makes addressing issues promptly difficult.
5. Public members may not have the background on matters referred to the ASB by Council making informed decision-making a challenge.
6. The perspectives and priorities of public members may contrast with Council’s.

Central Region ASB Composition					
Municipality:	Council Members:	Public Members:	Municipality:	Council Members:	Public Members:
Camrose	7	2	Red Deer	3	4
Flagstaff	3	4	Bighorn	2	4
Stettler	7	0	Ponoka	5	0
Clearwater	2	5	Wetaskiwin	4	3
Rocky View	3	4	Starland	5	2
Paintearth	7	2	Kneehill	4	3
Mountain View	3	4	Lacombe	7	0

As with the composition of ASBs, the frequency of ASB meetings varies significantly across the province. Administration has provided a summary of ASB meeting frequencies from across Alberta below:

ASB Meeting Frequency	
Annually	2
Bi-Annually	4
Tri-Annually	7
Quarterly	18
Bi-Monthly	22
Monthly (ASB Specific)	5
Monthly (via Committee/Council Reporting)	9

Administration has attached Policy CC(3) Duties of Committees, Commissions, and Boards for Council reference. Administration recommends that Council increase the meeting frequency of the ASB before considering changes to membership and further development of an ASB bylaw, Terms of Reference, or Policy. Administration proposes that ASB meetings occur three times in a given year. A general outline of the meetings is outlined below.

Timeline:	Meeting Content:
Winter (January) ½ Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial ASB resolution review • Emergent items as requested by the board
Spring (March-April) ½ Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of upcoming seasonal activities. • Board input on extension programming. • Emergent items as requested by the board.
Fall (October) ½ Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of regional resolutions. • Review of Provincial ASB resolution report card. • Review of seasonal operations.

Alternatives:

1. Change the composition of the Agricultural Service Board to include public members.
2. Maintain the current structure of the Agricultural Service Board and increase the ASB meeting frequency (Administration Recommendation).
3. Take other actions as directed by Council.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The 2022 Agriculture Budget includes per diems and meeting expenses for one ASB meeting and seven board members. Additional meetings and board members will require a budget increase.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 2 of the *Agricultural Service Board Act* states the duties of an agricultural service board are:

- (a) to act as an advisory body to assist the council and the Minister, in matters of mutual concern,
- (b) to advise on and to help organize and direct weed and pest control and soil and water conservation programs,
- (c) to assist in the control of animal disease under the *Animal Health Act*,
- (d) to promote, enhance and protect viable and sustainable agriculture with a view to improving the economic viability of the agricultural producer,
- (e) to promote and develop agricultural policies to meet the needs of the municipality.

Section 3 of the *Agricultural Service Board Act* states:

- (1) A Council may establish and appoint members to an agricultural service board and provide that the members of the board be paid, out of the funds of the municipality, reasonable allowances for travelling, subsistence and out-of-pocket expenses incurred in attending meetings of the board.
- (2) The council is to determine the chair, the number of members, the voting status and the term of office of the members of the board.
- (3) The membership of a board must include persons who are familiar with agricultural concerns and issues and who are qualified to develop policies consistent with this Act.
- (4) A board has and must exercise on behalf of a council all the powers and perform all the duties that are conferred on it by the council, under this or any other enactment, with respect to agricultural matters.
- (5) A person who is a member of a board ceases to be a member of the board if, without being authorized by a resolution of the board the member is absent from 3 consecutive regular meetings of the board.
- (6) A vacancy on the board does not impair the right of the remaining members to act as long as a majority of the members remain.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the following resolution:

That the County Manager be directed to amend the Agricultural Service Board Terms of Reference as identified in Policy CC(3) by:

1. Including a provision stating that the Agricultural Service Board is to meet a minimum of two times per year, and
2. Replace the clause "Reeve to Serve as Chair" with "Chairperson and Vice-chairperson" shall be selected by Council at the organizational meeting; and

furthermore, that Policy CC(3), as amended, be presented to Council at a future meeting for consideration of approval.

PREPARED BY: Mike Bates, Manager of Agriculture and Environmental Services

REVIEWED BY: Dion Burlock, Director of Community Services

REVIEWED BY: Tim Timmons, County Manager

