

Vancouver Food Policy Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 8, 2012
6:00-8:30pm
Strathcona Room, City Hall



Chair: Brent Mansfield

Council Members: Maria Burtlehaus, Trish Kelly, Ross Moster, Shelby Tay, Kim Sutherland, David Wilson

Liaisons: Thien Phan (Social Policy, City of Vancouver), Claire Gram (VCH), Arzeena Hamir (Richmond Food Security Society)

Invited Guest: Richard Heinberg

Regrets: Joanne Bays, Helen Spiegelman, Jason Boyce, Ilana Labow, Chris Thoreau, Heather Deal (Vancouver City Council), Aaron Jasper (Vancouver Park Board), Rob Wynen (VSB)

1. Welcome and Motion to Accept Agenda and Minutes
Amendment to January minutes: Item 6- Neighbourhood Food Networks. Added: Zsuzsi and Ross to become co-leads on this working group.
Motion to accept agenda and amended January minutes: moved by Arzeena, seconded by David, carried unanimously.
2. Richard Heinberg - Food and Farming Transition toward a post-carbon food system
Richard presented information on the effect of diminishing supply of oil on the food system. Countries with higher incomes have a lower proportion of farmers because of higher mechanization on farms. Currently, it takes about 7 calories of energy to produce 1 calorie of food, moving food from a source of energy, to an energy sink. Energy and economic costs increase as more 'unconventional' oil is produced, leading to higher food prices. This vulnerability in the food system can be offset by using more efficient transport and creating a more localized food system. There is a strong need to empower small-scale producers by providing better access to land, and teaching them to add value to products. Full report available at postcarbon.org/food.

Discussion

- Despite claims of agri-corporations, that technologies such as GMOs are necessary, the system would still be centralized and create more debt for farmers.
- At the Canada Food Summit, speakers from mainstream food suppliers argue for scaling-up production, implying that they are not heeding this relevant information. We must advocate for decentralization and diversity, not continuing to trade economic efficiency for resilience, but rather finding an appropriate balance.
- Governments and citizens must encourage policies that encourage small scale and subsistence producers, not only those for export. Locally, support is needed for farmers markets, school gardens, and school food programs that source from local producers.
- Food can be used as a leverage point to consider peak oil, and the Post Carbon Institute can offer ideas and examples to empower localized production.
- Globally, mechanization has generated wealth to allow some rise above subsistence. In BC, we have the ALR and a supply management system to control size and centralization of certain products like dairy and poultry farms, which leads to smaller farms here. The ALR has room for small production but not many larger parcels. Supply management is under attack in the free trade agreement, and if lost, the infrastructure of agriculture could be endangered. The structure allows our peri-urban zone to produce a lot of food, which can support institutional buying policies. However, a balanced agenda is needed - if there is too much decentralization, climate change can put local communities at risk. Thought needs to be given as to where to best centralize and dedicate fuel resources and where to localize with more manual labour.
- Some larger corporations are already in the process of decentralization, but governments are not willing to make changes.
- The pipeline is an example of economic growth at the expense of increased insecurity. We are

exporting our economic future and will face even higher environmental and economic costs for extraction.

- Our current economic model rationalizes the depletion of resources, and so is linked to the energy and food crises. Farmers feel pressure to use the latest technology to squeeze ever more out of their land to pay down debt. COABC will announce interest-free micro-loan.
- Recycling of phosphorus can be done through recycling human and animal waste as well as increasing microbial activity of soils.
- New research shows that more energy is used at the farm level, not on transport. Despite the implication, long-term trends in the availability of fuel must be considered. We will be less mobile in the future and we need to plan.
- While it is necessary to focus on carbon emission, focus also needs to be given to diet-related behavior changes, and eating from within what our ecosystems are able to provide. In the interior, meat is a realistic necessity, despite the energy intensity.

3. FEDAP (Food Energy Descent Action Plan)

FEDAP is a joint initiative between Village Vancouver and the FPC, about how to create a more resilient food system in the face of climate change, oil depletion, and a fragile economic system. Next event is on Feb 28th at the Museum of Vancouver, with support from dozens of sponsors. Participants will again backcast from 2040 and examine what responses can be made. Studies such as Food Secure Vancouver provide baseline data and context. The connection between short-term food justice and longer-term resiliency will be explored. The status of farmers needs to be elevated. It was clarified that farming in the Fraser Valley can be profitable, but perhaps not for all mixed crop vegetable producers, or the systems that new farmers are interested in. Through partnerships, the issue of eating from the local foodshed can be addressed in a culturally-appropriate way. FPC could help to identify which resources can be harvested sustainably in order to stay within biophysical limits.

4. Staff Report - Thien Phan

Food Strategy - engagement is underway, Rain City event had 300 attendees, and received great feedback. Multicultural engagement of food strategy addresses how the City can meet diverse food system needs in the face of multiple challenges. A 'What I heard' document is also being drafted. Wendy Mendes is working on the early stages of the report, which will be translated into policy then go back to the departments with action items. Council should receive it in early summer. A presentation is planned for the March meeting; FPC input is welcome then. On Feb 15th a presentation will go to Council to provide context for reports on the SOLEFood expansion and funds for the New City Market. Contact Thien or James if interested in attending. Procurement - Local Food Plus is meeting with 104 facilities to see what they are buying and how to gather information. Phase 1 report will have recommendations and is due back at the end of March. Phase 2 would be pilot projects; phase 3 would address implementation and policy. Some pilots will be based on readiness. VCH report expands procurement to education and land use policies. ACTION: Brent to circulate to council. On PHSA website under 'Health' (http://www.phsa.ca/NR/rdonlyres/70B15B27-6E79-42D3-9B27-D50AAFEFEA71/0/FoodActionFramework_FINAL_Dec2011.pdf).

5. Discussion of Orientation of New Members

The following suggestions were made on how to orient new members:

- documents package - history, vision, mission, mandate, relationship to city council, accomplishments, list of working groups, expectations of commitment, action plan
- mentorships
- strategic planning
- presentation on how the city operates

6. Discussion of Possible Alumni Gathering

Proposed event would be celebration, to thank members, and learn from the past. To bring in the history and people. Support was expressed for this idea.

7. Discussion of Strategic Planning Possibilities
With new members, a session was suggested, possibly 4-5 hours on a Saturday in April or May that would serve also serve as a social event. Would be practical as it relates to budget. A creative effort can be made for those not able to attend.
8. Membership Update
City Council Selection Committee has recommendations and FPC is waiting to hear back. It is expected that new members will attend next meeting.
9. Any Other Updates Or Announcements
 - Richard Heinberg speaking at Langara on Friday as opening of the World Community Film Fest.
 - Trish - met a farmer looking for commercial kitchen space. Contact Trish with any leads.
 - Feb 16th at 7pm session with experienced local farmer on leasing land for new farmers at Terra Nova Rural Park, free admission. Leasingland.eventbrite.com.
 - Feb 28th MoV FEDAP-looking for donations of food and funds.
 - Youth Food Policy Council is having strategic planning session on Sunday.
 - Van Dusen Botanical Garden Seedy Saturday Feb 25th
10. Closing Round
Council members and sixteen guests introduced themselves, and shared highlights.
11. Motion to Adjourn
Moved by Trish, seconded by Maria, carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28pm