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Agenda Item # 5#5

**REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, ~~OCTOBER 22~~ JULY 23, 2008**

SUBJECT Report on CRFAIR/CR-FAIR/RTE Food Policy Council Proposal

PURPOSE

~~At its meeting of July 23, 2008, the~~ The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiative Roundtable (CR-FAIR) made a presentation to this committee regarding the establishment of a Food Policy Council within the Capital Regional District. This report responds to that request.

~~have put forward a number of recommendations for consideration by local government, including recommendations for inclusion in the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) review, and a proposal for the CRD to establish a Food Policy Council. The purpose of this report is to outline the recommendations made by CR-FAIR, and provide some background to the food policy council proposal, in anticipation of their presentation to the Planning & Protective Services Committee. Representatives of CRFAIR presented to the Round Table on the Environment, where it was recommended they present to this committee~~

BACKGROUND

Members of the Capital Region Food and Agricultural Initiative Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and the Food and Agriculture sub-committee of the CRD Round Table on the Environment (RTE) have been working on food policy and food security issues for several years.

In 2004, CR-FAIR developed a draft *Regional Food Charter* and presented it to municipalities.

In 2006 and 2007, the two groups hosted two working sessions, entitled, "Putting Food & Food Policy on the Table" which addressed food security in the Capital Region and identified actions that could be taken by community members and local government. They produced as similarly titled Phase One Report that identified food security concerns and made recommendations for further action.

In 2007, the Roundtables produced the Phase Two Report, "Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan (this was distributed at the July meeting(attachment one)). The Plan included six priority actions:

1. Protect farmland through the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Official Community Plans (OCPs), Area Agricultural plans, zoning and bylaw changes.
2. Encourage innovations and diversity in the industry: through the RGS, OCPs, Area Agricultural Plans, zoning, bylaws, and investments in innovation in the areas of primary production, on-farm services, food manufacturing, alternative distribution channels, and novel marketing options.
3. Meet climate change obligations through land and water protection, waste stream management, the provision of ecological goods and services and reduced food miles.
4. Strengthen food system infrastructure and organisations by building new links with the supply chain, strengthening information exchange, increasing organisational capacity, linking government to community, and conducting outreach and education campaigns.
5. Improve population health and regional food security by building capacity for residents to access healthy diets and food resources, through partnerships with the Vancouver Island Health

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Authority (VIHA), regional and municipal government, First nations, emergency food providers and community agencies;

6. Establish a Food Policy Council to monitor regional food security and advise the CRD and local governments on food system issues, to coordinate the implementation of the action plan, and to link government, industry and community with other food system stakeholders and communities.

CRFAIR/CR-FAIR is a consortium of food system representatives with a shared interest in food policy and food security issues. Administrative support is provided through the Community Council. While the CRFAIR/CR-FAIR has the benefit of good representation, focused directions, and strong linkages with agencies and the university, they have identified a number of concerns that have led to their desire to have the CRD establish the Regional Food Policy Council:

- Policy direction and decision-making on food issues is very fragmented;
- It is very time consuming for a largely volunteer group to access 13 separate municipalities and 3 electoral areas;
- There is currently no dedicated staff person who can bring information and recommendations forward to a decision-making forum;
- There is no direct link to local decision makers to action their recommendations.

Food Policy Councils: Food policy councils are advisory, advocacy and policy bodies comprised of individuals representing all aspects of a local food system who work together to address food system issues including land protection, farming, food security, local food production, food distribution, access to healthy food, and retailing. They can help municipalities to develop policies and programs associated with all aspects of food access and security. Some of the initiatives undertaken by food policy councils (existing in US and some Canadian communities) include:

- Policy development, including land use policies to support land protection, access, urban agriculture and emergency preparedness with respect to food security;
- "Agricultural inventories" or investigations of public lands suitable for community gardens, boulevard planting, pocket markets, or other agricultural uses. Inventories of local agricultural policies, regulations and programs. Inventories of supporting infrastructure;
- Mapping, GIS analysis, and "Community green mapping" of farms, markets, community gardens and the like;
- Advocacy and strengthening the voice for Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) protection and support to local farmers;
- Input into government and institutional food procurement approaches to encourage buy-local and/or access to healthy foods;
- Development of programs to alleviate hunger and improve access for low income people to healthy affordable food;
- Promotion of local economic development and agricultural tourism opportunities;
- Research projects and collaboration on academic research;
- Waste management, composting and reuse of food "waste";
- Communications, capacity building and public education/outreach.

CRFAIR/CR-FAIR and the RTE sub-committee have been working toward a number of these initiatives over the last several years, but would like to advance their efforts and action their recommendations through an elected decision-making body.

ALTERNATIVES:

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1. That this report be received for information.
2. That the CRD establish a regional food policy council and staff be directed to facilitate its development.
3. That a regional food policy council not be established at this time.

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GROWTH MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The RGS currently includes a number of policy directions supportive of agriculture. These include:

- Protection of ALR land
- Support for urban growth containment to reduce development pressure on farmlands
- An action item to undertake a review of long term resource needs in the Capital Region, including food.
- Support for a regional economic development strategy that includes actions to support agriculture and to promote the economic potential of expanded local and export markets for farm products.

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The CRFAIR/CR-FAIR Action Plan included some recommendations specific to the Regional Growth Strategy, including; *strengthen the farmland protection provisions of the RGS, and use the RGS to encourage food production.* The scheduled 5-year review of the RGS provides an opportunity to address many regional-level food policy issues, particularly those pertaining to land use, and to strengthen the shared commitments in the RGS.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The establishment of a Food Policy Council within the CRD would entail a similar process to that used to establish a commission or the Round Table on the Environment, likely require the establishment of a new service, using a similar process to the Climate Change service establishment. Administrative support and/or a coordinator would be required to coordinate meetings, events, and reports to the relevant standing committee and/or Committee of the Whole. This would require a funding commitment for a full time or part time staff position, and require approval through the service establishment bylaw process.

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Many of the recently developed municipal Official Community Plans (OCPs) contain policy direction on improving access to locally grown food and improving food security. This issue has taken on increasing importance due to concerns around climate change, the health implications of imported and processed foods, and the increasing cost of fuel to transport foods long distances. The dedication of staff and associated financial resources (for administrative support, meeting expenses, etc.) (anticipated to be similar to the Climate Change service) could provide value to the member municipalities and electoral areas if there was a shared commitment to address food security issues throughout the region. Having a dedicated coordinator and the policy council/roundtable members available to work with the local communities could provide an opportunity to streamline/or coordinate policy development, relevant zoning regulations, inventory development, mapping projects, and grant applications.

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~~Interim options could include involving CRFAIR/CR-FAIR in the RGS review; directing the RTE to undertake specific food security issues; directing the new climate change coordinator to address specific food security issues pertaining to mitigation and adaptation strategies.~~

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Creation of a food policy council would require funding for administrative support and, likely, a food policy council coordinator position. Alternatively, some of the food security issues could be addressed through existing channels, particularly the RGS and the Climate Change service, thereby utilizing existing budget requisitions. However, without additional, dedicated project and/or staffing resources, the ability to assume additional responsibilities and projects is limited.

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SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The Capital Region Food and Agricultural Initiative Roundtable (CR-FAIR) has proposed the idea of a food policy council as a means to address food security issues and establish a more formal connection to the region's decision makers.

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intent of this report is to provide some context to members of the Planning & Protective Services Committee in anticipation of a request from CRFAIR/CR-FAIR and the RTE subcommittee on Agriculture and Food to establish a food policy council within the CRD. At this time, the CRD does not have a specific mandate or mechanism to establish a food policy council without undertaking a new service establishment bylaw. Opportunities to address aspects of the food security issues exist through the RGS, the newly created climate change service, and the work of the Round-Table on the Environment. The RGS review process presents an opportunity to strengthen and clarify existing policy directions pertaining to land use and land use protection, servicing, transportation and sustainability.

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RECOMMENDATION

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Attachment:

Tracy Corbett, MCIP,
Senior Manager
Planning & Protective Services

Robert Lapham, MCIP
General Manager,
Planning and Protective Services

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COMMENTS:

Report to Planning and Protective Services Committee, ~~Wednesday, October 22, 2008~~
Re: ~~CRFAIRCR-FAIR/RTE~~ Food Policy Council Proposal, Page 5

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