



VANCOUVER FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

MINUTES

OCTOBER 15, 2020

A meeting of the Vancouver Food Policy Council was held on Thursday, October 15, 2020, at 6:03pm, by electronic means.

PRESENT: Evan Bowness
Clare Cullen
Heather Escobar*
Joey Liu
Martina Marsic
Darlene Seto
Sarah Siska
Jesse Veenstra
Emily Voong

ABSENT: Jolene Andrews
Kaitlyn Fung
Delphina Kejo
Tamer Mohamed Hussein
Marc Schutzbank
Andrew Stephens-Rennie
Kelsey Timler

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Michael Wiebe, Council Liaison*
Caitlin Dorward, Social Planner, Social Policy and
Projects, Staff Liaison
Rachel Telling, Sustainability Specialist, Sustainability
Group, Staff Liaison
Rebecca Till, Environmental Stewardship Coordinator,
Vancouver Park Board
Estrellita Gonzalez, Trustee, Vancouver School Board

RECORDER: Vicky Baker

*Denotes absence for a portion of the meeting.

WELCOME

The Chair acknowledged that we are meeting on the unceded homelands of the ʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and selilwiltlh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and give thanks for their generosity and hospitality on these lands.

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Martina Marsic
SECONDED by Clare Cullen

THAT the Vancouver Food Policy Council approve the Minutes from the meeting of September 10, 2020, as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Roundtable introductions

Members and two guests introduced themselves. Staff reviewed WebEx guidelines.

2.1 Liaison Reports

- Councillor Wiebe
 - [‘Circular cities’ motion](#) was passed and included food elements as a component to reduce GHGs and increase green jobs. VFPC can have input into this process.
 - Van Plan has moved to next phase, and will do consultation in the fall on ‘complete neighbourhoods’ and how to ensure food assets (food drop off, access, hampers, markets, etc.) are kept in each neighbourhood to ensure fresh and healthy food.
 - Passed Homelessness Action Strategy – residents will move into different forms housing that will include food programs.

Discussion

- Vancouver Economic Commission has been working on and promoting the circular economy, and will actively continue to work on it through the motion.
- Homelessness strategy – some will move to Jericho lands, the City will work with partner organizations to ensure 3 meals/day are delivered. There is an action in the DTES plan about non-market housing having cooking facilities
- Van Plan public engagement is going into phase 2 (identifying goals), with many food-related actions. Staff will bring ideas based on phase 1 engagement. The motion specified specific points that engagements should include, although it has not been finalized.
- This planning process is less specific than the OCPs developed by some neighbourhoods, and looks at what defines a ‘complete community’. It was noted that not every neighbourhood needs every element and that an equity lens is needed.
- Councillor Bligh – no update available
- Commissioner Dumont– no update available
- Trustee Gonzalez
 - Adapting to COVID has taken many staff resources. The VSB Food program has been running throughout and continues to deliver food to families. It is unclear when the ad-hoc committee on food will resume, as staff time needs to be prioritized. That work is tied to the Long Range Facilities Plan including gardens and kitchens, and after-hours access so schools are part of the community.
- Rebecca Till (PB staff)
 - NMF has reopened to support community projects. Criteria has changed to allow other types of project, but on Parks land only.
 - Continue to support installation at Strathcona by the Indigenous Food Working Group
 - LFAP consultant team has been hired, and will engage with VFPC at Nov 12 meeting.

- Food production at Sunset may continue in 2021.
- Affordable produce market established with Kiwassa NH
- Staffing – Katelyn’s position has not been filled, and process are slowed due to reduced capacity.

Discussion

- The Park Board worked with City and the Kiwassa Neighbourhood house, and other partners to ensure adequate infrastructure and expedite permits to host the market in the field house at Pandora Park.
- Rachel Telling (Sustainability Staff)
 - The climate emergency action plan will go to council Nov 3. This 10-year plan aligns with the IPCC 1.5 deg. warming [see draft circulated in advance]. A key aspect is to amplify the City’s work, particularly with food, to have greatest impact.
 - Greenest City grants will open shortly to support work on climate and equity.
- Caitlin Dorward (SP staff)
 - Update on Class 8 sites is forthcoming
 - Has been in touch with Clerks’ office, who requests agendas one week before meeting to be posted online. Caitlin will share a new template.
 - Vancouver social infrastructure strategy – ACTION: Caitlin will ensure the VFPC is invited. Strategy will look at facilities for and services by non-profits to help the community meet their needs, and will chart long-term goals for securing and maintaining these spaces.

2.2 Working Group Updates

- Leadership Team – no updates
- Food Waste – no updates
- Food Cultivation/UrbanAg -no updates. World Soil Day is Dec 5; potential for action.
- Children & Youth – members have been active in advocacy but have not met formally. , School food is mentioned in the NDP and Green party platforms.
- Development/Retail – members spoke in favour of the food friendly neighbourhoods motion, and will follow up with Caitlin on further engagement and how to provide support. The hope is that Social Policy will lead the response however capacity is limited. The LFS summary provides policy precedence for supporting food retail, and may fit with Vancouver Plan.
- Community Food Programming – met for discussion; no new actions.

3. Matters requiring discussion

3.1 Victoria Urban Food Table - Alex Hamed and Aaren Topely [backgrounder sent in advance]

Caitlin provided background on two similar initiatives [see appended descriptions]. Surrey’s Yard to Garden Program provided garden kits and sites to pick up soil, seeds, and get guidance. With COVID, they were unable to begin until Aug, and planted later season crops. In Vancouver, the Park Board grew food at golf courses, Van Dusen, and Sunset Nursery for the City’s meal programs. It is estimated that 5000-6000lbs of produce were supplied.

Aaren began by acknowledging that current food systems have displaced indigenous people and stewardship of the land. The Victoria Urban Food Table is an advisory group to City council, and worked to pass a motion in April 2020 to grow and distribute seedlings to residents.

The initiative was in response to COVID and built on previous work to use the City's infrastructure to support urban agriculture. Funding was provided to five groups that serve people in the target demographic. Seeds (27 varieties) from local farms were grown and community partners delivered seedlings, including to school sites. Multilingual educational videos were also produced. While it was challenging to work with multiple city departments and the impact on food security may be minimal, the project increased partnership development to strengthen community and increase the quality of life for residents. The support of City council and staff was key to the success.

Discussion

- Funding provided to community organizations was reallocated from garden volunteer coordinator grants. A coordinator was hired to catalyze the project, and CRFAIR contributed honoraria and production of the videos.
- Is there data about the success of distributing knowledge in an agricultural setting? The evaluation was co-created and had about 200 responses that indicated increase to healthy food, improved quality of life, etc. The evaluation is being concluded and will be presented to Council in December.
- Recognizing that those with low income/homeless often do not have a lot of time or space to grow food, the target audience was those who have the capacity to participate, rather than to reduce acute food insecurity. Working with partners to grow food for vulnerable populations using public land is an issue that will be explored.

3.2 DTES Food Sovereignty Coop – Sammy Pranteau and Jill Ratcliffe

The speakers introduced themselves and the [SRO Collaborative](#), which began with the opioid response, to empower tenants to be agents of change. COVID funding allowed for more staff and organizing.

There was a recognized need to protect people during COVID. New partnerships have been developed with organizations doing food support to create a network of food resources for tenants. About 7500 hot meals and over 1000 hampers have been provided. The work builds a tenant-directed support network that aims not to replicate the charity model, but to empower those affected. Working in borrowed space, shared infrastructure was considered to provide stability for work toward food sovereignty. An infrastructure needs assessment was done, and included cultural needs, e.g. to process meat.

It was recognized that to achieve food sovereignty, collaboration with all nations is needed as well as an understanding of the relationship with the land and animals, and teachings are offered. Tenants are paid for their work. The goals are: 1) Build capacity to meet community-identified needs 2) Ensure access to culturally appropriate food 3) Build DTES indigenous leadership and governance 4) DTES employment and training, and 5) Build indigenous food sovereignty community facility in DTES. Guiding principles include elder governance, dignity, respect, community-led.

Discussion

- Policy changes are needed with respect to health regulations and meat processing.
- Additional needs include finding space with dry storage and a walk in fridge.
- Suggestions for VFPC support include writing a letter of support, connecting with relevant expertise, or advocating to Council for a bylaw change.
- ACTION: The discussion will be moved to email to identify main points and raise at Nov meeting.

3.3 First We Eat film screening

There is potential to do a screening at the Van City theatre; ACTION: Jesse will put Kelsey in touch, who will follow up through email. Now that the film has been released, an online screening may be possible.

3.4 Earthsave Good Food City declaration – tabled.

3.5 Food Waste Working Group Motion

Prior to this item, Heather Escobar left the meeting and did not return. As quorum was lost, the formal part of the meeting adjourned.

A motion was passed in July, however the final version is substantially different and needs a revote. The item will be added to the Nov agenda. It was recommended that the VFPC avoid passing motions that are not finalized.

3.6 Admin – December meeting and extension of term

Recognizing the time lost, the City has asked advisory groups to continue to April 30, 2021. Members were reminded that not all groups meet monthly, and that the VFPC does not normally meet in December.

The VFPC will need to consider finalizing existing work (including input to the LFAP), recruitment and the transition to the next council. The Leadership Committee is currently operating with limited capacity. Staff are in discussion with the Clerk's office on meeting support for the VFPC as part of a review of all advisory councils. The VFPC will be engaged in the review, including reflections on the new criteria for advisory groups.

ACTION: Members are asked to complete a spreadsheet outlining their preferences and capacity until the end of term. It was noted that the limit to the number of terms served begins with this term, and all members are eligible to reapply.

It was noted that the VFPC typically does engagement around the election, however given the short time frame, does not have time before the current provincial election.

Next Meeting:

DATE: Thursday, November 12, 2020
TIME: 6:00pm – 8:30pm
PLACE: WebEx Online

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Vancouver Park Board Food Growing Initiatives in Response to COVID-19

Information for this summary was gathered from Park Board staff including Ema Tanaka (Acting Garden Director of VanDusen Botanical Garden, Bloedel Conservatory and Queen Elizabeth Park), Bruce Macdonald (Superintendent - Sunset Nursery and Bloedel Conservatory), and Mark Halyk (Food & Beverage Operations Team Leader) in Sept. 2020. A short video about the Sunset Nursery portion of the project can also be found [here](#).

Background

Over the summer of 2020, the Vancouver Park Board leveraged its access to land and growing expertise to establish several food-growing sites to provide fresh produce for COVID-19 response initiatives.

What was implemented and how?

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, facing reduced staffing levels resulting from City-wide budget cuts, the Park Board's Sunset Nursery adjusted its typical production cycle accordingly. Under this adjustment, the Nursery was producing only about 60-65% of their normal volume of nursery products. This freed up room in the greenhouses and outside, making room for production of vegetable seedlings and a pop-up farm producing vegetables on site.

Vegetable seedlings were grown for four Park sites—Langara, McCleery and Fraserview Golf Courses, and VanDusen Garden - where they were transplanted out into raised beds and in-ground gardens maintained by Park Board staff. The pop-up farm at Sunset Nursery itself included 34 "plots" made out of 3-yard Bagster curbside waste bags, 45-50 pots (for tomatoes, cucumbers, basil and squash) and a small watermelon hill. The curbside waste bags, donated by Waste Management, are normally used by homeowners to dispose of renovation and household debris but were able to be put to new use as cost-effective growing containers.

The transition to a pop-up vegetable farm allowed staff to stay even busier than normal while contributing to a meaningful project. Funding was received to hire one extra staff over the summer, but overall the projects were possible because everyone stepped up to make it happen.

Outcomes - what was harvested and how was it used?

Food grown at the Park sites were provided to several initiatives. Much was provided to residents of City-owned and operated non-market housing in the form of food hampers and meals. These meals were prepared in golf-course kitchens, which had pivoted to this initiative while golf-courses were temporarily shut down. As of July, partnerships were also established with other organizations such as Fresh Roots and Grandview Woodland Food Connection, providing additional fresh produce for their respective food programs.

As of late September, Sunset Nursery was still harvesting late season crops and expected to be doing so for a few more weeks. Nursery staff feel it was a highly productive season, and estimate that they have grown about 5000-6000 lbs of food over the summer.

Next steps

Staff are now assessing overall project budgets and impacts and considering whether the initiatives will be repeated in 2021. The Local Food Action Plan renewal, kicking off in fall 2020, will provide a timely forum for considering the Park Board's long term role in food growing initiatives such as the ones piloted in 2020.

Pop-up farm at Sunset Nursery



Beautiful salads prepared for Non-Market Housing residents using Park Board produce



Surrey's Yard to Garden Program

<https://www.surrey.ca/about-surrey/community-initiatives/local-food-in-surrey/yard-garden-program>

This program summary was written based on an interview with Erin Desautels, Sustainability Planner at City of Surrey on October 2, 2020.

Background

In response to the COVID-19 impacts Surrey began experiencing, the Yard to Garden program was established to support residents to transform their yards into gardens with the goal of growing more food and feeding more people in the community. The program provided Surrey residents with materials and resources to grow vegetables at home, including soil, seeds, educational resources and gardening support. Gardeners were asked their willingness to donate their excess harvest to local food banks and community organizations.

How and why it was implemented

The idea for the program arose out of discussion at *Seeds of Change Surrey* - a food action coalition that includes City of Surrey, Fraser Health, and school board staff, as well as community organizations in its membership. *Seeds of Change* recognized that COVID-19 was exacerbating pre-existing food insecurity issues and that, in addition to charitable food response, interventions that would improve food system capacity and literacy were needed.

At the same time, municipal food growing initiatives in Brampton, Ottawa, Victoria, and elsewhere were making headlines. Inspired by these, a project concept was developed that took into account the Surrey context - few community gardens, many residential areas with private growing space, and no city-run nursery. Surrey Sustainability Office staff received approval to lead the program in collaboration with the many *Seeds of Change* partners and funding was secured from the United Way of the Lower Mainland. Input and advice from members of Victoria's Urban Food Table helped shape the program and inform logistical planning.

Internally, support from the Surrey EOC and City Manager was key to getting the program going. Partnerships with the City of Surrey parks division was also critical, as the Sustainability Office itself didn't have access to necessary equipment and staff resources for implementation.

Program details

Surrey residents were invited to sign up to receive growing kits via the City's existing online parks and rec registration system. Three pickup locations were set up across the City for pickup, and pre-registered pickup times were set and staggered in order to minimize crowding and better enable physical distancing. The kit included soil, three varieties of seeds sourced from the BC Eco-Seed Coop, and a getting started guide.

A partnership with DiverseCity Community Resources Society also enabled 25 kits that included custom built planter boxes donated by the City to be delivered to residents who faced barriers to picking up the kits and didn't have access to in-ground growing space.

Challenges and learnings

Timing was challenging - even with support from management, community, and funders, the program did not roll out until August. However, despite concern that this was so far into the growing season, it was still well received and enabled people to be ready for cooler season gardening. The program was initially

over-subscribed with a waitlist, but ultimately enough materials were available to satisfy most of the demand.

Staff workload to design, implement, and manage the program - on top of pre-existing workload was higher than initially anticipated. The program will require dedicated staffing to run in future years to allow a program launch at the beginning of the spring to maximize food potential throughout the growing season.

Although recipients were encouraged to donate a portion of their harvest to community food programs, there was limited capacity to coordinate this given the short timeline of the program. In the future, staff would like to see strong partnerships with organizations that could receive produce such as exists in Delta through Earthwise Society.

Outcomes and next steps

A survey was administered to all garden kit recipients as part of their registration process in order to track program outcomes and collect information about recipients' food security status, garden experience, and intended use of the harvest. Staff are currently analysing the results, along with assessment of budget. This information will support decision making as to whether or not to run the program again in 2021.