

Vancouver Food Policy Council  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 22, 2014  
6:00-8:30pm  
Town Hall Room, City Hall



**Chairs:** Tara Moreau and Zsuzsi Fodor

**Council Members:** Anna Cavouras, Kimberly Hodgson, Trish Kelly, Ilana Labow, Emme Lee, Brent Mansfield, Pat McCarthy, Ross Moster, Nicholas Scapillati, Helen Spiegelman, David Wilson

**Liaisons:** Heather Deal (City Council), James O'Neill (Social Planning, City of Vancouver), Aaron Jasper (Park Board), Lauren Klose (MetroVan, for Theresa Duynstee)

**Invited guests:** Lenore Newman, Kim Sutherland, Art Bomke,

**Regrets:** Jason Apple, Joanne Bays, Maria Burplehaus, Robyn Carlson, Claudia Chan, Peter Ladner, Chris Thoreau, Theresa Duynstee (MetroVan), Rob Wynen (Vancouver School Board)

#### Agenda Items:

1. Opening Round
  - a. Welcome to new member Anna Cavouras  
Anna works at the DTES Neighbourhood House and has a background in Social Work.
  - b. Other change in membership  
Shelby Tay and Claudia Chan have decided to step down.

Members introduced themselves and spoke about their experiences with the ALR. Fifty-seven guests were present.

2. Motion to Accept Agenda and Previous Minutes  
Moved by Helen, seconded by Nicholas, carried unanimously.
3. Staff Update - James O'Neill
  - Food Strategy - officially adopted approximately one year ago. February meeting will look at the highlights of what has been achieved.
  - Recognition - Trish and Brent were thanked for their role as Chairs and their active help in advancing food issues within the City.
  - Aaron Jasper - updates on two community gardens:
    - Beaconsfield Garden, on Slocan and E 17<sup>th</sup>, behind Italian Cultural Centre.
    - Riverfront Garden site - South Vancouver Family Place, on Fraser River.
    - More gardens under public consultation until February 6 before being formally approved.
    - GMOs in the Park Board are being examined with regards to the urban forest management plan and the maintenance of fruit trees.
4. Updates and Discussion
  - a. Preparing for our February & March Meetings  
Feb 19<sup>th</sup> meeting - review work plan and goals, review Food Strategy (successes and gaps), update working groups, and plan for meeting themes. Themes that have brought up in the past may be revisited. Members were invited to join an ad-hoc group to discuss a process for Feb meeting (Dave, Kim, Ilana volunteered).
5. Introduction of Topic
  - a. City of Vancouver Motion on ALR - Brent  
With the last provincial election, the Minister of Agriculture was appointed from the Peace River region, where there is Liquefied Natural Gas and proposed Site C development. In the Premier's mandate letter, he was instructed to 'balance' economic development with agricultural preservation. The BC Food Systems Network

issued an alert and spread to municipalities. The provincial government did not honour the terms for consultation that they had set out for the core review, resulting in no effective public consultation. Councillors Deal and Reimer were approached, and in Oct 2013, the City passed a motion supporting the preservation of the ALR, and a legitimate process for consultations, as did 11 other municipalities. It has since been confirmed that the ALC will not be absorbed into the Ministry of Agriculture. Interested citizens are invited to join the group 'ALR watch' on Facebook.

#### 6. Presentations on the ALR

- a. Kim Sutherland - ALR has high quality soil, water, and climate, and proximity to urban population, allowing for over 200 products to be grown. 50% of MetroVan land base in the ALR is farmed, 20% in 'other use', 6% is underwater, 5% is unavailable for farming because of 'conflicting land use', 25% own the land but do not farm it. The average age of farmers in BC is 57 years (comparable to small business), so not an age crisis but they should be interested in successional planning. Farmers' incomes are on par with average income of BC households.
- b. Bill Zylman - The best way to save the land is to save the farmers. Despite higher incomes overall, most *family* farms are in debt. Young farmers cannot afford land in the Fraser Valley. Others build on ALR land but do not want to farm it so they rent it out. It seems as though the ALR is a land base in reserve for future government projects. For example, the Gateway project cut through good farmland, and when the project went over budget, the irrigation and drainage project for Delta was cut back. A fund could be established to help enhance other areas of ALR.
- c. Lenore Newman - Overall, the ALR has worked. We have lost about 12% of the farmland since its inception. We still have the farming services, because they know the farms will be around. Incentives can work at the municipal level to reduce exclusions. Globally, there has been a liquidation of farmland. If the ALR disappears, the economic gain is high, but long-term cost is high. Call to action - halt exclusions from the ALR in the lower mainland, the Okanagan, and Vancouver Island. Exclusions were only meant to fine tune boundaries. The public needs to love their farmland, and have a deep appreciation for it. Developers count on an apathetic public - Lenore encouraged everyone to talk to their MLAs.
- d. Art Bomke - The ALR was established using sound scientific principles, based on Canada Land Inventory classification, which uses the quality of soil, topography, and climate. The primary objective was to protect classes 1-4, and then some class 5 and 6 land was looked at for ranching and hay production. There is less than 1% of the land base that has Class 1 climate and good land; class 3 climate puts limitations on what can be done. Site C is scheduled to be built in Class 1 climate Land. All of the land that was included should be there for farming. There is too much emphasis on property rights; we need to support farmers and farm communities.

#### Discussion

- o Cost - land in the FV costs ~\$100,000/acre, and for high intensity farming on 5 acres, new farmers should budget \$250,000 for tractors, tools, marketing. The high price of farmland needs to be reduced. Some policy tools have been implemented: the land use inventory identified that no more subdivisions are needed, and also, a residential use bylaw has been put in place to help decrease speculation by limiting the size of house and footprint in ALR. It was noted that in some places a degree in Agriculture is needed to purchase farmland. It was suggested that a fund be created from the applications for exclusion to subsidize young farmers.
- o Markets - Farmers markets need to be strict about only selling food grown by farmers. When marketing boards set prices, new farmers end up last in line to move product, producing an uneven playing field.
- o Division of ALR - there has been an idea to divide the ALR into the SW area, and the rest of the province. It was generally agreed that everyone in the province needs capacity to help

- eat local foods, and with restrictions on what can be grown, difficulty in developing markets, and the high cost of freight, that this idea would be very problematic.
- Policy tools - in the US, policies exist surrounding the purchase and transfer of development rights. It was felt that it would not be enough to accomplish the preservation of ALR due to the high price of land. In BC, farmers' development rights are bought out over time through money resulting from a lower tax rate.
- Present threat - 90-95% of citizens in the Fraser Valley support the ALR. In order to avoid the threat, BC must stop electing governments that sign agreements that make it cheaper to import food. In the meantime, citizens were encouraged to write to their MLAs, the Premier, and the media.
- Accesses to land - while subdivisions and housing increase the value of farmland, new farmers need new both dwellings and smaller parcels. In order to reconcile these, it was noted that most of the 25% of land that is 'unused' is less than four acres and has a house on it. Many of these landowners will rent out the land.
- Foreign ownership - many parcels are owned by absentee landowners who sometimes rent the land out for farming.
- Infrastructure projects - can have important and unintended effects. For example, the destruction of the Massey will cause much agricultural land to be lost, and in summer the salt levels will be high in the river meaning that farmers cannot draw for the river for irrigation. Although farmers are aware, no studies have been done.

## 7. Group Discussions

Groups were asked to discuss and report on the top three actions to respond to the threat.

- Academics
  - use positions and informed research to disseminate information through op-eds, social media, etc. to help the public understand the issues
  - reach out to government contacts that value academic connections
  - conduct a study to look at viability of grouping parcels and associated incentives
- Farmers
  - create a fund from speculation to support farmers
  - mentoring - working through institutions to give practical experience
  - develop collaborative relationships with retailers
- Scientists
  - organizing organizations - FPC could convene larger key stakeholders interested in promoting more science
  - have local governments support more science in the libraries
  - engage with business community, innovation networks, and look at schools for activist groups
- Government
  - promote residential use bylaw to mitigate urban rural conflict and improve viability of farmland
  - provincial - advocate that the ALC stop approving non-farm uses
  - federal - re-evaluate federal trade agreements and be more sympathetic to local farms
- Community
  - tell 5 people why it matters
  - organize a rally
  - support actions other groups (see FPC website)
- FPC
  - have a media strategy for unified message
  - launch a 'We love food, farmers, and soil' campaign for valentine's day
  - examine what policy tools exist to move this idea forward at February meeting

## 8. Motion to Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:34pm. Moved by Ilana, carried unanimously.