

Vancouver Food Policy Council All Candidates' Questionnaire Final - Jane Bouey



The Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) is an advisory group to Vancouver City Council, providing ideas and policy recommendations toward creating a thriving local food system. The primary goal of the VFPC is to examine how our local food system operates and provide ideas and policy recommendations to Vancouver City Council on how it can be improved. VFPC is comprised of passionate people from various sectors of the local food system. Members include farmers, food distributors, nutritionists, processors, waste managers, activists, and academics engaged in the food system. The VFPC functions as a bridge between citizens and civic officials, coming together to work on food policy initiatives that benefit all Vancouverites.

Candidate Name: Jane Bouey

Office Seeking: School Trustee (Vancouver Board of Education)

Party Affiliation(if any): Public Education Project

Public Website: <http://publiceducationproject.ca>

Please complete the questionnaire and send back to us at info@vancouverfoodpolicycouncil.ca. We'll post your responses on our blog, and on the wall at our All Candidates Forum Oct 15th.

General Questions:

1. Will you endorse the Vancouver Food Strategy and/or the Park Board Local Food Action Plan if you are elected? Yes, and I will support efforts towards developing and linking a food strategy within the School District.

2. What actions in the VFS and/or LFAP would you focus on first?

Food access.

The increase in Farmer's Markets has improved access for those who can afford to buy the amazing products at the markets. The growing number of urban farmers and the development of an urban farmers' network is something to be very proud of. In particular the growth in community food networks has improved food access in some of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods in the city. However there are still lots of families who cannot afford healthy, locally grown foods. A significant number of Vancouver students go to school hungry.

I would focus on the drive to improve access to healthy, culturally diverse local, affordable food for all.

I support the recommendation to connect with community food markets and encourage their integration into Vancouver School Board (VSB) programming for youth and families.

One of the challenges with getting local healthy foods in our schools is infrastructure. We lack a distribution system to move local foods from farm to student plates. It would be great to see a food hub in this city with affordable local produce, that our schools offering meals or snacks could tap into. A delivery system between that food hub and the schools would be terrific too.

I would work to expand the school gardens, greenhouses, farms from the 2/3rd of schools that have them and I would work on ways to get that food into the school meals and snack programs.

I would support efforts to develop food procurement policy within the school district with a view to establishing some modest targets to incrementally increase the amount of local foods served in school meals and snacks.

I would work with all levels of government to increase the funding for meal programs at schools, and would want the foods served in schools to be as fresh, healthy and as local as possible.

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I would continue my work with Farm to School BC and the Think and Eat Green at School Initiative to connect with local farms to supply those programs.

3. What have you already done for food in your community?

As a trustee from 2002-2005 I worked to expand the schools offering hot lunch programs, I worked to bring down the barriers that existed then to prevent school gardens and began work on a food policy, and the elimination of unhealthy foods in schools. Again elected as trustee in 2008, and chair of the VSB's Education and Student Services Committee – I championed the VSB's food policy, and the establishment of the 5 year project with UBC called Think & Eat Green @ School. I am a member of the Advisory Committee of Farm to School BC and in that capacity I am working with representatives from the Ministry of Health, Agriculture, Education, and from NGO's and civil society to support the expansion of programs and to bring more fresh healthy local and sustainably produced foods into schools in Vancouver and throughout the province.

4. Given the many priorities of a municipal government, how do you feel food can contribute to our city?

Food is central to health and well-being. We cannot survive without food. An effective Food Strategy is good for the health of the environment (lessens greenhouse gasses and waste), good for the health of the community (brings people together working on neighbourhood gardens, or even outside meeting neighbours in their own gardens), good for the health of the economy (creates new jobs and keeps local dollars circulating in the local economy) , and good for our health (access to healthy foods increases consumption of such foods and simultaneously helps to address two costly population health concerns –obesity and hunger). An effective food strategy also increases access to food for those who struggle with mobility and income barriers, increases peoples understanding of where food comes from.

Issues Based Questions:

5. Given the Greenest City Action Plan's goal "to ensure that the majority of residents live within a five-minute walk of a basket of fresh produce" and the Vancouver Food Strategy's goal to "improve access to healthy, affordable, culturally diverse food for all residents", what initiatives would you use to support these goals? See answer to number 2.

6. Given Metro Vancouver's upcoming 2015 organics ban, what initiatives would you support to get us to zero food waste?

The City needs to work more closely with large institutions like schools or even large restaurants, to ensure that they have composting receptacles that are big enough to hold all of their food waste. The VSB has an active and engaged community that works on these issues. I would sit down and listen to their ideas of how we could reduce food waste, and increase our composting and increasing the amount of compost that gets into our school gardens, greenhouses, farms. I would support their recommendations, and work to make them become reality.

7. Given that Vancouver has a rich urban agriculture community (e.g. community gardens, urban farming, beekeeping, backyard chickens) what is our biggest missed opportunity to this point?

I think supporting the development of policy (local food procurement policy) and infrastructure (food hubs/ food distribution) systems to get that local food onto student plates is the biggest missed opportunity.

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8. How would you as a municipal politician work with other levels of government on issues that may be considered outside of Vancouver's jurisdiction e.g. ALR, raising welfare rates, GMOs, migrant farm labour, others?

I see these issues as directly related. As host of community radio show, I have raised awareness of these and other food security issues. I would publicly advocate for the revocation of Bill 24 and return to the previous legislation regarding the Agricultural Land Reserve, and work to strengthen the ALR, and call for the Board of trustees to support this call as part of their Food Strategy. Whether in elected office or not, I have been a consistent supporter of raising welfare rates. BC has the highest child poverty rates – poor children live in poor families. As a trustee I championed the VSB joining the call for a Poverty Reduction Plan. I would, either with the board as a whole, or if they were unwilling to support this, as an individual, work with other levels of government and community organizations to pressure the provincial government to implement the above.

9. What role do you think local governments play in supporting healthy and sustainable food in schools?

The school board is saddled with serious underfunding. The City's decision to support the breakfast programs was a terrific announcement, but a missed opportunity too. The Mayor announced a significant amount of money for school breakfast programs but it could have been linked to City's food strategy and/or the school boards emerging food strategy. Ensuring that our tax dollars were going to be used to purchase fresh healthy foods from nearby farms for school meal programs would have been consistent with each sector's food strategy. If the City could work with the school board to support their efforts to procure more local food for all school meals and snack programs in a cost effective way it would be a huge step forward. If the city were to support provincial and/or national efforts for a universal school meal program – farm to school at every school – that would be a second huge step forward. Finally, if city staff devoted to the City's Food Strategy, could be seconded to work part-time or even on a temporary basis for the VSB, it would improve the capacity of the School Board to implement its own food policy.

10. The Vancouver Food Strategy and Talk Food To Us program engaged thousands of residents in the development of the strategy. What kind of engagement process would you utilize in food policy work?

There is no doubt about it – the Vancouver School District's school food system is in transformation right now. Significant gains have been made to get more local healthy sustainable foods into the minds, onto the plates and into the tummies of our school children. School gardens exist in 2/3'rds of our school grounds. Experiential and classroom education on food preparation, preservation, service, composting is growing in our schools. Farm to School programs are proliferating. We are supporting a learning lab process to see how we might increase procurement of local foods in our school meal programs district wide. We are the first school district in all of Canada to lease some of our property to an urban farming society. The foods are coming up now by the bushel, so now we need to figure out how to get them in the school kitchens. And the best thing about our work is that we have teachers, school meal coordinators, principals, parents, students, farmers and many, many others engaged in this work.

So what is my answer to this question about "how to further engage people in our food policy work"? Well I guess I would want to look a little more closely at what we are doing right now that has contributed to this wave of excitement about food in schools - and build upon that. Maybe we our slogan is "learn, grow, cook and eat food with us now".