

Vancouver Food Policy Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 17, 2014
6:00-8:30pm
Town Hall Room, City Hall



Chairs: Zsuzsi Fodor and Tara Moreau

Council Members: Kimberly Hodgson, Emme Lee, Brent Mansfield, Pat McCarthy, Robyn Carlson, Trish Kelly, Ross Moster, Helen Spiegelman, Chris Thoreau

Liaisons: Theresa Duynstee (MetroVan), Corrine Eisler (VCH), Orlando Schmidt (Ministry of Agriculture)

Regrets: Anna Cavouras, Dave Wilson, James O'Neill (Social Planning, City of Vancouver)

Absent: Jason Apple, Ilana Labow, Peter Ladner, Nicholas Scapillati, Heather Deal (City Council) Aaron Jasper (Park Board), Rob Wynen (Vancouver School Board)

Agenda Items:

1. Opening Round

Members introduced themselves. Twenty-six guests were present.

Corrine noted that successful [CFAI projects](#) were presented.

Pat attended the consultations on [Bill 24](#) (changes to the ALR). He reported that there was limited scope to comment, and guests were limited to the questions posted in advance on the website. There were twice as many civil servants as invited guests, and any changes were not up for discussion. Full minutes will not be made available, only a synopsis which does not reflect the full discussion that took place.

2. Motion to Accept Agenda and Previous Minutes (June & July 2014)

Moved by Brent, seconded by Trish, carried unanimously.

3. Staff Update (as sent to the Chairs prior to the meeting)

1) Urban Agriculture Expression of Interest and Application for Assistance

An awesome opportunity for people to get involved - As in previous years, the urban agriculture Expression of Interest, we're asking residents to tell us where they'd like to build community gardens and other urban agriculture projects. This year, we've translated some of the info into Chinese and doing a much more targeted outreach to Chinese speaking population. Also new this year, is we're providing some financial assistance to non-profits and other social serving organizations to start gardens as extensions of their current programming. (they have to have the land, and we'll provide some 'seed' money). Deadline for applications is Oct 5.

More information and applications on the [website](#).

2) The Sustainable Food Systems grants

Applications are now available for food-related program funding. Criteria for successful applicant include: increase access to healthy, affordable, and culturally diverse food for residents, and promoting inclusion, participation, celebration, skill-building and / or community capacity-building. If anyone has any questions contact James. Applications are available [here](#).

4. Updates and Discussion

- Sustenance Festival Town Hall (Trish)

Oct 15th will be the VFPC's fourth annual October meeting at the Sustenance Festival. The meeting will begin at 6pm at the Roundhouse, and is an all candidates forum. All candidates will be invited and will explore what they have done and what they plan to do with respect to food policy. Three spots/category are available, and candidates must fill in a questionnaire beforehand. Trish will moderate and Ilana will manage questions, both from the questionnaires and audience members. Volunteers are needed - two runners at the event and two people to help with set up at 5pm. Food donations are also sought, along with help increasing media coverage. Brent, Emme, Tara, Zsuzsi have volunteered. Eventbrite notice has been drafted, and will be sent once details are confirmed. The blog and social media will be used to promote the event. Trish and Ilana were thanked for their work on this.

- **Election Priority Working Group**
Following on the June meeting, a list of topics will be shared with candidates. Members invited to work on final draft at meeting Sept 24th, or to provide feedback if unable to attend.
- **Membership Process Update**
The VFPC will be dissolved December 8th when the new council is sworn in. The Chairs have been in touch with Councillor Reimer about process. The new Council can decide on the continued existence of the VFPC and the nomination process (as with all advisory committees). A call for members is expected in the new year at www.vancouver.ca/volunteer and will be posted on web and social media. Some VFPC members are ending their terms, some will automatically be renewed for 4 years (along with the new municipal council). It was recommended that the City should look at a contingency plan, as a four-year commitment may be too long for many people, and the process to replace members could be sped up. Existing members were reminded to resubmit applications. Liaisons, however, are managed by the VFPC.
- **Council of Councils meeting** - scheduled for Nov 24th, the meeting is an invitation to all members of all advisory committees, to meet with new City Councillors. It was noted that it will happen after the election.
- **Welfare Food Challenge**
Members and audience are encouraged to participate. The challenge is a week-long event (Oct 16 - 22) by [Raise the Rates](#) to raise awareness of the inadequacy of the social safety net, which provides \$26/week for food for a single person. [BC Poverty Reduction](#) is hosting a related event Sept 22. It was noted that the 'Cost of eating in BC' data has been completed, but has not been released to the public. The report was formerly done across the country by Dieticians of Canada, but is now housed in the provincial health services.
- **Arbutus Corridor Letter**
A letter was circulated to council members on July 28th and was voted on, then submitted to Mayor and Council. Since then, the gardens have been destroyed. It is unclear if CP received a copy of the letter.
- **GE free motion** - Teresa from GE-free BC
Suggestions for public education include a non-GMO awareness week, possibly in October, with a proclamation from the City. It was suggested that Graze restaurant could host, and have the Mayor or Councillor Reimer do a press conference before dinner. A second fun and educational event for the public could be linked to the Sustenance Festival, and/or a table at Village Vancouver's Neighbour Savour event at Heritage Hall. A Twitter or Facebook party has also been suggested. A working group will meet once or twice before launching. The City may be able to provide assistance with promotional materials. Help with press release and promotion is being sought.

5. Confronting First World Hunger

Guest Speakers Graham Riches & Janet Poppendieck

Graham is the author of [First World Hunger](#), and one of the founders of the FPC in 2004. Janet is the author of [Sweet Charity](#) and a food advocate in the US.

Graham - The issue of food charity or the right to food has been around by decades. Graham's book was first published in 1997, and has been updated to include more countries for comparison including Finland (where food banks began), Spain (who signed the [Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#), which when ratified, includes the right to food), Brazil (as an outlier to high income countries), Turkey, Hong Kong and China (non-Christian, exploring moral imperative to feed people), and Estonia (post-Soviet transition to capitalism). While there is a lack of national data in high-income countries, a key theme points to income inadequacy as a major cause of food insecurity. Globally, there has been a shift from income-based programs to direct food relief, and Graham questions both the effectiveness and desirability of that approach.

Janet - In the US, as welfare rates have stagnated, there has been an increasing number of people participating in the [SNAPS](#) program. In fact, twelve times more is spent on SNAPS than income assistance, leading to the success of the anti-hunger campaign relative to welfare advocacy. This is what Janet refers to as the 'advocate's dilemma', and as Janet points out "you can't food stamp your way out of poverty." Five factors can explain the relative success of food assistance programs in the US - Agriculture (programs originated from surplus product in the 1930s); Business (can create alliances knowing percent of sales are in SNAPS benefits); Core values (socially questionable businesses donate to food charities, for 'halo' effect); Devolution (mayors and governors leverage \$9 in economic activity \$5 in benefits provided); and Effectiveness (advocacy has been effective but issue has been misidentified as hunger, contributing to myth that food solves problem and not addressing underlying wage inequities and power inequities). The right to food is not about giving food to hungry people, nor about the government doing things for people; rather it is about governments recognizing their obligations under international law to realize the right to food through promotion of an adequate standard of living. Roles for other stakeholders can lead to 'joined up' food policy, indicating that the answer to hunger lies in social-economic policy.

Discussion

- Moving beyond food policy, to situate in broader discussions - 'joined up' food policy refers not only to agriculture, but also to health, environment, income security, trade, etc. We can have community gardens and farmers markets and community kitchens, meal programs, but unless universal, the system does not address the root causes. The [Potluck Café](#) is an example of combining those elements to see the principles working in practice.
- Point gardens - folks can work to earn points and share part of a harvest in exchange. Similar initiatives exist in the US.
- Beware of cost of tax cuts - they reduce capacity to move toward increasing benefits.
- Corporate donations - are supported by tax system in Canada, and tend to create large-scale industrial food systems which can threaten food security. Companies can donate. Some corporations raise prices for shrinkage then donate at a profit for tax benefits. This reduces funds available to increase welfare rates and undermines local agriculture by buying at lowest cost.
- Vancouver Food Bank - a progressive institution that can be looked to for best practices. They teach clients how to cook and process food rather than solely provide prepared and packaged food.
- Donors, food banks and depots all have a role to play. We need to look at intersections. The tax system plays a large role.

6. Heather Deal - Councillor's update

- Arbutus corridor - the City thought it could negotiate but has walked away from table as CP's estimate of value is not what it is assessed at, but rather is potential development value. At this point, CP cannot be stopped. The Park board is willing to provide more land on 6th east of Burrard.
- Capital plan - the draft includes up to 25 new community gardens, and while the food hub/bank is not specifically identified, it is included in the emerging priorities set, if an appropriate location is found.
- Mental health and addictions - food was identified as part of healing process and the importance of community gardens (like [Sole Food](#)) and Potluck Café was noted.
- New coal shipments through Fraser valley - low grade coal will come from Washington, and there is a concern that coal dust could be detrimental to agriculture. Metro Van is working to have it added to the list of safety concerns.

7. Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Pat, seconded by Tara, carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.