

Vancouver Food Policy Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 16, 2014
6:00-8:30pm
Town Hall Room, City Hall



Chairs: Zsuzsi Fodor and Tara Moreau

Council Members: Anna Cavouras, Kimberly Hodgson, Trish Kelly, Peter Ladner, Emme Lee, Pat McCarthy, Ross Moster, Helen Spiegelman

Liaisons: James O'Neill (Social Planning, City of Vancouver), Corrine Eisler (VCH), Heather Deal (City Council)

Regrets: Jason Apple, Joanne Bays, Robyn Carlson, Ilana Labow, Brent Mansfield, Nicholas Scapillati, Chris Thoreau, David Wilson, Aaron Jasper (Park Board), Theresa Duynstee (MetroVan), Rob Wynen (Vancouver School Board)

Agenda Items:

1. Opening Round
Members and liaisons introduced themselves. Twelve guests were present and also introduced themselves.
2. Motion to Accept Agenda and [Previous Minutes](#)
Moved by Pat, seconded by Helen, carried unanimously.
3. Staff Update & Sustainable Large Development Policy
 - New community grants for garden infrastructure and kitchen equipment - deadline has passed and an overwhelming number of applications were received. The aim is to distribute funds equitably and support as many initiatives as possible.
 - [Hobby Beekeeping Guidelines](#) - Social Planning has been preparing to update the current guidelines, which were last updated in 2006. The current guidelines limit zoning and do not reflect what is actually happening in communities. The guidelines will be revised to provide more details for hives in community gardens or used for educational purposes. Social Planning is working with both internal and external advisory groups.
 - [Sustainable Large Development Policy](#) - initially raised at the February meeting, James provided a deeper explanation. Development begins with a big-picture policy statement that needs to be passed by Council. After this, the developer applies for rezoning to change the use, and this is when the City can intervene. After this stage the applicant seeks development and building permits which dictate specific elements of the proposed building. In 2008, Council adopted higher sustainability standards for large sites, and required that developers meet certain sustainability targets. This was revisited in 2013 to redefine 'large site' (parcel with site size of 8000m² or 45,000ft² floor area) and better articulate requirements for the standard. Developers need to specify how they will provide certain amenities (e.g. access to nature, low carbon, rainwater management, zero waste). One of the amenities is 'sustainable food system' with a requirement that a minimum of three food assets be included on site (e.g. community garden/orchard, community kitchen, compost, markets, facilities for NFN or other). The revised policy applies to very few sites, the most recent being the Oakridge redevelopment that will include a community garden in the centre, a large commercial/community kitchen, and edible landscaping.

Questions

- Reaction of developers - food is one element among many, and has not been singled out or criticized. Developers seem to have expertise or access to it. Social Planning liaises with Planning who works with the developers.
- Liaising with developers - the developers are required to build the amenities, but are not required to describe how they will function; the onus is on the community to ensure infrastructure is used. Food

- Policy team is visioning future large developments and planning priorities to determine what amenities would be best on specific sites (FPC could provide input at future meeting). It was suggested that the FPC help planners connect developers with resources. ACTION: James to send FPC relevant community plans.
- Guidance documents - it was suggested that developers be given a resource with a list of relevant organizations along with facts and definitions related to food system amenities.
- Other models - there are no known existing models that are more progressive than Vancouver's.
- Building code - BCIT had identified that installing rooftop gardens can be problematic if not built to bear extra weight. The Vancouver building code has been updated with new accessibility and green requirements, including one that building must be able to support green roofs.
- Citizen engagement - while regulatory and technical aspects are being worked on, engagement of neighbours is needed for success. The FPC has opportunity to develop capacity at neighbourhood level to change society. It was suggested that the policy landscape group help identify potential revisions.
- Oakridge - report had many comments about food and gardens and associated benefits. Food was a positive aspect and central at public consultations.

4. Updates and Discussion

- Meeting Preamble Update (Trish)

Based on an incident at an earlier meeting, the FPC is exploring how to set a tone that gets beyond assumptions and ensures respectful conversations. Trish has been meeting with Aboriginal groups to discuss this, potential activities in June for the end of the Year of Reconciliation, and the potential of more aboriginal voices at the table.

There is no requirement in the Terms of reference for diversity in membership of the FPC but the nomination committee considers those issues when trying to balance membership. Many FPCs in North America are struggling with this issue, but good examples exist of how cities are trying to increase diversity.
- Vancouver Youth Food Policy Council

The inaugural meeting of the new VYFPC is on April 17, 2014 at the Central Library Branch. All are welcome. The group does not currently belong to a particular organization.
- Next Meeting

Theme will be migrant farm labour. One speaker is in place and more are being sought that could speak to this or migrant labour in other areas of the food system.

5. Introduction of Topic - Urban Pollinators (Anna)

Anna has a personal interest in bees, but also works in DTES. Discussion often revolves around access and justice, however people are also passionate about the land and are interested in skill development and knowledge sharing. The meeting was planned for the DTES to attract local residents, but was not possible.

- Presentations by Brian Campbell, Rob Hunt & Niki Sharma

Brian began beekeeping 17 years ago and founded the Bee School 7 years ago. He teaches at EYA, Van Dusen, Richmond Beekeepers Association and runs joewasp.com, rescuing bees from human behavior. He is passionate about conserving and protecting pollinator diversity.

This issue is important for planning and policy - we need bees more than they need us. Bees are a keystone species for ecological and food security health. Humans use pesticides, destroy habitat, and remove forage, so now need to be proactive to restore. Soil needs to be respected and protected for it to provide habitat for ground nesting bees. Of the 25000+ species worldwide, 80% are ground nesting and the others are opportunistic nesters. 80/20 split is reversed in the cities 56 species in Vancouver, 80 % will be opportunistic cavity dwellers, indicating poor protection of ground nesting bees. Bees provide the pleasurable eating that we enjoy, and are one of the few things we can add to our gardens that create value. For example, a blueberry crop with honeybees has 6x the value of one without honeybees. Effects of pollination crises are nearly invisible to general public. Vancouver is lucky to have 56 species of bees, one of the most bee diverse communities in Canada, with both the opportunity and responsibility to undertake conservation measures.

Rob Hunt is a pollinator enthusiast. He speaks of the role of each and the negative impact of pesticides. Rob gave a comprehensive overview of Vancouver's most common pollinators, as well as some background and details on each. This constitutes a wide range, including hummingbirds, moths, butterflies, bees, flies. Rob also touched on the use of pesticides and declining bee populations; neonicotinoid insecticides are especially dangerous for honey bees. To learn more about each pollinator, view Rob's presentation [online](#).

Niki Sharma is currently a commissioner with the Park Board (PB). Her background is environmental biology and she has worked with the EYA and local community gardens, as well as being a strong voice for women's issues.

Commissioner Sharma's motion to the Park Board (available [online](#)) passed unanimously two weeks ago, and was passed by City Council today, April 16. The Pollinator Project has three aspects: 1) to determine how best to use green space to support pollinators, and where to plant West Coast Seed's pollinator blend; 2) to work with partners currently working on this issue (e.g. EYA, Van Dusen, Hives with Humanity) to leverage work; and 3) to raise awareness through a campaign that will identify pollinator habitat. Launch will happen April 27 at the Van Dusen plant sale, where residents will be offered a garden stake with the identifying logo, and a package of seeds to plant so they can participate in the program and provide habitat. There will also be a website for those who want to learn about the 56 bee species in Vancouver.

- Questions & Discussion

- It was recommended that a food piece be included as part of the Pollinator Project, to encourage purchase of organic foods.
- Pollination crisis - there is much pressure on honey bees to work and often they are left worse off, so other species are brought in. Honeybee diseases are now found in blue orchard bees and bumblebees. Managed species have different lifecycles so diseases are not as easily visible. Honeybees filter out toxins as they make the honey, so the honey is purer, but the bees suffer.
- Call to action - pesticide issues are governed at the federal level, but to advance the cause of bees we can conserve the bees in our back yards through random plantings (including weeds), participate in Pollinator Project and visit the project's website.
- Balcony gardening - even one plant can provide nesting site, food, and forage for bees. Suggestions are encouraged for low maintenance plants and how to encourage your neighbours to create a corridor.
- Weeds - many nuisance/invasive plants are bee-pollinated. If eradicated, honeybee populations would be halved, as they need wild untamed plants. Canada thistle produces well-balanced pollen for bees, whereas ornamental cherries have limited nutritional content for bees. Native plants can better support native bees.
- Bees are seasonal and temporary. Mason bees spend most of their time as developing larvae and only fly 2-6 weeks of the year.
- To improve habitat - Single flowering plants allow better access than double blooms, replace lawn with low-growing ground cover, and use seed bombs for alleys or vacant lots.
- Connection with sustainable large site and pollinator project - it was recommended that this connection be made.
- City would like to work with others (urban farms) as part of pollinator project.
- Ground nesting bees - prefer different soil types. To preserve, if you see a hole, often around edges, mark it and watch to see if it's a nest. Creating more edges will create more habitat.
- Green spaces program - recommend connecting Pollinator Project with that program.

6. Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Anna, carried unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm