

Attachment 4
Electoral Area Director Comments

This page left intentionally blank

2946 Palmer Rd:

Having attended this property several times since the RDN have been involved with this file I note that there is a barn/agricultural building on the property.

The owners of this farm are currently contributing to the local community by leasing land for sheep and horses, selling hay, eggs, fruit and vegetables.

This year they were not able to grow garlic because of the continuous issues regarding the barn/agriculture building and its use through the neighbors' complaints.

The intent of the barn/agriculture building was to be used to store hay & equipment (tractor & other farming related equipment), to be utilized for a variety of equestrian activities, and to dry some of the farm harvest.

In addition, 4H had utilized the barn/agriculture building for their activities especially youth 4H attendees.

All activity related to the barn/agriculture building, was halted on March 3rd, 2023 as a result of a complaint driven stop work order.

The owners have continued to maintain a fan in the barn/agriculture building to avoid mold/mildew and other pathogens as a result of non-use.

The owners lost hay this year as it was in the field and bailed however, they were not allowed to use the barn and had no other place to store the harvest resulting in significant cost to the owners.

The combination of allegations and quantity of dog training that was alleged in a complaint against the owners from neighbor's, has not been substantiated in the documentation that I have received.

In this, I am hesitant to accept these claims without further exploration.

Having had in depth conversations with the owners, it appears that there is a discrepancy regarding primary activities/events held on the farm.

It is my understanding that gathering for an event or Agri tourism allows a maximum of 10 events per year per ALR legislation.

The owners state they had two events (dog trials) in 2021 and seven (dog trials) in 2022.

In addition, the owners state that eight of nine events over two years, were held outdoors or - one event was held in the barn/agriculture building. The owners state that the general use on the farm is not dog training/agility.

The farm provides two equestrian outdoor rings as well as one indoor ring.

The “do not occupy” and the “stop work order” for the barn have significantly impacted the ability of the owners to continue any viable farming activity as the barn/agriculture building is central to this income.

This farm was previously used as a Mini-Shetland rescue service, and it produced only hay over several years, prior to the current owners purchasing it in 2017.

Moving forward, the current owners continued with hay production and sales, and added chickens, sheep, fruits, vegetables, eggs, horse training and youth 4H services.

The farm owners are stable members of the community, joining the Arrowsmith Agricultural Association and they attend local meetings and activities within the community. Further, the owners submitted applications to take the Regenerative Farming Program offered by North Island College in Courtenay. These activities indicate a farming tradition and are well received in the area.

They were invited participants in the annual Coombs Fall Fair as they are well respected within the Area F community.

Although they had additional plans to expand their agricultural production, this was stopped as a result of allegations.

The owner has indicated that the activities they offer on the farm typically include less than 10 people per activity. It is my understanding that this falls below the guidelines of low occupancy regarding the barn/agriculture building and its dimensions as outlined in the National Farm Building Code of Canada definition of low occupancy. (3.1.1.2.(2).

Further, Area F does not have a noise bylaw, nor do we have a traffic bylaw. In addition, as we are currently working on the Area F OCP, I have requested that we support dog training on farmland.

In conclusion, as Area Director, I have no hesitation in supporting these farming activities and certainly hope that they can return to developing and improving the farm. I anticipate that this farm will remain a valuable resource within the agriculture community.

Kind regards,

Director Salter Electoral Area F