



VANCOUVER FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

MINUTES

APRIL 29, 2021

A meeting of the Vancouver Food Policy Council was held on Thursday, April 29, 2021, at 6:06 pm, by electronic means.

PRESENT: Clare Cullen
Joey Liu
Tamer Mohamed Hussein
Martina Marsic
Marc Schutzbank
Jesse Veenstra
Emily Voong

ABSENT: Evan Bowness
Heather Escobar
Sarah Siska

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Michael Wiebe, Council Liaison
Caitlin Dorward, Social Planner, Social Policy and
Projects, Staff Liaison
Trustee Estrellita Gonzalez, Vancouver School Board
Rachel Telling, Sustainability Specialist, Sustainability
Group, Staff Liaison
Rebecca Till, Environmental Stewardship Coordinator
Vancouver Park Board

RECORDER: Vicky Baker

*Denotes absence for a portion of the meeting.

WELCOME

The Chair acknowledged that we are meeting on the unceded homelands of the ʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish), and sel̓íl̓w̓it̓ul̓h (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and give thanks for their generosity and hospitality on these lands.

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Joey Liu
SECONDED by Emily Vroong

THAT the Vancouver Food Policy Council approve the Minutes from the meeting of January, 2021, as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Introductions and Liaison Updates

Members and liaisons introduced themselves. Quorum was reached. 19 Guests were present.

- *Councillor Wiebe*
 - Reported on the recent staff report presented to Council “One Year In: City of Vancouver Contributions to Covid-19 Recovery and Council Covid-19 Recovery Committee (CCRC) Report Back to Council” (<https://council.vancouver.ca/20210427/documents/r1.pdf>) . It includes a report on the status of several food policy initiatives, including urban farming policy review (staff report back expected later in 2021) and the development of a food hub (which was explored at various points from 2021-2018 but has not yet materialized).

Discussion

- The policy direction is in the False Creek Flats plan, but the work has been stalled.
 - It was noted that a definition for ‘food hub’ is not clear at this time.
 - A member noted that the Jewish Family Services is creating a food hub near Quebec and 2nd. What is the role of private and charitable organizations that move these ideas forward, and what is the role of the City?
 - An attendee commented that the original plan proposed by the Vancouver Farmers Markets (VFM) to create a New City Market focussed on aggregation and distribution then evolved to work with the food bank and shifted priorities. VFM would be interested in participating in future discussions.
- *Trustee Gonzalez*
 - Met with MP Joyce Murray to advocate for a universal school food program and was told the federal government currently has other priorities. There is opportunity with the provincial government as it was included in the mandate letter for the Minister of Education. Vancouver School Board (VSB) would like to be engaged and will need to think creatively about how to support the program.
 - The VSB’s Food Working Group is expected to begin work in September.
 - VSB Budget – no longer has surplus, funds to be set aside for Covid impacts. A request for a garden coordinator has been made.

Discussion

- BC Chapter for the Coalition of Healthy School Food received \$300k grant to continue work.
 - Process for distribution to schools is unclear, there may be opportunity to leverage existing relationships.
- *Rebecca Till (Park Board staff)*
 - Currently considering the process for making requests to capital budgets in regard to equality.
 - LFAP update – working in collaboration with the new Decolonization, Arts & Culture Department, noting the importance of food systems and land. The first draft will be revised and will include a spatial analysis. The draft will go to key staff and the community advisory committee for further revisions and to the Board in Fall 2021 before being implemented.
 - Brewer’s Park – new community garden in partnership with Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House. Leona Brown is leading work on indigenous plants; partners are being sought for programming.

- Community centres have reopened and are focussed on children's programming. Food programs for adults are suspended.
- There is a new Community Centre Strategy planning process based on VanPlay. Sarah Carten and Rebecca are working with the planning team and they hope to present to VFPC in July.

Discussion

- Requests for new community gardens on Park land can be directed to Rebecca.
- First phase Public engagement for the LFAP update is finished. Plan to connect with Vancouver Farmers Markets for feedback.

- *Rachel Telling (Sustainability Staff)*
 - Vancouver is a pre-signatory to the Glasgow declaration, examining the role of municipalities in leveraging food action tied to the climate emergency. <https://www.glasgowdeclaration.org/>
 - Greenest city grants – funding several good food programs, including indigenous food programming.
 - Staffing – there will be a replacement while Rachel is on maternity leave.

- *Caitlin Dorward (Social Policy Staff)*
 - Currently reviewing several rezoning applications that have triggered the Sustainable Large Development policy, including the Jericho lands and Heather lands, both owned by MST Development Corp.
 - Free and Low Cost food map project continues. The [online version](#) has been launched and the print-friendly/PDF version will continue to be updated about once every two months.
 - Transition to next term of VFPC - Application period is closed and new members will be appointed by Council on May 18 then notified. New committees will be trained in May/June then begin meetings in July/June. CAITLIN will connect with returning members regarding orientation..
 - Social Policy's small and medium capital grant applications are optn; info here - <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/capital-grants-program.aspx>
 - Staffing – Caitlin is in a new position and will be working full time on food. A new hire will be made for her previous position.

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2. Urban Farming Guidelines

Presentation from Marc on behalf of the Urban Farming Working Group: *The Urban Farming Working Group has put together a draft motion framing the history of urban farming and to ask council to remove barriers to urban farming [circulated prior to meeting].*

Urban agriculture has existed in Vancouver for a long time. In 2010, urban farmers were looking for legitimacy, and this led to the development and adoption of the Urban Farm Guidelines in 2016. These Guidelines set limitations on farm size and scope which farmers were concerned would impact farms' ability to thrive – e.g. requiring permits for hoop houses. When the Guidelines were adopted, Council directed staff to report back on the impact of the Guidelines after 2 years. To date, the Vancouver Urban Farming Society (VUFS) has documented the impact as being negative with a decrease in the number of farms and some not applying for licenses. The motion presented by the Urban Farming Working Group aims to inform the report back that staff are working on and plan to present to Council this year, and encourages policies that can have a positive impact for urban farms.

Discussion

Members and attendees provided the following comments:

- The Guidelines were adopted to reduce financial liability for the City; and farmers did not feel supported.
- While urban farms in Vancouver may fail for several reasons, it has been documented by VUFS that the Guidelines have had an impact.
- The permitting process needs to be simplified. While class A/B will likely still need permits, for smaller scale and farm stands, outright approval may make more sense.
- The motion was drafted by the Urban Farming Working Group in collaboration with VUFS. Staff have also consulted with most urban farmers to get impact and feedback on the review of Urban Farm Guidelines.
- Best practices from other cities are included in VUFS' [Policy and Possibilities](#) report.
- If the size limitation on urban farms, it could enable farmed properties to achieve Class 9 (farm) status, lowering their property taxes owing. The City receives the same amount overall; the amount would be redistributed to other property owners.
- The current guidelines state "No herbicide or pesticide may be used" which could be amended to allow for limited use of organic products.
- The definition of 'off-farm' needs to be clarified to allow for sale. Farm gate sales are allowed under class B only. \

The Council liaison explained that if the VFPC passes this motion, a Councillor could then bring it forward as a Member's motion at a City Council meeting. As part of that process, staff would first have the opportunity to review the Council member's draft motion and add feedback for the Councillors consideration. If the Councillor chooses to bring the motion forward, it will be made public one week before the Council meeting.

The draft motion was amended based on the points raised in the discussion and the final motion was presented.

Urban Farming Motion

MOVED by Clare Cullen

SECONDED by Tamer Hussein

WHEREAS

1. The goal of this initiative is to support the 'seeding' of small scale urban farms that grow Vancouver food for Vancouver families. For example, imagine walking next door to a small backyard farm, where residents can load up on choy, pick up a few seedlings, and bring a bunch of daffodils home. Imagine an old gas station with raised beds where an urban farmer holds a weekly U-pick for salmon berries. Imagine residents being able to easily grow the food they need for themselves and their communities through supportive urban farming policies.
2. Urban Farming is broadly recognized for its potential to help achieve city-wide goals in the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan, Vancouver Food Strategy, Healthy City Strategy, Vancouver Economic Action Strategy, Transportation 2040 Plan, Food Waste Targets and COVID 19 Recovery Program; and
3. Whereas the Report of the Council COVID-19 Recovery Committee specifically names "vulnerable food supply" as a key theme about the COVID-19 Recovery and "enabling local food production," as a recommended activity for COVID Recovery Plans and the Climate Emergency; and

4. Whereas in the Council Report on the Covid 19 Recovery Program on April 27th specifically references allowing urban farming and urban food production in items 85, 94, 95, and 96 - where it is noted that staffs first priority is related to efforts that support urban food production within the municipality; and
5. Whereas the Urban Farm Guidelines were adopted by City Council in 2016 with the intent to assist the development of safe, neighbourly and productive urban farms and create a more sustainable food system for Vancouver; and
6. Whereas due to concern from the Vancouver Food Policy Council that the Urban Farm Guidelines would pose barriers to farmers, Council adopted the 2016 Urban Farm Guidelines while directing staff to “report back to Council on the effectiveness of these initiatives following the 2017 growing season;” and
7. Whereas, the 2017 [“Class B’ Urban Farm Guidelines: Impacts & Recommendations”](#) Report (prepared for the Vancouver Urban Farming Society with funding from the City of Vancouver), The 2021 [Policy and Possibilities](#) Report (commissioned by the Vancouver Urban Farming Society, funded by the Real Estate Foundation), Farmers Dialogue at the [2020 Urban Farming Forum](#) detail challenges posed by outsized Development Permit and Business License requirements; and
8. Whereas, the 2017-2019 Urban Farming Census documents a decline in the Vancouver farming sector in part due to the Urban Farm Guidelines, with some farms moving to adjacent municipalities; and
9. Whereas, on March 31st 2021 City Council passed a [motion](#) (see p.18) “Calling for a Plan to Clear Vancouver’s Permit and License Backlog and Revamp this Critical City Service,” looking to reduce the work and backlog of permits and licensing; and
10. Whereas, city staff are undertaking a review of the Guidelines per Council’s [2016 direction](#) (see p.12) that “the Managing Director of Social Policy and Projects be instructed to report back to Council on the effectiveness of [the Urban Farm Guidelines] following the 2017 growing season.” However, this direction does not specifically ask staff to resolve the top two constraints to urban farming that have been raised by stakeholders prior to and since the adoption of the Guidelines: land access and over-regulation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Vancouver Food Policy Council recommends that City of Vancouver Council request that staff’s review of the Urban Farm Guidelines, currently underway and due back in Q2 or Q3 of 2021, according to the recent report “One Year In: City of Vancouver Contributions to Covid-19 Recovery and Council Covid-19 Recovery Committee (CCRC) Report Back to Council, brings forward recommendations to Council guided by the following:

1. Departments including ACCS, Finance, Development Services, Planning, and Law to develop policies that promote and deregulate barriers to urban farming including:
 - A. simplify the Zoning and Development Bylaw to allow farms as Outright Approval Use in all districts, including in all existing and future Comprehensive Development district bylaws, eliminating the need for a Development Permit; thus reducing staff time required for urban farming development permits;
 - B. incentivizing the leasing of land to farm operations, allowing farms to scale up by removing the 7,000 m² cap on a combined leased planting area for any one urban farm business license holder;
2. Explore allowing limited off-farm farm products to be sold and/or distributed from farm sites to help support financial feasibility of urban farms and to diversify available BC products.
3. Deregulate plastic-covered hoop houses and high tunnels mounted in-ground from the Vancouver Building Bylaw;

4. Identify, delineate and publish the list of building permits necessary for known indoor Class B farm types and look for ways to simplify, expedite and minimize costs associated with the building permit process;
5. Remove the requirement for site plan/ map of production sites for all Class A farm sites as this is not required by neighbouring jurisdictions and is a significant informational burden on farms with multiple sites;
6. Allow other urban farming products besides fruit and vegetables, such as flowers, honey, eggs, fibre, seeds, nuts, seedlings, herbs, mushrooms, plant cuttings;
7. Allow non-disruptive urban farming activities outside 8am to 9pm;
8. Amend regulations for on-site sales of farm products to enable multi-site farms to aggregate farm products for sale on one site (e.g. an urban farm with 6 sites, can aggregate and sell farm products at any one of those sites).

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Working Group Updates - *Update on works in progress from working group to be continued in new term.*

- Leadership team – preparing for transition, including orientation and transfer of email and social media accounts.
- Food waste - have not met recently.
- Food cultivation and urban agriculture - will continue to advance the urban farming motion and work with City. More work is needed on Class 8/9 for community gardens on development sites. Work overlaps with LFAP
- Children and youth – BC-Coalition for Healthy School Food received 3 years' funding. Working to increase membership in the Coalition of other FPCs across Canada.
- Development/retail – this is ongoing work that the VFPC has a role in.
- Community Food Programming – work remains to explore how to build long-term sustainability into all the food initiatives. More local food centres are needed to anchor people to food.

4. Transition to New Term - Discussion

Members discussed changes or advice for a successful next term:

- Training should be provided for Roberts Rules of Order and how motions are written/passed
- Each member should only be expected to commit to one working group.
- Roles for Leadership team should be clarified.
- The priorities set this term are still relevant, there is a lot of opportunity. It is important to focus on what is manageable and do it well.
- There should be more community engagement. Meetings could have a public-facing first hour, followed by business.
- Returning members can help guide the first meetings of the new term.
- The role of tracking plans was noted, to hold those accountable for actions.

The staff liaison commented:

- Clerk's office reviewing advisory committees, expected to report back in Fall or later on the structure and supports, including equity issues, compensation, and the use of Roberts rules.
- Social policy has requested an additional liaison from Planning.
- Clerk's office reviewing advisory committees, expected to report back in Fall or later on the structure and supports, including equity issues, compensation, and the use of Roberts rules.

Attendees (members of the public) also provided suggestions:

- Suggest to match priorities to Sustainable Development Goals.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Clare Cullen

SECONDED by Marc Schutzbank

THAT this meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The Committee adjourned at 8:50pm.

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DRAFT