

Vancouver Food Policy Council

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 28, 2014

6:00-8:30pm

Town Hall Room, City Hall



Chairs: Zsuzsi Fodor and Tara Moreau

Council Members: Anna Cavouras, Robyn Carlson, Trish Kelly, Ilana Labow, Emme Lee, Kimberly Hodgson, Helen Spiegelman

Liaisons: James O'Neill (Social Planning, City of Vancouver), Theresa Duynstee (MetroVan), Corrine Eisler (VCH), Orlando Schmidt (Ministry of Agriculture)

Regrets: Jason Apple, Joanne Bays, Peter Ladner, Brent Mansfield, Pat McCarthy, Ross Moster, Nicholas Scapillati, Chris Thoreau, David Wilson, Heather Deal (City Council), Aaron Jasper (Park Board), Rob Wynen (Vancouver School Board)

1. Opening Round

Members introduced themselves. Twenty-two guests were present.

2. Motion to Accept Agenda and Previous Minutes

Motion to accept agenda: moved by Trish, seconded by Anna, carried unanimously.

April minutes will be circulated before being approved at next meeting.

Add bullet to May agenda, item 4: Trish Kelly

3. Staff Update - James O'Neill

- [Greenest City Grants](#) - funds put aside to advance GCAP for community groups, process run by Vancouver Foundation. Next round includes three categories. Application process is two-step, with Letters of Expression due July 25th. Many food projects have been awarded funds in the past. Committee is looking for more food applications related to the Food Strategy and GCAP, especially supporting new innovations and also pilot projects.
- Incubator kitchen - partnership with Vancouver Community College, Save-on Meats, Vancity. There are three foci: community kitchen (current Expression of Interest) for processing, education, capacity building. Contact James for application.
- GMO/GE-free Vancouver - motion put forward by Councillor Carr, passed by council and given to staff. Staff is to consider implications of GMO but want fuller conversation. Potential to revisit next meeting to discuss FPC role and potential actions for staff, focusing on those that are tangible.

Discussion

- GE-free BC had a template with motions that other cities have passed but there are issues with jurisdiction and preventing sale of crops/seeds, etc. It was suggested that Councillor Carr could present. The motion is symbolic but actual change is a challenge. Park Board agreed to not procure GMO trees. There are similarities with the pesticide campaign, which could provide some best practices. Other municipalities have passed the motion as a symbolic gesture with hopes that it is strategically important while recognizing that it is not enforceable.
- Interns - Ashley - UBC SCARP - MA project is related to community gardens and inclusion as a starting point for social diversity in the food system. Wes - Tallahassee - will work with food bank and Save-on Meats.
- Arbutus Corridor community gardens - Social Planning to provide update for next meeting.

4. Updates and Discussion

- Meeting with Staff and Council Liaisons - chairs met with Social Planning to discuss the election and the non-partisan role of VFPC, and to reflect on moving forward with VFPC platform ideas. Will be explored in June to share with parties and candidates and get food on agenda, ready for October Sustenance festival. Also discussed was the diversification of FPC members, and including criteria in next membership drive. Met with other chairs of advisory councils. Trying to create common standards, to include a section that asks for comments from relevant advisory committee in staff reports. In recent report, several advisory groups spoke to why they supported that motion, made for a powerful statement. A database of motions is being created which will allow tracking of motions by the Canadian Federal Municipalities. Decision-making processes - how to establish a process among FPC members for recommendations to support other initiatives/groups to ensure the process is participatory. It was

thought that requests for support could be made if sufficient background context is provided. To be discussed at June meeting. The need for a repository for information (or project management software) that could help preserve institutional knowledge will be discussed in June.

- Advisory Committee Chairs Meetings - will be a council of councils meeting Nov 24th. In the past has been an opportunity to meet to the new City Council. If someone is interested in creating a presentation, contact the chairs. Can discuss in June. Manger of community services is working on matrix of roles and responsibilities for councils and staff.
- Timeline of Upcoming Meetings & June Meeting - June - food policy priorities for election; July - Reflecting on a year of reconciliation; September - cross cultural farming (TBC); October - sustenance festival; November - term-end reflection, thanks, survey and celebrate.
- Membership Term Notice - Members are elected and can hold a maximum of two terms (formerly 3 years each but will soon be 4). FPC is dissolved then appointed by City based on recommendations of FPC. Helen, Trish, and Robin have terms ending. A committee will be created at the June meeting to look at gaps and food movements and how to be more representative. The City also puts out a call for the public to apply. Encourage relevant residents to stay in touch when the City releases their call.
- Communications Update - If items are valuable to council (events, etc.), feel free to share with members directly. People can now sign up for newsletter on Facebook.
- Vancouver Youth Food Policy Council - have had two meetings, if interested in getting involved, contact chairs. Age range is informally under 30.
- Sustenance Update - Parks Board needs information and wants blurb for programming. Anna, Dave, and Ross are on committee, contact if interested in joining. Goal is to get food on the election agenda.
- Parks Board nomination - FPC member Trish Kelly is seeking nomination for the upcoming election. Has demonstrated ability to work with bureaucracy to move forward issues of importance - see previous work on Food Asset task force. Votetrishkelly.ca to learn more.

5. Introduction of Topic - Migrant Farm Labour

Presentations by Joana Bettocchi-Barow (SFU) & Felix Martinez (Agriculture Workers Alliance)

Felix has worked with TFW since 2008. Until 2011 he worked at Mexican Consulate for SAWP before blowing the whistle for the blacklisting of workers wanting to unionize. He began with AWA in 2012.

The SAWP program was introduced in 1970s to bring workers from Caribbean then also Mexico to fill positions that Canadians wouldn't do. However, the program is now flawed - in 40 years the rules have not changed. Workers can never become residents and cannot change employer, and are dependent on employers to be able to come back the next season. Workers rent housing provided by the employer but many are substandard and overcrowded. The guidelines are not sufficient; for example only one bathroom is required for every 10 workers. The workers have no access to EI or CPP yet they pay for it, along with taxes. The SAWP program has been compared to modern slavery, or a disposable work force. If workers are injured, it is easy to replace them. They keep coming because what they earn is more than back home (\$10.33/hr). These conditions create opportunities for abuse - employers sometimes discount fees from the workers' pay. Many workers develop health issues.

Joana is a graduate student at SFU, and uses an ethnographic survey to research access to health services for SAWP workers. The work hours can be very long, leaving no time to see a doctor or access services. Workers are often off Sundays when services are not open. Access to transportation is limited as the locations are rural but services are in the city. Employers are supposed to provide transportation, but workers may be scared to let employers know they have a condition. Workers are assumed to be Spanish-speaking but many are indigenous so their information is not provided in their language. There is no way to manage institutional information. Continuation of care for recurring conditions (e.g. pesticide exposure, other medical condition) could be broken when sent back. Nobody has had direct contact with migrant woman so there is limited access to services for sexual abuse. Overall, there is a domination of fear - of being sent home, no access to care, perception of weakness. Workers often don't know who to trust, so the employer does not find out and risk losing their opportunity to participate.

At the federal level, more needs to be done to increase opportunities for immigration. The AWA works with the labour movement to help workers unionize - not for higher wages, but for job security. There is a proposal to have Vancouver become a Sanctuary City - to provide access to all regardless of status. This would impact both TFW and SAWP workers, removing the fear of their employer finding out. Toronto and Hamilton are Sanctuary cities. It would mean workers would need access services in Vancouver if they work in the suburbs. There is a mobile clinic that goes to rural areas. Employers are to take workers to a doctor, and some do, but not always. Sometimes this triggers the worker to be sent home because it is an expense for the farm owners.

- Questions & Discussion

- Other parts of the food system. Low-skilled workers are being exploited in the food services in the TFW program. SAWP is a real shortage of workers. If they shut down the program, the Canadian agricultural system would break down. Guatemalans come in under the TFW so creates tensions because they work under different conditions.
- There are about 400 employers, 4000 Mexican workers across BC under the SAWP. It was estimated there are about 3000 Guatemalans here under the low-skilled program (agriculture stream).
- AWA is working on a brand for products for those that are produced by unionized workers - like domestic fair trade. This is done in Quebec by UFCW. To unionize, the workers sign cards, followed by a vote 10 days later. In this time, the employer can pressure the workers to vote no.
- The Bridge clinic is a sanctuary clinic, but more mobile units are needed to go to rural areas, where workers can go anonymously (e.g. parking lots of grocery stores).
- More inspections and enforcement needs to happen. The consulates act as brokers, and are the ones supposed to look after worker well-being.
- BC greenhouse growers associations - workers were not receptive to union.
- A US domestic fair trade association campaign showed what impact one cent more per pound of tomatoes would have on workers. Pressure was put on large purchasers (fast food, etc.)
- It was suggested that good employers on farms be highlighted. The bulk of workers do not want to stay in Canada.
- Churches play a large role for social connections.
- Movies such as '[El Contrato](#)' describe the situation. It was made 12 years ago but the same problems still exist. Caesar's Last Fast is another.
- There are some positives. Workers go where farms need lots of labour, there is a feeling that the majority wants to do well.
- Better liaising could happen with the Agriculture Advisory Councils.
- To improve employment standards, the most effective would be to amend the legislation at federal level. UFCW has lobbied federal government, and it was suggested that the FPC and CoV join that lobby.
- It was suggested that the FPC participate in a public awareness campaign but would need guidance on what it would look like.
- Goal is to have TFW enjoy the same working conditions as Canadians. Farm work is hard physical labour and can lead to health problems.
- Guests invited to continue collaboration with chairs.
- The Vancouver Food Charter refers to a JUST food system, and can be leveraged.

6. Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Robyn carried unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 8:37pm.