

Vancouver Food Policy Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 17, 2012
6:00-8:30pm
Town Hall Room, City Hall



Chairs: Brent Mansfield and Trish Kelly

Council Members: Jason Apple, Robyn Carlson, Claudia Chan, Zsuzsi Fodor, Kimberly Hodgson, Ilana Labow, Peter Ladner, Pat McCarthy, Ross Moster, Shelby Tay, Paul Taylor, Chris Thoreau, David Wilson

Liaisons: Theresa Dunstee (MetroVan), James O'Neill (Social Planning, City of Vancouver)

Regrets: Joanne Bays, Maria Burtlehaus, Emme Lee, Tara Moreau, Nicholas Scapillati, Helen Spiegelman, Heather Deal (City Council), Aaron Jasper (Park Board), Rob Wynen (Vancouver School Board), Kim Sutherland (BC Ministry of Agriculture), Claire Gram (Vancouver Coastal Health)

Agenda Items:

1. Opening Round
Members introduced themselves. Fifty-four guests were present.
2. Motion to Accept Agenda and previous minutes
David Wilson's name to be moved to 'Regrets' section of September minutes. Motion to accept agenda and amended minutes: Moved by Paul, seconded by Claudia, carried unanimously.
3. Staff Report - James O'Neill
 - Food scraps report - went to Council with recommendation to change pick up to weekly and garbage bi-weekly.
 - Greenest City update to council - first update since 2011, covering 10 priorities. Local food is meeting and exceeding targets (e.g. to increase assets by 50% by 2020)
 - Community Garden Expression of Interest - open to general public until Oct 31 to identify sites and start gardens (see vancouver.ca/communitygardens)
 - Food strategy - meeting with deputy city manager, and city manager to get input and recommendations on next steps. Strategy is finished and the goal is to take to Council by early 2013. FPC and community will be contacted once this happens.
4. Review and Approval of 2012-13 Work plan
2012-13 Work Plan Draft circulated - to review and revise if needed. Guests are reminded that working groups are open to non-members.
Brief descriptions:
 - Communications and Engagement - to improve food literacy and link with policy. Actions - revamp website as information hub, including content strategy, new content, videos, podcasts, visual mapping, communicating information from reports, translations, resource library, online directory of local food assets. Group is looking to link with other organizations, and to organize a volunteer appreciation event. It was suggested they consider links to the Food Secure Vancouver website.
 - Food Energy Descent Action Plan - explores community food resiliency (reduce fossil fuel use considering the future and climate change), taking concrete actions, engaging organizations, hosting events (in partnership with MoV), and working with UBC students.
 - Food Policy Landscape - goal is to identify key policies at different levels of government to understand impact on Vancouver's foodscape. Group will focus on explicit references, then indirect connections, and plans to meet with stakeholders. They are interested not only in regulatory policies, but also operational policies, reports, etc. They are in contact with a group in Puget Sound, Washington, who has a similar initiative. Group will produce a presentation and a summary report.
 - Food Waste - goal is to support community projects addressing behavior change to improve diversion, and advocate for local use of City's compost. They would a host small event to

discuss solutions and develop recommendations for Council, liaising with the Policy working group.

- Neighbourhood Food Networks - will continue to support creation of new networks, and to host events with networks and key organizations.

Working groups are requested to create a budget as if funds were available. Any revisions to the draft plan should be sent to Brent, who will circulate.

5. Introduction of theme - Paul Taylor
The Right to Food: Moving From Charity to Justice

In Canada, an agreement was ratified in 1976 that was part of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, listing food as a human right and obliging Canada to create conditions to allow for food access. The maximum benefit for social assistance is currently \$610/mo, with \$375 going directly to housing. This leaves \$7.58/day for food, leisure, transportation, and clothing per day. To compare, the current cost of keeping a male in prison is \$301/day. Another impediment is housing - with the average rent in Vancouver for a 1-bdrm apartment at \$919/mo, often a larger portion of the welfare cheque goes to housing. Because the government is not living up to its obligation with respect to the right to food, charity, community, and faith-based groups try to intervene but cannot address systemic issues. Recipients have no control over the food they are given, despite cultural or physical needs, which reinforces a two-tiered food system and unequal power relationships. Increased food justice exists on a spectrum where capacity is increased, alternate distribution is explored, related policies are adjusted, and poverty is not criminalized. The Broadbent Institute recommends that taxation and increasing minimum wage be examined to correct social inequities. Welfare rates need to be increased and indexed to inflation, and BC needs to create a poverty reduction strategy. This issue is central for the FPC, as part of the mandate of the VFPC includes creating a *just* and sustainable food system.

6. Panel of Respondents - Ted Bruce (VCH), Fraser Stuart (Raise the Rates), Gerry Kasten (VCH)
- Ted - the social justice argument is not always effective due to different value systems, and to the notion that poverty is absolute, while it is actually relative. He emphasized that the issue affects society as a whole, through impacts on health (physical and mental) and criminalization, and stressed the importance of work at the community level.
- Fraser - An example of poor government policy is locating a large university in a poor area, as many students use the cafeteria at Carnegie Hall, causing food shortages. The most important need is adequate and affordable housing; often people are left without a way to cook food. Welfare rates need to be increased, and throwing away edible food should be made illegal. He encouraged everyone to write letters to all levels of government.
- Gerry - 'Cost of Eating in BC' report (from Dieticians in Canada) indicates a much higher income needed than that provided by social assistance. Welfare rates need to be indexed to the ages of children in the family as well as the cost of living. He reiterated the nutritional and societal costs resulting from lack of food.

7. Roundtable Discussion

- Food stamps - would not be recommended for Canada due to potential stigma, and the fact that they do not cover vitamins, toiletries, etc.
- Welfare is divided into housing and all other supports, and the rate is same for all of BC, despite more expensive food in more remote places.
- Members and guest are encouraged to work through working groups (e.g. NFNs, food waste) and find ways for people to connect, while helping at the same time.
- Encourage community building, collective gardens, and bulk buying to empower people and create more balanced relationships.

- Food charity continuum - food banks (as emergency), community capacity building, opportunities for low cost food, leading to systems change. It was noted that the Vancouver Food Bank does training on canning, community kitchens and gardens, and can play a role in the continuum. Despite this, research shows that while all programs help to increase capacity, the main reason for reduced food access is lack of money.
- Food banks can use influence to advocate to government.
- Rates could be indexed to housing location. Raise the Rates advocates to index welfare rates to the Market Basket Measure, which is tied to location. Currently, rates are set arbitrarily.
- Role of culture in food choice - important for and related to enjoyment of food.
- Cost - it was noted that some items are more expensive in the DTES.
- Individual actions to help - participate in civil society organizations, write to MLAs, use connections, and increase dialogue.
- Role of FPC - it was recommended that FPC connect with the Social Housing Coalition in the City, which meets first Wed of the month at 7pm at Carnegie.
- In provincial election year, FPC could host a town hall meeting with political parties to talk food.

8. Next Steps

On May 29, 2012, City Council passed a resolution supporting the Raise the Rates coalition and asking the provincial government to remove barriers, end clawbacks, and increase the provincial income assistance rate. Brent, with help from Ross, Zsuzsi, Paul, Kim, and Shelby, will craft a similar motion for the FPC, to be circulated by email prior to presenting at the next meeting. It was suggested that a FPC from another municipality might be interested in partnering.

9. Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Shelby, seconded by Ross, carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm