

DATE OF MEETING December 21, 2020
AUTHORED BY KARIN KRONSTAL, SOCIAL PLANNER
SUBJECT **NANAIMO FOOD POLICY COUNCIL**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with options and to seek direction for how the City of Nanaimo can support the creation of an independent Nanaimo Food Policy Council for the purpose of further enhancing local food security.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Support City of Nanaimo Staff participation in the Nanaimo Food Policy Council as non-voting members;
- 2) Send a letter to the Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors requesting that a staff liaison be appointed to the Nanaimo Food Policy Council to represent regional interests; and
- 3) Provide a letter of support from the City to Nanaimo Foodshare requesting the Nanaimo Region Medical Health Officer provide Nanaimo Foodshare with an additional \$5,000 annually to the health authorities locally designated food hub, to contribute to the administrative costs of coordinating the Nanaimo Food Policy Council.

BACKGROUND

On 2020-OCT-19, Council passed the following motions:

- “1. Endorse the Emergency Food and Nutrition Strategy as formal stakeholder input into the REIMAGINE NANAIMO process; and*
- 2. Support the creation of a Nanaimo Food Policy Council as an independent, arms-length body that would continue collaborative work to strengthen the local food system and request that Staff bring forward a report on how the City can facilitate this work.”*

Staff have provided the Emergency Food and Nutrition Strategy to the REIMAGINE NANAIMO consulting team that is compiling the engagement input. As well, Staff have continued to dialogue with many of the stakeholders that contributed to the creation of the Strategy. This report focuses on the second part of the motion regarding the potential for a new, independent Nanaimo Food Policy Council (NFPC).

Food policy councils are relatively common throughout much of the province and across the country. They provide a forum for community and food system stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve the local food system. The formation of a local group has the

potential to provide significant value and synergies with local government initiatives. These include, but are not limited to, sustainability, waste management, water supply, emergency planning, economic development, and land use planning. As opposed to representing only food producers, food policy councils bring together stakeholders from across the entire food system, including educators, processors, regulators, distributors, and others. Food policy councils examine the local food system and provide ideas, actions, and policy recommendations on how to improve it. The draft Terms of Reference for the recently created Comox Valley Food Policy Council (see Attachment A) provides an example of the typical scope of a mandate for a food policy council.

Food policy councils operate under various models of governance. These range from existing within a local government committee structure (i.e., City of Victoria's Urban Food Table) to operating completely independently (i.e., Cowichan Green Community is a non-profit organization that hosts the Cowichan Food Security Coalition and the Emergency Food Task Force). An excerpt from the document entitled, "Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs – Forms of Municipal Food Policy Activity," outlines the range of possible models (as detailed in Attachment B).

DISCUSSION

Following Council's direction in October 2020, Staff engaged with Jen Cody, Executive Director of Nanaimo Foodshare Society, to discuss potential points of partnership and collaboration with the City of Nanaimo in establishing an NFPC. Nanaimo Foodshare has been Island Health's designated 'Food Hub' for many years. Nanaimo Foodshare is provided with an annual \$15,000 budget and a mandate from Public Health to lead food security advocacy work in our region.

The NFPC is proposed as a "hybrid model" (see 'Category 3' of Attachment B), with independent status and indirect links to local government. This structure means the NFPC would have no formal attachment to the City or other local governments, although local government representation would be maintained and periodic informal assignment of Staff resources may be provided where appropriate. An analogous example would be the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition, which has City Staff attend monthly meetings and is the primary network for housing service providers.

To formalize this relationship, Staff are requesting Council endorse a resolution to support Staff participation in the NFPC as non-voting members. Furthermore, given that food security is a region-wide issue, Staff are recommending Council send a letter to the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Board of Directors requesting the RDN also appoint a staff liaison to the Nanaimo Food Policy Council to represent regional interests and concerns.

Nanaimo Foodshare recently informed the City they have been successful in obtaining \$15,000 in funding to support dialogue related to the impact of COVID-19 on food security in the region. This funding must be spent by 2021-MAR-31 and could be used toward the start-up costs of an NFPC. Given the purpose of the funding, this would mean the NFPC's mandate for its initial 6 to 12 months would have more of an emergency food focus (which is appropriate in the current local context of the COVID-19 pandemic).

Given that the available funding must be spent in the next four months, it is understood Nanaimo Foodshare has and will continue to be advancing grant applications in support of the

NFPC. Staff recommend that Council provide a letter of support from the City to Nanaimo Foodshare requesting the Nanaimo Region Medical Health Officer provide Nanaimo Foodshare with an additional \$5,000 annually to the health authority's locally-designated food hub, to contribute to the administrative costs of coordinating the Nanaimo Food Policy Council.

OPTIONS

1. That Council:
 1. support City of Nanaimo Staff participation in the Nanaimo Food Policy Council as non-voting members;
 2. send a letter to the Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors requesting that a staff liaison be appointed to the Nanaimo Food Policy Council to represent regional interests; and
 3. provide a letter of support from the City to Nanaimo Foodshare requesting the Nanaimo Region Medical Health Officer provide Nanaimo Foodshare with an additional \$5,000 annually to the health authority's locally-designated food hub, to contribute to the administrative costs of coordinating the Nanaimo Food Policy Council.
 - Advantages: Has the potential to greatly enhance coordination and communication among those with an interest in emergency food, the food industry, the agricultural sector, government, and food advocacy groups.
 - Disadvantages: Would require Staff time to attend meetings and provide follow-up on requests.
 - Financial Implications: None immediately. Nanaimo Foodshare may approach the City in the future for funding, should the NFPC prove to be a successful undertaking adding value to the city.
2. That Council provide alternative direction.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The creation of a new, independent Nanaimo Food Policy Council was one of the recommendations coming out of the Emergency Food and Nutrition Security Plan (2020).
- Nanaimo Foodshare Society, the Island Health-designated lead agency for food security in the Nanaimo Region, is able to lead this effort and has obtained a grant to cover the associated costs until March 2021.
- Staff recommend Council approve City Staff participation in the Nanaimo Food Policy Council and that Council request the Regional District of Nanaimo also designate a staff lead.
- In addition, Staff recommend Council provide a letter of support to Nanaimo Foodshare requesting the Nanaimo Region Medical Health Officer provide Nanaimo Foodshare with an additional \$5,000 annually to the health authority's locally-designated food hub, to contribute to the administrative costs of coordinating the Nanaimo Food Policy Council.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Draft Comox Valley Food Policy Council Terms of Reference

ATTACHMENT B: Excerpt from “Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs – Forms of Municipal Food Policy Activity”

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