

Vancouver Food Policy Council

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 6, 2020

6:00pm-8:30pm

Cascadia Room, City Hall



Meeting Co-Chairs: Jesse Veenstra and Emily Voong

Council Members: Evan Bowness, Clare Cullen, Kaitlyn Fung, Tamer Mohamed Hussein, Joey Liu, Darlene Seto, Marc Schutzbank

City appointed liaisons: Councillor Bligh (City Council), Caitlin Dorward (Social Policy, CoV), Trustee Gonzalez (VSB), Katelyn Ling (Park Board Staff), Councillor Wiebe (City Council)

Regrets: Heather Escobar, Delphina Kejo, Martina Marsic, Sarah Siska, Andrew Stephens-Rennie, Kelsey Timler

Absent: Jolene Andrews, Commissioner Dumont (Park Board), Rachel Telling (Sustainability)

Minutes

1. Welcome/Call to order

1.1 Land Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge that we are meeting on the unceded homelands of the *w̓məθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *sk̓wx̓ wú7mesh* (Squamish), and *sel̓il̓wítulh* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and give thanks for their generosity and hospitality on these lands.

1.2 Quorum

There is quorum at the meeting.

1.3 Roundtable introductions

Members and liaisons introduced themselves and shared their recent learnings about first nations. Five guests introduced themselves.

2. Consent agenda matters

2.1 Previous Minutes

- January 2020 - Amended to include finalized motion. Motion to approve Jan 2020 minutes: Moved by Marc, seconded by Joey, carried unanimously.
- Motion to approve October 2018 minutes: Moved by Marc, seconded by Darlene, carried unanimously.

2.2 Liaison Reports

- Councillor Wiebe - has heard concerns about the low funding and attention to food in the GCAP. It is recognized that significant funding was dedicated to housing, and that food is also central in making Vancouver a more livable city. The integration of food into all plans will be explored.
- Councillor Bligh - met with Children and Youth working group, and will read a related proclamation at the March meeting. There will be a motion going forward to endorse and support the work of the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food. Don Davies has just tabled a Private Members bill, and the federal Liberals committed to working with the provinces in their last budget. Food has been moved to the 2021 work plan for the Healthy City Strategy.
- Commissioner Dumont - No update available.
- Trustee Gonzalez - will present notice of motion to endorse the CHSF for a vote at the end of February. If passed, VBE would be the first school district in Canada. The ToR for the new food committee will also be reviewed for a vote at the end of the month.
- Katelyn Ling (PB staff) - Talk Vancouver survey open for input on the Blodel Conservatory and Van Dusen Gardens strategic plan for green spaces. Rebecca Till is a new Stewardship Coordinator and will work on the LFAP update. An RFP is being developed, and the VFPC input on the draft action plan will be sought in the fall.
- Rachel Telling (Sustainability Staff) - no update available

- Caitlin Dorward (SP staff) - ongoing review of urban farming policy, work planning, considering connections with the Vancouver Plan, which will have broad representation. Sarah Carten will be the liaison; a presentation to the VFPC will be planned for March 2020.

2.3 Working Group Updates

- Food Cultivation & UbAg - will focus on urban farming guidelines and renewal, and have met with Caitlin to review work done to date. Will also focus on class 8 zoning regulations and requirements, and criteria that would need to be met for developers for land to be considered as a community gardens.

City staff, to the best of their ability, track the number of plots as a metric in the Greenest City Action Plan that is rolled up with other food assets. The metric could be more robust, as currently it does not track size, or if part of a communal garden. A move to communal gardening model, rather than by single plot, might be considered. The City is currently evaluating the Hillcrest garden governance model, with a target of making at least 50% communal. The Park Board is exploring how to provide support for this, and also for school gardens that need management during the summer months.

- Development/Retail - goal to document options for independent food retail and distribution, definition of food assets. Focusing on minority-owned stores, the group will identify and support appropriate policy approaches and is seeking a presentation on zoning for March. LFS students are doing jurisdictional scan of other cities, with a goal to have a briefing note as output.
- Food Waste - much interest from community members, the group is hosting a meeting in Feb to create a work plan. Focus will be on food system waste rather than packaging; water is also beyond the scope of this group. Are in discussions with City staff (Erin Nichols) and may work with SFU students. The solid waste biennial report will be reviewed and feedback may be provided to the province.
- Children & Youth -focused on the Great Big Crunch and supporting the Coalition for Healthy School Food. Don Davies tabled a private members bill, which was shared on the VFPC twitter account. There is a lot of work and momentum at all levels - locally (VSB and CoV), provincially, and nationally.
- Leadership Team - Members can send Emily an email to post news or exciting events to social media.

Membership - two members (Patrick Johnson. Jason Yip) have stepped down; there are now 5 vacancies. Clerks' office runs recruitment, and is planning to open applications at the end of March. Caitlin will advise once open, and members encouraged to spread the word.

- Community Food Prog. - working with LFS 350 to update the food asset map and conduct a literature review for food programming as a concept with a local focus (e.g. what does it look like, why is it important, what are the impacts and limitations). This will be used to build a case for support. Recommendations will be made about both the map and food programs.

Evelyn Saller Cetnre - the group was asked to provide input but the process is not clear. ACTION: Caitlin will see if there is a timeline for consultations regarding both the old and the new centre. Input will also be sought from users - food is a priority and there is currently an unacceptable two hour line up.

Discussion

- Food asset map was created by VCH, is now managed by the Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks in collaboration with LFS.
- This project will only focus on updating existing information in two categories. It will not include a review by those that submitted the information.

3. Matters requiring discussion*

3.1 Website Updates

Member bios - In the past member bio have been posted. It was decided to revisit this at a future time.

Working groups can submit three bullet points about what the group is doing, to inform the public.

3.2 Urban farming Guidelines Update & Report to Council Process - Part 1 [see associated presentation appended to the minutes]

Caitlin provided an overview of the urban farming policy and its review, beginning with the background on the creation of the guidelines.

The guidelines were adopted in 2016 after consultation with the Vancouver Urban Farming Society (VUFS). Prior to this, the sector has been unregulated. The pilot period has now ended, and the City is working with stakeholders to: 1) Evaluate impact of guidelines and related policies, bylaws, processes, and communication material, and 2) Identify opportunities for amendments, communications strategies, and programming to better support programming.

VUFS received funding to update the urban farming census 2017-2019 and for a research project to look at policies in other jurisdictions. VUFS will provide their own recommendations for amendments to the guidelines and other ways in which the City can provide support. This is a collaborative process; VCH and MoAg are also being consulted, about food safety/public health, and production methods, respectively.

Caitlin reviewed the feedback received to date with respect to regulations (e.g. what can be grown, operating hours, sales, farm structures, multi-site licensing, and taxation), communications, and other supports beyond regulations. The review is expected to be finalized in May.

3.3 Urban farming Guidelines Update & Report to Council Process - Part 2

Caitlin explained the staff processes and engagement opportunities for the urban farming guidelines. Staff will share any major changes requested by other departments, and will review with the VFPC in May. The working group is planning to table a motion to support the report. Two week prior to the Council meeting, the report is sent to the City Manager and no changes can be made. One week prior, the report is made available to the public. The VFPC can request to speak at the Council meeting and as a representative from an advisory council, would be moved to the beginning of the queue. This is where speakers express support or concerns.

The first report is a status report on engagement. Part 2 is the report with recommended amendments, and will be referred to a public hearing, which is expected in June or July. Members of the public can then speak to amendments. After being finalized, the new regulations are enacted legally.

Discussion

- Pest management needs clarification - currently the use of herbicides or pesticides (even organic ones) is prohibited, although the health bylaw permits use in other spaces.
- The Sept 2019 amendment was for clerical purposed only; no substantive changes were made.
- Economic activity vs regulations - a balance is needed to ensure farms can be financially viable and also adhere to the regulations as legitimate businesses. The VUFS project will identify best practices from other cities. The City is willing to be permissive on some areas (e.g. hours) but not others (e.g. taxation).
- If over 10m², structures require a building permit. A custom form may be created for more efficiency. The building inspector has discretion to approve exceptions.
- The guidelines do not currently address indoor growing, but may be considered in the future.
- VUFS report is expected in March.
- All farms need a development permit, whereas other sectors are not required. This is because there are no purpose built spaces for urban farms.
- A question was raised about covenants - if a landowner commits a site to be used as a farm for enough time (e.g. 25 years), an agreement could be reached with BC Assessment to reclassify the site. ACTION: Clare will do some research. The working group could present a related motion. There may be public support for this in the face of the climate emergency.

4. Adjourn Meeting

Moved by Kaitlyn, seconded by Clare, carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.