

Vancouver Food Policy Council

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

6:00pm-8:30pm

Town Hall Room, City Hall



Chairs: Caitlin Dorward and Tara Moreau

Council Members: Veronik Campbell, Anna Cavouras, Larry Copeland, Rebecca Cuttler, Zsuzsi Fodor, Antonietta Gesualdi, Dirk Gibbs, Chashma Heinze, Will Jung, Stephanie Lim, Emme Lee, Pat McCarthy, Colin Stansfield,

Liaisons: Adriane Carr (City Council), James O'Neill (Social Policy, City of Vancouver), Sarah Carten (Social Policy, City of Vancouver), Corinne Eisler (VCH), Michael Wiebe (Park Board) Heather Deal (City Council),

Invited guests: Kevin Huang (Hua Foundation)

Regrets: Ilana Labow, Kimberly Hodgson, David Speight Theresa Duynstee, Janet Fraser (VSB), Gabrielle Kissinger

Absent: Andrew Christie, Orlando Schmidt, Saber Miresmailli

Agenda Items:

1 Motion to Accept Agenda and Previous Minutes

Moved by Colin, seconded by Caitlin, carried unanimously.

2 Introductions

Members of the council and twenty-two guests introduced themselves.

3 Working Group Updates

Reporting framework:

- *What?* - Report on the activity of the WG over the past month
- *Now what?* - What the WG's/VFPC's next steps are, or discussion

Working Groups Reporting Today:

- Development/False Creek Flats - Caitlin

The group met after the False Creek Flats advisory committee meeting (Colin and David attended), and have a sense of how to provide input for the Centre for Food Excellence.

The group will meet with the COV Planner, and also request time at the March meeting to discuss ideas for input. The group has not yet discussed the rezoning application for Pearson-Dogwood, and will do so after attending the open houses.

- School Food - Antonietta

The group plans to put forth a motion at the March meeting to become a member of the Coalition for Healthy School Food. This would involve having the VFPC logo on their position paper, participating in meetings, and sharing relevant information. The Coalition's objectives focus on research, engagement, and advocacy to seek a \$1B investment from the federal government. It was clarified that there is no requirement to travel to their yearly meeting. Membership is reviewed annually; there is no long-term commitment to be a member. ACTION: A draft motion will be circulated by email along with the membership terms and the position paper.

- Ad-Hoc Procurement Working Group - Veronik

The group has met and will reach out and to attend Park Board meetings and offer support. They have outlined some areas where members could bring expertise. ACTION: Pat or Veronik will circulate an email.

- Party Planning committee - Tara

In lieu of the regular meeting for April, a "Celebrate food with us" gathering is planned, in collaboration with the City. The goals are to celebrate achievements of the VFPC, bring together relevant organizations, and to recognize champions. This is an opportunity to visualize the impact of food policy. Introductions, a panel of speakers, food, and Golden Carrot awards will be included as part of the event. ACTION: Nomination forms will be shared; members are asked to think about who they could nominate as a food champion. A photographer and AV for the music are needed - contact chairs if available. An award selection committee will be formed; Larry and Colin have volunteered. It was clarified that as a public event, photo permissions are not required. Attempts will be made to invite past members, if contact information can be found.

4 Liaison Updates

Reporting Framework

- *What?* - Report on the item (prioritize things that are actionable)
- *Now what?* - What the VFPC can do, what the Liaison needs, or discussion

Liaisons Reporting Today:

- City Council

The NE False Creek Stewardship group (focusing on viaducts, hospital, gardens, etc.) is in the process of being formed. The February 3 report does not explicitly mention food, but can be included indirectly in many areas. It will be an open application process to join the group. ACTION: Heather will follow up with specifics.

Urban Farming - The report will go to council Feb 23, and is currently on the website.

- Park Board

The General Manager consents to having a staff member at the FPC meetings for a more direct link and in order to facilitate the operationalization of food-related policies. The biodiversity strategy for Park Board is complete, and includes creation of micro-forests, and educational gardens (e.g. new community gardens must have section for community).

- City Staff

1. Kitchen study recommendations - Sarah Carten

The study looked at 49 kitchens located in city facilities. Additionally, UBC students visited approximately 30 other kitchens (in churches, etc.) in food strategy, and infrastructure - how are they used, can be designed better. The report will be finalized by the end of February, with a presentation in March. Contact Sarah if interested in attending. The preliminary findings highlight differences in use and condition between neighbourhood houses and community centre kitchens. A challenge was identified that in addition to licensing and VCH requirements, that kitchens must be zoned as 'industrial' to be able to sell food they prepare. This could have implications for policies in False Creek. Recommendations include creating a community kitchen facility guide, to harmonize development applications for kitchen renovations, to subsidize food safe, and to collaborate with VSB. The presentation of Preliminary Findings are included below.

Discussion

- It was clarified that the report will not go to City council, and is intended for staff to assist decision making for grant applications (infrastructure, programming, etc.)
- Sometimes, there is a disconnect between the mandate of the organization and need to pay back expensive facilities through rentals.
- Accessible kitchens - only one kitchen visited was fully accessible. Some others are able to be entered by wheelchairs.
- It was suggested that rescued food could be used to pay people rather than money, to avoid stigma at foodbanks and keep dignity intact.
- There was no financial analysis done of the different cost structures, including community food markets.
- The report will include some recommendations for future designs, and can include consideration for teaching kitchens.
- Community centres often don't know how to maximize use of their kitchens, as most have traditionally been focused on recreation. A broader concept of their mandate should include food programming, and the hiring of more staff to deliver food programs.
- It was suggested that this be a new category of food-related grants, apart from food-security focused ones, which are typically much smaller.
- Councillors are willing to support zoning changes to allow commissaries in community centres, which could be used by food trucks and others.
- Collaboration with VSB could include neighbourhood houses or other organizations using home-economics rooms or kitchens. Most high schools are equipped, and some elementary schools.
- Health permits can be a challenge for kitchens operations.

2. Update on urban farming policy report to council - James O'Neill

Urban farming report is now online for the council agenda next week.

Process and timeline - the report will go to council on Feb 23 for referral to public hearing because of the zoning and bylaw changes. A public hearing will be scheduled for March 8 or April 5. The FPC is encouraged to attend. Three documents are included in the report - the zoning development bylaw change, licensing changes, and guidelines.

Recommendations - There will be two classes created for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables - Class A for sites in residential areas and Class B for those in industrial and commercial spaces. A new business license category will be created, and all farms will need a business license and a lease. Class A (~80%) are those that are up to 325 m² for each site and will be exempt from development permits. They would require a farm management plan and business license, at the cost of \$10/site. Class B are those that have up to 7000m² of growing space (approx. 25 home lots), and would need to apply for a development permit

(\$279), have a farm management plan, and a business license (\$136). Accessory structures such as greenhouses are permitted, and need to adhere to building bylaws. It was noted that these fees are significantly lower than other types of permits. Size allocations are based on tax qualifications. Most of the City's revenues come from property taxes, and farms over 8000m² could qualify for Farm Status under BC Assessment, which provides significant tax breaks. Farms that demonstrate great social impact can be larger than the threshold. Sites on City or Park land are already tax-exempt.

Discussion

- This is a two-year pilot, and will be assessed with support from the Urban Farming Society and the FPC. Rooftop, vertical, and underground growing can be considered in the next phase.
- There was no distinction made between social enterprise and commercial growing. The City aims to reduce barriers and provide support so both can thrive.
- Best practices guidelines - were developed with VCH, and include 2 components - food safe handling and transportation, and also healthy soil. The City has a list of contaminated sites and thresholds for metals, etc., and the onus is on the farms to do soil testing. Growing in raised plots is encouraged.
- Soil testing - it was suggested that the City support soil testing, including where to test and how to interpret results, especially for those in Class A that may not be familiar with such tests.
- Best practice guidelines - the FPC can be involved in the development of these over the next two years.
- It was clarified that these regulations apply only for sites that are growing food for sale.
- Farm management plan - includes an explanation of the movement of goods on and off site, where is the compost, etc. and how the site and adjacent sites be affected. There are some environmental management parameters, such as waste management in the guidelines.
- City staff - training will be provided to staff who will process applications for licensing and development. A learning curve is expected, and evaluation of the process will be included in the assessment.
- Distribution - must be off-site for class A; class B can have on-site sales.

Next steps - once the report gets referred, council members cannot discuss it. All members are encouraged to read the report. Appropriate knowledge and expertise is sought; Ilana, Ben (guest), and Chris (guest) have put their names forward for an ad-hoc working group on urban farming. It was noted that the Urban Farming Society has worked with the City to develop the guidelines, and most requests have been accommodated.

5 Right to Food Working Group Update and Guest Speaker

Right-to-food is a broad concept, and focusses on food justice and social factors such as poverty, rather than on food access or food security. Right to food is about both material and procedural equity, and includes dimensions of fairness. The working group has determined specific initiatives that are illustrations of how to think about complicated issues.

- Independent grocery stores and cultural food assets - a Chinatown Case Study presented by guest speaker Kevin Huang (Co-founder and ED, [Hua Foundation](#))
Hua Foundation's first project was the Choi project, that produced a seasonal Choi guide, and bilingual signage both at Chinatown grocers and select farmers' markets. The project includes intergenerational and cross-cultural learnings, and is now working with local restaurants. Historically, two parallel food systems developed due to the distrust of mainly Chinese growers and the Vegetable Marketing Act of the 1920s. Trust is now being rebuilt. Chinatown is comprised of mostly working class, and food justice is an important piece.

Neighborhood pockets - Chinatown has grown to include a list of services, but many have been lost over the last few years. Closing due to pricing pressures, the Chinatown Supermarket has been a main partner and has now been sold. Fraser St is undergoing similar pressures, with big stores pushing out smaller grocers. It is thought that independent grocers likely won't be able to come back. In Los Angeles, a Wal-Mart in Chinatown pushed out many smaller grocers, and is now in the process of closing its doors.

Strategic ideas for moving forward include investing in capacity for the system (e.g. farmers' markets, Ocean wise), and working cross-sector with immigration groups and academia. The group has been in touch with UBC and SFU, to explore the development of a stronger research capacity.

The Hua foundation hopes to answer the following: Is there a way to protect the unique food assets in culturally relevant communities? Can qualitative metrics be included in planning process?

The presentation is included following the minutes.

- Access to City Services Without Fear (formerly Sanctuary City) - Anna
Working group members attended the City-hosted meeting. Previously the FPC heard about the precarious nature of temporary farm workers accessing services. In 2014, the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration began looking at the issue of Sanctuary Cities, which exist in other cities. The idea is that people of uncertain immigration status should be able to access services without fear of deportation. The WMGI has met with stakeholders including VCH, VPD, VPL, and advisory committees and councils in the development of the draft policy.

The City has limited scope under the Charter, which is very specific, and includes fire and rescue, tenants, utilities, compost, and general government. The draft includes a section asking other agencies to adopt a similar strategy (e.g. Police, libraries, health, schools, Park Board and transportation). The draft was reasonably well-received with some critiques about the name. It is important to acknowledge migration stories, intersectionality of racism, and effects of colonialism. The working group is happy with the precedent despite the gaps, and with the level of engagement. It was suggested that programs and services that receive city funding could be embedded in the policy as well.

Sanctuary health could take a food lens to explore how can food organizations be also become sanctuary organizations.

Discussion

- Gender - it was noted that the role of gender should be included when thinking of food system dynamics.
- Guidelines - a suggestion was made to draft guidelines for use in other working groups.
- Diversity - a suggestion was made to re-visit the diversity of the FPC, and the use of sectoral representation for membership criteria.
- [PeerNet BC](#) - provides workshops on intersectionality and equity.
- Healthy city strategy - includes wording on poverty. Phase 2 will launch soon and will look at living wages and assistance rates.

6 Debrief/Bread Basket

- Will Valley (UBC) would like to liaise about how students can be involved in research, either in September, or next January.
- Working group strategic plans - working groups are asked to send them to the Chairs as soon as possible, to assist in strategic planning.
- An email application was received for endorsement of a Meatless Monday proclamation, and will be circulated via email.
- Members are asked to send the chairs their bios as soon as possible, to be available for the April meeting.

8 Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Dirk, seconded by Antonietta, carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30