

Vancouver Food Policy Council All Candidates' Questionnaire



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: Tim Louis
Office Seeking: City Council
Party Affiliation(if any): COPE
Public Website:

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

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

In reviewing the Vancouver Food Strategy, it quickly become apparent that all of the actions are important. If I was forced to focus on a subset of these actions, I would choose the following:

- 1.1 Explore opportunities to improve security of tenure for community gardens and community orchards on city property.
- 1.4 Create healthy soil guidelines for community gardens informed by environmental best practices.
- 1.5 Enhance funding partnerships to support the creation, operation, improvement and capacity building opportunities for community gardens and community orchards.
- 1.7 Update existing, and develop new land use policies, zoning, and other regulatory levers, such as Community Amenity Contributions to bolster the creation of community gardens and other forms of urban agriculture.
- 1.9 Increase the number of community garden plots in Vancouver from 3,640 to 5,000 by the year 2020 (five to six new gardens per year).
- 1.10 Create policy to enable commercial food production (urban farming) as a defined use on zoned lands with appropriate limitations and mitigation strategies.
- 1.11 Explore possibilities for urban farmers to sell produce directly from an urban farm (farm gate sales) with appropriate limitations and mitigation strategies.

- 1.12 Enable alternative food retail and distribution models for urban farming produce such as community food markets, food distribution hubs and pre-approved Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) distribution sites in locations such as community centres, neighbourhood houses and schools.
- 1.13 Create urban farming business license category.
- 1.16 Increase the number of urban farms in Vancouver from 17 to 35 by the year 2020, ranging from backyard farms to mid-scale operations.
- 1.17 Encourage implementation of Green Streets and Blooming Boulevards program guidelines to allow for growing vegetables and other food plants in residential boulevards, traffic circles and bulges.
- 1.18 Promote edible landscaping as an alternative to ornamental or flowering plants in residential, commercial, institutional and parks landscaping plans.
- 1.19 Increase the planting of food-bearing trees when planting new trees in parks and on other civic lands, and encourage community stewardship of those trees.
- 1.20 Review and update existing guidelines to consider conditions under which beekeeping on rooftops, institutions and higher density locations could be permissible.
- 1.21 Explore options to allow sale of honey directly from an urban farm (farm gate sales) with appropriate limitations and mitigation strategies.
- 1.23 Explore options to allow the sale of the eggs of backyard hens directly from an urban farm (farm gate sales) with appropriate limitations and mitigation strategies.
- 1.24 Review and update zoning and development by-law to consider conditions and locations for the keeping of backyard hens.
- 2.5 Measure the percentage of local and sustainable food procured by the City and make recommendations for an appropriate local and sustainable food target.
- 2.9 Encourage installation of community kitchens or retrofit existing kitchens in new developments, social housing sites or City facilities
- 3.5 Explore opportunities to support farmers markets on Park Board sites with electricity and water where appropriate.
- 3.8 increase the number of farmers' markets in Vancouver from nine

to 22 by 2020.

- 3.9 Establish community food markets as a permitted use and streamline application process.
- 3.10 Encourage integration of community food markets into Vancouver School Board programming as part of healthy food options for youth and families.
- 3.11 Incorporate community food markets into community centre programming.
- 3.12 Increase the number of community food markets in Vancouver from four to 15 by the year 2020.

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

As a City Councillor (2002 – 2005) I spearheaded the creation of the Food Policy Council.

As a consumer I purchase local produce whenever possible and avoid imported produce.

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

The production of food creates employment. Community gardens help put “community” back in neighbourhoods.

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?

Today, many aging seniors are no longer physically able to maintain a food garden in their yards. At the same time, other individuals, physically able to do so, but without access to a yard are unable to grow their own food. I would advocate for a registry that would link these senior with individuals that are looking to grow their own food.

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

My partner and I are big fans of vermiculture. The best way to deal with organics is to turn it into top notch soil for the garden. The City of Vancouver could be doing a lot more to promote vermiculture.

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?

Education. Speakers such as Michael Pollan would be a great draw and would help raise awareness of the multiple issues that relate to food. Lack of awareness is our biggest obstacle.

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?

Change comes so often from the bottom up. By passing motions at the municipal level, even on issues outside of the municipal jurisdiction, Councillors can raise the profile of issues that fall within provincial and federal jurisdiction. In addition to motions at City Hall, I would put forward resolutions at the Union of BC Municipalities. This annual convention receives a lot of media coverage.

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

Governments, working in partnership with the food community, can engage students in food issues. This should include growing food. In junior and secondary schools it should also include cooking healthy food.

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?

I would utilize the very successful model that the Food Policy Council has used. This process resulted in the Vancouver Food Strategy – a very comprehensive blueprint for moving us forward. I was particularly impressed by the format of the All Candidates Meeting, Wednesday, October 15th, organized by the Food Policy Council. It was profoundly different in format than the typical All Candidates Meeting. It truly engaged and empowered the audience and held the politicians accountable.