

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 4 2020

6:00pm-8:30pm

Via WebEx



Meeting Chair: Marc Schutzbank

Council Members: Jolene Andrew, Evan Bowness, Clare Cullen, Heather Escobar, Kaitlyn Fung, Tamer Mohamed Hussein, Delphina Kejo, Joey Liu, Martina Marsic, Darlene Seto, Sarah Siska, Kelsey Timler, Jesse Veenstra, Emily Voong

City appointed liaisons: Caitlin Dorward (Social Policy, CoV), Trustee Gonzalez (VSB), Rachel Telling (Sustainability), Councillor Wiebe (City Council), Rebecca Till (Park Board)

Invited Guests: Metha Brown (Vancouver Plan, CoV), Chani Joseph (Vancouver Plan, CoV), Laura Mackenort (Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee), James O'Neill (Vancouver Plan, CoV)

Regrets:

Absent: Andrew Stephens-Rennie, Councillor Bligh (City Council), Commissioner Dumont (Park Board), Katelyn Ling (Park Board Staff)

Minutes

1. Welcome/Call to order

1.1 Land Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge that we are meeting on the unceded homelands of the *w̓m̓əθkʷəy̓'əm* (Musqueam), *s̓k̓w̓x̓ wú7mesh* (Squamish), and *sel̓ilwitulh* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and give thanks for their generosity and hospitality on these lands. The racialized plight of people in Canada and around the world was also recognized.

1.2 Quorum

There is quorum at the meeting.

1.3 Roundtable introductions

Members, liaisons, and invited guests introduced themselves and shared food policy related highlights. Six guests attended the meeting.

2. Consent agenda matters

2.1 Previous Minutes - Approve March 2020 minutes

Moved by Marc, seconded by Clare, carried unanimously.

2.2 Liaison Reports

• Councillor Wiebe

The city has seen an increase in food insecurity due to COVID. City Council has passed an extension of patios to improve the viability of restaurants. There are questions about if the City should allow restaurants to sell groceries and specialty goods, and discussion about permitting production in restaurants recognizing limited commissary space.

• Councillor Bligh - no report available.

• Commissioner Dumont - no report available.

• Trustee Gonzalez

Students are back in school, and the numbers vary greatly between schools. Staff are working hard to clean and ensure supplies are there. Vulnerable kids are priority with the continuation of food programming. Staffing issues are currently being resolved. Trustees have been in close contact with staff; all committee meetings are now online.

• Rebecca Till (PB staff)

The RFP for the update to Local Food Action Plan was delayed due to COVID, but will be released in the coming week or so. ACTION: Rebecca will share with the VFPC to share with its networks. Work is expected to begin in August, using a decolonized approach.

Seedlings at Sunset Nursery are being grown to contribute to a hamper project. Staff have been working with indigenous practitioners on land base projects.

- Rachel Telling (Sustainability Staff)
The engagement phase for the climate engagement has successfully wrapped up, despite having to pivot, and have reported back to council. The deadline to submit the final report to council is November. Staff are supporting the Vancouver Plan team, as well as Greenest City and NSG grants, which have been redirected to support activities in the context of COVID.
- Caitlin Dorward (SP staff)
The WebEx format will hopefully allow the VFPC to increase its capacity and be more nimble. Motions can be passed during official meetings only (not over email) so that the public can attend and hear the discussion. Caitlin and other food policy staff have been working with the EOC to support the food security response. Activity is slowing and most staff will be returning to their home departments, although the EOC will remain active to monitor infection rates and planning to be prepared for a potential second wave. The food team will leave notes and recommendations for consideration, and will reflect on and document lessons learned. Because of the crisis, the Vancouver Plan has been re-scoped with new timelines and framework based on 7 key theme areas with a focus on recover.
Staff acknowledge that higher rates of food insecurity are still an issue, and that economic impacts will be felt for months to come. Despite a slowing in the emergency response, it is not related to a reduction in need. The City has taken on the role of providing some meals and are exploring how to transition out of that as the funding runs out and in light of which services and meal programs are opening up again.

2.3 Working Group Updates

- Leadership Team - no update available.
- Waste - no update available.
- Urban Farming - will soon reach out to Development WG to work on emerging issues related to the ALR.
- Children & youth - active provincially and nationally as members of the national Coalition for Healthy School Food. ACTION: WG to circulate opportunities to support advocacy, with request to share.

3. Matters requiring discussion

3.1 Discussion about Vancouver Plan and Food System/Covid Recovery

The Vancouver Plan is comprehensive and includes various strategies and area plans. Vancouver has not had such a plan previously.

A shared vision will be developed with five connected elements

1. Integrated policy framework
2. High level physical plan - transportation, zoning, density
3. Public investment strategy - how city invests in public utilities and assets (sewers, community centres, etc.)
4. Partnerships - non-profits and agencies, to support and advance actions (e.g. VCH, VSB)
5. Metrics and reporting - framework will show advancements over time. The 30 year plan to identify policy changes for the City.

Timeline

Now - Listen and learn

2020-21 Envisioning the future - considering big drivers of change and scenarios that may play out.

2021 Develop key actions, based on findings and learnings

2022 From plan to actions, goes to Council for adoption

2022+ Moving forward together, early implementation, budgeting

A recent survey showed that 55% of residents feel that life in Vancouver is getting worse. The survey was conducted pre-Covid, and would likely be worse now; some populations are affected disproportionately. Urgent priorities include housing affordability, visibility of people struggling (income inequality), homelessness, climate change, transportation.

The City is moving from response to recovery with seven areas of focus. Staff will deliver a report to council at the end of the calendar year with some quick start actions planned for September. Staff are seeking to hear VFPC experiences in short term recovery, ideas and suggestions for their current work, as well as long-term policy objectives for more long-term sustainable food system in Vancouver.

Discussion

- Have specific communities been identified as being disproportionately impacted?
 - At the public dialogue, it was recognized that staff was not hearing from disproportionately affected communities, so they went to places where people were gathered to ask questions. It is recognized that more work to be done to engage. It has not yet been decided how to adjust for this online landscape; ideas are welcome.
- Recovery planning is being addressed under different themes, what groups have been identified as disproportionately affected?
 - The engagement was conducted pre-Covid. Data is being pulled together including input from team members, with more focused work with groups they did not hear from to supplement to data.
- Is the Vancouver Plan an OCP? If not, what is the distinction between the two?
 - Vancouver is the only municipality that is governed by a charter - others have OCPs that direct development. The Vancouver Plan would be a proxy, however the level of detail is still to be determined. OCPs can be very specific. The Vancouver Plan is a high level structure plan - a map to give direction for growth and change over time. An OCP will inform more detailed community planning.
- It was noted at the EOC that the City's ability to meet food security goals is limited because there are not many City-owned assets (e.g. Sunset nursery) to mobilize. Investment in more food assets would allow the City to mobilize resources to respond more quickly and efficiently in a crisis.
 - Public benefit strategies will be looked at, to see how to open up and see if those benefits are still relevant. The deliverable of that process is a strategy for investment, which could include this. Given the City's financial picture, it will need to look at how to develop plans, reexamine financial tools, and take a close look at priorities to allocate limited funds. Critical infrastructure planning can be defined in a variety of ways. The idea is to "Build back better" for any crisis as part of long-term land use planning.
- The VFPC has previously discussed the centralization of services by the Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB). Service has decreased during Covid, and it has been hard to find accountability for the practices.
 - There is a great network of community -based organizations, who have mobilized to serve the community and respond. It was acknowledged that the City could provide more support to those existing organizations, to add more power and funding/ infrastructure for them.
- Community groups have been filling gaps that should be filled by government or bigger agencies. The GVFB has damaging policies that make it hard to work with them, so community groups are looking for other sources of support. Social support programs are at risk of being lost - e.g. community centres, crisis centres, work in DTES, libraries, transportation. Dedicated supports for social programs are recommended, in the context of systemic injustices and the effectiveness of funding police. 2020 expenditures for the City show 30% is allocated to public safety while only 22% to community services.
- Taking a global view, the Covid response has shown the challenge of having an essential right delegated to private organizations. The government does not have a stake until a crisis occurs. There is a call for the City to step in with social supports so they can see what community organizations are doing.
- When considering food assets in the Vancouver Plan, it was noted many are accessing food through private supply chains. There is value in short supply chains to support all kinds of food assets (e.g. processors, distributors, wholesalers, small retail). Gentrification leads to concern that these businesses will be squeezed out. The City should consider providing incentives for legacy businesses, and minority-owned businesses.
 - Staff noted the importance of connections and culturally appropriate food, as well as that of affordability.
- The listing of 'Business Recovery' as the first of seven focus areas was questioned, as it seems to indicate a higher priority. It is unclear how 'business' is defined, and it was noted that what is being done is constantly changing, so a comprehensive scan will be challenging. There should be a local focus.
 - Both complete communities and economic recovery were ranked as priorities. Business recovery is also focused on the non-profit and social enterprise sectors, recognizing they are doing more than before. Many businesses are being lost in walkable neighbourhoods, especially those in food and arts and culture.

- There needs to be an understanding of what the future of Vancouver will look like, and what is meant by ‘community recovery’, and policies are needed to create that vision.
 - Staff are trying to do long-term planning while recognizing the City is still in response. They will anticipate future ways to get back to an immediate response.
- It was noted that there is a dearth of services on south slope. Planning (regulations about zoning single-family homes) should include incentives for businesses and organizations to diversify land use in single-family home blocks.
 - Zoning will be a main part of the Vancouver plan. A large portion of the land base is currently zoned for single-family homes. This will shift to facilitate complete communities and easy access for walkable neighbourhoods.
- What is the role of coordinated leadership at city, and how do we help ensure that resources are embedded into organizations so that emergency planning can take place. For example, the VSB has sites across the city but no mandate to engage.
 - Many staff were redeployed to the EOC to support different work, including food. They helped people shelter at home at SROs, and had food delivered. Staff have been considering how to fill a role to support coordination between groups, while supporting and empowering community groups to be self-determined.
 - It was noted that the VSB is embarking on a food visioning process, hopefully in the Fall. There is a need to revamp the kitchens, which could be a partnership with the City and serve communities better in terms of food production.

ACTION: Members are asked to add comments by Monday; CAITLIN will check in to confirm wrap up.

4. Grab Bag Items / Updates

- 4.1. Supporting Dignified Food Access and Food Security for Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 (Discussion of letter of recommendations or formal statement to support dignified food access and food security for people with disabilities in Vancouver. Draft circulated prior to meeting.)

Kelsey has been working on developing a letter of recommendations to support dignified food access for people with disabilities during the pandemic. The Vice-Chair of the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee has provided feedback, and there are outstanding issues. It was clarified that the term ‘Person With Disabilities’ is used on BC to refer to those who received government assistance; not all disabled are PWD here, although it is a more generic term used across the country. The draft letter has been sent to members, with some initial feedback received, mainly related to the idea of allowing only those with disabilities to shop on ‘cheque day’.

It is hard for those with disabilities to go to the stores at 7am. Support workers should be allowed to shop on behalf of those with disabilities. It is unclear how people would ‘prove’ they have a disability; sometimes they are invisible, and not all receive government assistance. All government support payments are made on the same day each month (disability, social assistance, child benefit, etc.), and are typically made by direct deposit. People shop depending on many factors, not simply when they receive payments. People may not want others to know they have a disability, so there may be stigma attached. Priority access to online shopping could be included.

The goal would be to facilitate food access by allowing those with disabilities to go to the front of the line, which seems to be less of an issue now. The PWD Advisory committee is willing to work with the VFPC to revise the letter.

Discussion

With conflicts at food bank lines, discussion is needed with managers and staff to avoid similar conflicts. A mid-day time slot may be more workable.

The VFPC, PWD, and Seniors committee should work together to come to something quickly that the City can promote.

ACTION: Kelsey and Councillor Weibe will work with the PWD and Seniors Advisory Committees to draft a statement.

Many meal programs are senior-centric and more support is needed for those with disabilities to make food and distribute it for those who are isolated, lack transportation or access to credit cards. Resources could be listed on the City's website or distributed through networks for disabled people. The City has a map of where to get emergency meals; this could be more tailored for those with disabilities. The Park Board noted this for inclusion in the LFAP update.

ACTION: Kelsey will follow up with Councillor Wiebe and Laura. Caitlin will help; other members are welcome. The more the advisory bodies work collectively, the better.

- 4.2. Motion in support of additional community gardens for Hastings-Sunrise (draft circulated prior to meeting)
There is a coalition of groups in Hasting-Sunrise that had requested Park Board to establish two additional community gardens and that they be expedited due to COVID-19, as more are facing food insecurity. They have identified two locations and have sent the proposal to Park Board with a detailed plan. They are looking for ways that the VFPC can express support or advocate for them.

THAT we express support for proposal, call on City of Vancouver and Park Board to support this, and to expedite approval of this proposals.

Discussion

- It was noted that community gardens do not equal food security, and that this proposal is a start.
- The proposed plots would be communally based (not individual plots). Park Board is only taking requests where 50% is allocated as communal growing space.

MOTION IN SUPPORT OF ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY GARDENS FOR HASTINGS-SUNRISE

WHEREAS the City of Vancouver has identified community gardens as a food asset that contributes to supporting the local food system; and

WHEREAS the City of Vancouver's Greenest City 2020 Action Plan includes goals focused on improving residents' Access to Nature, Local Food, achieving a Lighter ecological Footprint; and

WHEREAS in the context of COVID-19, food insecurity in Canada is expected to double from the existing 4.4 million, and there are disproportionate impacts on Indigenous, Black and racialized communities; and

WHEREAS Canada has committed to the Sustainable Development Goals set out in 2015 by the United Nations and intended to be achieved by the year 2030 as part of "UN Resolution 70/1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which includes goals focused on Good Health and Well Being (SDG3), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG11), Climate Action (SDG13) and Life on Land (SDG15); and

WHEREAS food security is a critical issue in our community and while community gardens are an important part of our city, they do not 'solve' food security, they are one small component of a greater plan to support food security.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT the Vancouver Food Policy Council supports and calls upon the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Park Board to support the approval of the proposal put forth by members of the Hastings-Sunrise Food Networks for additional community gardens at Callister Park and Hastings Community Park; and

FURTHER THAT the VFPC requests that staff at the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Park Board work to expedite the approval process of this proposal to ensure a prompt response to food insecurity in the Hastings-Sunrise area as exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moved by Kaitlyn moves, seconded by Marc, carried unanimously.

Park Board staff noted the Park Board is not currently accepting Eol for gardens, so these would be the only ones, and they would still need to go through same process to be fair. The Park Board will want to see how many groups are involved and that the need is justified, as park Pand is limited. ACTION: Kaitlyn will ask for more details and re-share the original proposal with the VFPC. It was also noted that first nations (MST) need to be considered for land-based food projects.

It was noted that indigenous people are working through the Resurfacing History with the Park Board and are reprioritizing MST wishes. It is unclear what that looks like yet.

5. Adjourn Meeting

Moved by Kelsey, Darlene seconded, carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm