



Date: January 5, 2004

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation

FROM: Commissioner Eva Riccius

SUBJECT: Results of the Work of the Food Policy Task Force

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be received for information.

BACKGROUND

On July 8, 2003 Council approved a motion supporting the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver that fosters equitable food production, distribution and consumption; nutrition; community development and environmental health. To provide leadership in achieving this goal, a Food Policy Task Force was initiated.

Commissioner Eva Riccius and Liane McKenna represented the Park Board on the Task Force in addition to representatives from approximately 70 community organizations, City staff, Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and Council members Tim Louis, Fred Bass and Ellen Woodsworth.

The Task Force completed an extensive consultation process which consisted of two meetings of the full group, informal small group meetings, consultation with recognized experts in urban food policy, staff liaison with community, City staff, UBC and other stakeholders and research on existing models of successful urban food policies and Food Councils already in existence.

The outcome of the Task Force's work was the completion of a Food Action Plan which was presented to Council in December 2003 and approved in principle subject to consideration of the funding requests as part of the 2004 budget process.

DISCUSSION

The Food Action Plan is primarily focused on areas that are within the jurisdiction of the City of Vancouver but includes strategies that involve partnerships with other stakeholders and levels of government. These are intended to deal with some of the larger policy issues such as hunger in Vancouver, loss of agricultural lands from increased urban development pressure, changes in agribusiness and the growing distance between consumers and producers more at the local level.

The Action Plan is made up of three components:

1. The creation of a Vancouver Food Policy Council

With a mandate to act as an advisory and policy development body, the Vancouver Food Policy Council will be made up of between 15 and 25 members of a range of sectors from across the food system continuum. Its members will be appointed by the Task Force and will work under an initial terms of reference that coordinate with the Action Items approved by Council.

2. An Interim Work Plan of Action Items

The action items in the interim work plan have been selected because they provide opportunities to coordinate, maximize and expand upon the food-related programs and services that are already provided and/or supported by the City of Vancouver.

There are 6 action items:

- A. Conduct a Vancouver Food System Assessment - This work looks at the current state of the food system, its gaps and the needs of the community and assists in the determination of priorities for action.
- B. Feasibility study for the creation of rooftop gardens - This is focused on examining the potential to increase rooftop gardens on residential and industrial buildings and expanding their use for the express purpose of growing food.
- C. Facilitating the Creation of Community Gardens - This action item will consider the expansion of community gardens on under-utilized City Land incorporating more urban agriculture beyond what has been achieved through the Park Board's Community Gardens Policy. Private development space may also be considered.
- D. Facilitate the creation of Farmers' Markets - While a number of Farmers' Markets exist in Vancouver, primarily on Park Board land, this task will be to seek creative ways to increase the quality and number of farmers' markets by reviewing zoning regulations, health regulations and other requirements that may have limited their numbers in the past.
- E. Facilitate the creation of a School Nutrition Policy - Partnerships with the Vancouver School Board, Regional Health Authority and other stakeholders will be required to create this policy in response to the growing demand for more nutritious food in schools.

- F. Facilitate the creation of a coordinated food processing and distribution facility for low income citizens - The creation of this facility will allow a number of food related organizations that have the shared objective of improving food security for low income citizens to be housed together. Sharing resources, developing new program partnerships and the economies of scale are some of the benefits expected.
3. Staff support proposals

In order to support the work of the new Vancouver Food Policy Council and coordinate and assist with implementation of the action items, two new positions are being considered for funding in 2004. These are a Food Policy Coordinator and a 2 year temporary Food System Planner. These individuals will be staff of the City of Vancouver's Community Services Department and link with the various City Departments and the Park Board and School Board who presently also provide key components of the food system in Vancouver.

Impacts for the Vancouver Park Board

As an organization and through our partnership with Community Associations and others, we provide a range of facilities, services and activities that enhance the Food System in Vancouver. From Community Gardens and Farmers' Markets to community cooking programs and locations for Food Bank distribution, the Park Board has connected community needs with opportunities for many years. The creation of a Vancouver Food Policy Council with City staff support will enhance our ability to present food related issues from the community to ensure coordinated action with many others. We will also continue to expand our collaborations with other City departments in order to implement the action steps identified in the Interim Work Plan. In the future, given the focus on Food Policy, there may also be innovative ways that the Park Board can contribute to the improved Food System, beyond what we presently do.

SUMMARY

The approval of the Vancouver Food Policy Council and its Interim Work Plan will focus on activities that support the work that the Park Board, the City and many community groups are presently undertaking. But with the assistance of dedicated staff resources through the Community Services Department support, research and continued collaboration with existing and new partners will ensure a stronger food system throughout the communities within Vancouver.

This report provides a summary of the proposed Food Policy Council and the staff support and is provided for the information of the Park Board Commissioners.

Prepared by:

Commissioner Eva Riccius
Vancouver Park Board