

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: June 24, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

SUBJECT: Prince George Food Policy Council

ATTACHMENT(S): None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council CONSIDERS the three Food Policy Council structure options set out in the report dated June 24, 2021, from the Acting City Manager, titled “Prince George Food Policy Council” and provides direction to Administration.

PURPOSE:

At the May 31, 2021 regular meeting of Council, Administration was directed to return a report to Council recommending a committee structure and proposed terms of reference for a Food Policy Council. This report responds to that direction by:

- overviewing the urban food system, the context in which Food Policy Councils operate;
- describing the typical mandate of Food Policy Councils (FPCs) and;
- providing examples of various FPC structures, including examples of FPCs operating in other BC municipalities.

BACKGROUND:

Food System

A food system is an “integrated view of the production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management of food.” The system is complex and interconnected and recognizes there are multiple players who must work together to develop integrated solutions. This is illustrated in the diagram to the right.



Food Policy Councils

Food Policy Councils (FPCs) operate in many municipalities across BC and Canada. They are typically a voluntary body comprising stakeholders from *across* the food system that examine how a food system operates in order to provide ideas, actions, and policy recommendations on how to improve it. As such, membership (particularly for those FPCs that work from a broad food systems approach driven by concerns about sustainability) is as inclusive/representative as possible. The chart below illustrates which parties may participate in an FPC.

Food Sector	Stakeholders/Community	Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production• Processing & Distribution• Markets & Purchasing• Preparation & Consumption• Food waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity of community organizations and initiatives focused on range of interests in food system (health, nutrition, Indigenous, environment, anti-poverty, food security, education etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Government• Health• Education

Terms of Reference for FPCs generally include mandates that highlight four key functions including:

- Discuss food issues, while balancing the interest of different actors (government, business, non-profits);
- Create opportunities for all sectors in the food system to collaborate across the system as well as across rural/urban divides;
- Analyze, influence, and create policy and;
- Create or support existing programs and services that address local needs.

Role of Local Government

Municipalities have limited jurisdictional authority over the food system as the majority of food system issues and policy rest at the federal and provincial levels. However, food is implicated in land-use planning, waste management, emergency planning, transportation, community health and well-being, along with other local government areas of responsibility. This jurisdictional overlap complicates decision-making and action, and is further blurred by the complexity of the food system itself.

However, local government can influence access to healthy food through zoning by-laws and transportation policy; it can support local agriculture through space for farmers markets and by-laws that protect agricultural land; and it can implement actions to support community-based food programming. As such, many municipalities have utilized FPCs to engage with the local community, build relationships, and convene with local food systems stakeholders to discuss problems and collaborate on solutions.

Examples of Food Policy Council Structures

Food Policy Councils are operating in many B.C. municipalities. Contexts vary significantly across BC and as such, they operate with different structures and models of governance. Some are embedded within local government while others operate with no direct local government involvement. The three most common structures and their associated characteristics are outlined below.

Structure Options	Characteristics
1. Local Government Led FPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government administers by setting mandate, providing financing, and assigning staff resources • Linked to an existing local government department(s) with external organizations playing an advisory role • Direct interaction with an elected official is often enabled through Council representation on the FPC • Facilitates food systems connections across city departments, and between local government and community • Initiatives reflect a broad food systems approach driven by concerns about sustainability (reducing climate change impacts or economic viability of regional agriculture) • Strong ability to influence the food system • Challenges for the FPC include balancing program and policy outcomes, pressure to achieve “quick, visible wins”, adapting to changing political environments, jurisdictional challenges and lack of time to implement agendas • Vancouver Food Policy Council • City of Vancouver Food Policy Council • City of Edmonton’s Food Policy Council
2. Independently Led FPC with Links to Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassroots movement (sometimes led by an organization with non-profit status) but with attachments to local government (not as formal as above option) • Membership is diverse with local government participation • Local government support is in-kind by way of formal or informal appointment of a local government representative (usually a staff person) • Funding can be from a mix of sources including local government and provincial government and external grants • Reason for creation of FPC is broad, often related to social development or health goals and projects can lead to the development of food charters • Scope of activity can be broad or project-specific, such as the creation of farmers’ markets, the development of food box projects, or the establishment of community gardens • Challenges for the FPC can include unstable funding, lack of clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, balancing program and policy outcomes, adapting to changing political environments, and navigating organizational structures of local governments • Victoria Urban Food Table • Kamloops Food Policy Council

3. Independently Led Action Oriented Round Tables/Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consists of a grassroots organization(s), roundtable or project committee, without local government involvement (a City representative may occasionally participate) • Can be supported by local government grants • May have success developing food charters and securing associated local government endorsement • Motives for creation are usually focused on specific food system projects or goals, such as maintaining the viability of local farms, ensuring food security for low-income populations, addressing barriers to food access, promoting healthy eating, etc. • Similar challenges to structure 2 (above) • Central Okanagan Food Policy Council • Kaslo Food Security Project
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When considering the food policy council structures, it is important to note the following.

1. There are no metrics by which to evaluate the success of food policy councils (largely depends on both the FPC's goals and its perception of success).
2. All FPC structures have advantages and disadvantages.
3. Selection of a structure should consider applicability to the local context and the needs and conditions of the community.
4. For many FPCs, programmatic activities are as important if not more so than direct policy engagement so it is important that their structure relates to desired aims/outcomes.
5. Organizational capacity and alignment with Council priorities should be a consideration, particularly if policy change and/or resource allocation is required to influence food system change.

Following a review of operating FPCs and given the above noted considerations, Administration recommends Option 3 as a means to advance food system priorities in Prince George. This provides the City with the opportunity to tailor its support and/or participation in a way that aligns with Council priorities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The Select Committee on Poverty Reduction prepared 19 recommendations for City Council's consideration (approved during the May 31, 2021 Council meeting). Consideration to *Develop a Food Policy Council (and Food Charter) that supports issues around community food security and insecurity* was one of the nineteen recommendations.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Depending on the FPC structure, resource commitments can range from significant in option one (local government led and administered) to negligible, as would be the case with option three (independently led with optional and/or tailored local government participation).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Food Policy Councils (FPCs) operate in many municipalities across BC and Canada to provide a forum for community and food systems stakeholders to work collaboratively to examine the various components of the food system and provide ideas, actions and policy recommendations.

Three Food Policy Council structures have been presented for Council consideration. Council is asked to consider the three options set out in this report and provide direction to Administration. Administration recommends option three, an independently led and administered Food Policy Council (that may or may not have assigned local government representation).

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

PREPARED BY: [Sarah Brown, Supervisor, Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships Division]

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: [2021/07/12]