

Final Report:**An Initial Framework for a KFL&A Food Policy Council**

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**Creating a more secure and sustainable food system
in the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington region**

This document outlines a proposed framework for a regional Food Policy Council developed by the KFL&A Healthy Eating Working Group. It is based on the directions established in the KFL&A Food Charter, on research conducted to learn from progress in other communities, a community stakeholder consultation with 42 participants on March 21, 2013, and on careful consideration by the Working Group. The desire is to have a consensus-based model supported by all groups committed to a healthy food system in our communities, and this document sets out an initial framework for the first council.

The KFL&A Healthy Working Group

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- Kaitlin Byrick, Downtown Kingston B.I.A.
- Dianne Dowling, National Farmers Union-Local 316
- Cheryl Hitchen, City of Kingston
- Tara Kainer, Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul
- Helen Maberly, Kingston Community Health Centres
- Joli Manson, Hospitality Services at Queen's University
- Mara Shaw, Loving Spoonful
- Suzette Taggart, KFL&A Public Health
- Sue Weir, Lennox & Addington Interval House
- Anne Marie Young, County of Frontenac

Examples of typical food policy issues...

Healthy food policies for workplaces, public buildings, and facilities, including:

- Guidelines for food and beverages sold in snack bars or served at meetings/events;
- Strategies to attractively price healthier food and beverage choices (e.g. vegetables, fruit, and milk);
- Promotional strategies that encourage healthier food/beverage choices; eliminate advertising of poor food choices on vending machines, scoreboards, gyms, etc;
- Nutrition education for food service staff.

Policies to support the use of local foods in the community, at food venues, community programs and events, including:

- Local food procurement practices (e.g. by municipal food services and recreation facilities, markets, grocery & other stores);
- Use of locally produced food for events & community food box and meal programs;
- Support of farmers' markets/roadside stalls for access to locally produced foods.

Planning and transportation policies that increase access to healthy food, including:

- Municipal and regional plans for food sites (e.g. grocery stores, food markets, farmers' markets and community gardens);
- Transportation routes/bus stops near grocery stores and food markets.

It is proposed ...

That a Food Policy Council (FPC) be established in the KFL&A region to help create a more secure and sustainable community food system, with the following purposes:

- To serve as a forum for discussing food issues
- To assess the community food system in KFL&A
- To engage policy makers and propose changes to food or food-related policies

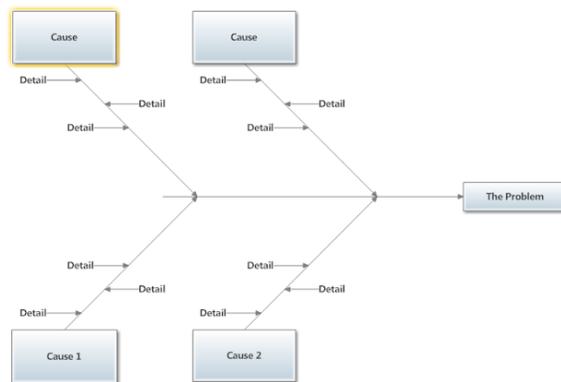
In the course of its work, the KFL&A Food Policy Council would also be expected to foster coordination between sectors in the food system. It would also provide education and overall guidance on community food system solutions for government, institutions, agencies, businesses and the public.

At this stage, it is not expected that the Food Policy Council would play a direct role in operating frontline programs or services to meet needs, undertaking formal system research studies or leading advocacy initiatives. As appropriate within its policy mission, however, the FPC may help others to propose legislation or design and implement projects that address deficiencies in the short or longer term, consistent with the Food Charter as its guiding document.

A Policy Focus:

It is proposed that the Food Policy Council's primary focus would be on policy (hence the name). This means it would study and recommend principles, intentions and rules to guide decisions in support of the Food Charter vision and concerns of the broader community food system. It may identify alternatives, encourage new behaviours, and work with policy/decision-makers to implement procedures and protocols supportive of a secure and sustainable community food system.

While the proposed council may have a policy focus, that does not mean it controls policy or has regulatory powers of any kind. In fact, it will have to engage policy-makers, build awareness and trust, and make effective use of its powers of persuasion to inform and encourage changes in policy, planning and priorities in organizations throughout the community.



Context:

The vision set out in the KFL&A Food Charter is to celebrate and champion nourishment for all.

It imagines the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington region having healthy, food-secure communities where:

- food is recognized as a basic right,
- a just food system ensures all members of our community have access to adequate, nutritious, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food,
- an ecologically and economically sustainable food system thrives, and
- a strong relationship exists between our rural and urban communities, which advocates and supports our local food system.

As the Food Charter describes in its Collective Commitments section, to achieve our vision the Food Policy Council would pursue policy review, development and change to:

- Celebrate **community** and **culture** through opportunities that bring together community members to appreciate and celebrate local food, culture, diversity and experiences.
- Promote the **health** of individuals, families and our community through policies, practices and access to adequate, nutritious, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food.
- Improve **education** through community awareness of how our food choices connect with our health and the environment, the role of agriculture in our lives, and promotion of food skills.
- Protect our **environment** through preservation/protection of farmland, production methods, watersheds, habitat, agriculture, land use policies, food waste reduction and recycling.
- Uphold **social justice** through a living wage, respectful work environment for all farmers and food workers, dignified access to sustainable healthy food, and meaningful community participation in policy development.
- Foster **economic sustainability** of our community through affordable agricultural land, and production, preparation, storage, distribution and consumption of regional food.

Proposed: Food Policy Council Authority and Boundaries

It is proposed that the KFL&A Food Policy Council be established as:

- an **independent body accountable to the community**, perhaps to evolve into an incorporated non-profit at some future date (rather than being a loose ad hoc network/working group, or a formal sub-committee or advisory group to some other entity such as KFL&A Public Health, the City of Kingston, Frontenac or L&A Counties);
- using a **consultative¹, consensus-based² approach** to its work, reaching out regularly to partners and KFL&A communities to hear from the full range of roles and perspectives that are inherent in a community food system;
- drawing its primary direction from a **focus on the Food Charter and policy review, development and change** — not on operational projects, programs or direct services;
- maintaining **liaison and engaging community**, whether individuals, agencies, institutions or governments (both at staff and political levels), to effect policy development and change;
- building particularly strong **relationships** with those in a position to provide resources and policy leadership for the Food Policy Council (such as KFL&A Public Health and municipalities);
- providing **thought leadership** to advance community thinking on food-related issues;
- undertaking a **community food system assessment** as a first step to identify planning and policy issues in need of community response and strategies; and,
- **encouraging, endorsing or showing moral support** for the initiatives of partners and other groups consistent with the aims and goals of the Food Charter;

¹ With a “consultative approach”, it is anticipated that the FPC would use a variety of mechanisms to engage community stakeholders to inform policy development, network, and contribute to a shared understanding of the issues. For instance, the FPC might invite stakeholders to meetings for discussion around a particular policy issue or theme. And all stakeholders would be welcome to participate in an annual food forum as a place for reporting back and planning for the future. Consultation would be pursued where and when needed, as may be relevant (e.g. depending on the parties interested in a policy), and/or where grassroots momentum is emerging in the community.

² By “consensus” we mean a process that takes the time to ensure that all committed stakeholders have had an opportunity to air their perspectives; decisions are then made and supported for “the overall good of the community”, not for specific interests. It seeks a better, perhaps more innovative way to work with different perspectives rather than relying primarily on compromise.

Examples of Food System Perspectives:

Food Production, Processing & Distribution
 Farmers and food producers (rural & urban)
 Agricultural and food organizations
 Local food businesses
 Institutional purchasers
 Ethnic food retailers/consumers
Faith groups
 Food marketing organizations
 Food retail, restaurants, food services
 Emergency food providers & food charities
 Food access and justice
 Community gardens
 Neighbourhood-based food programs
 Municipal councillors and/or staff
 All levels of government
 Media
 Local citizens and neighbourhood groups
 Seniors or Youth organizations
 Consumers experiencing food insecurity
 Public Health Unit/Board of Health
 Other health care or social services sector
 Various community/non-profit organizations
 Labour organizations
 Local environmental groups
 Social service advocates and/or providers
 Urban agriculture advocates
 Anti-poverty/poverty reduction advocates
 Academics/researchers (on food system)
 Educators/teachers/educational institutions
 Land use planning / economic development
 Public works / waste management
 Employment and social services

Proposed: FPC Structure, Composition and Roles

It is proposed that the KFL&A Food Policy Council:

- Be established in a timely manner (e.g. by summer of 2013);
- Be broadly consultative, but action-oriented and modest in size: **12-16 members** at most;
- That members be recruited for their **passion** for the vision of the Food Charter and making food a basic human right for all, along with **expertise** and other **resources** they might bring to advancing those commitments and related policy tasks. They would be expected to serve as members of a cabinet, not as “representatives” in a confederation of organizational interests;
- That members serve for a term of two years, renewable; and that the chair or co-chairs be elected by the group;
- That candidates be confirmed to sit on the first council after a **recruitment/review process** conducted by members of the current KFL&A Health Eating Working Group, charged with convening a first council that offers the best possible mix of perspectives, expertise, resources and commitment to take on the council’s policy work;
- That a variety of methods be used to attract candidates for the Council, such as public notices and announcements, direct contact and communications to stakeholder groups and agencies;
- That, for the sake of continuity and expertise, current **Working Group** members who wish to continue to serve through the Food Policy Council be invited to serve on that first council;
- That other members be appointed with **staggered terms** to ensure ongoing continuity;
- That **other opportunities to serve** and contribute (other than serving on the Council, such as on working groups or policy review teams) be found to engage the talents of interested nominees and volunteers not appointed as members of council;
- That it be recognized that the Food Policy Council structure may have to be **adaptive and flexible** as it matures, achieves significant milestones, and faces new emerging challenges.

Proposed Commitments: Expectations of Members

It is expected that Food Policy Council members will be conscientious in attending meetings, being well prepared in advance of such meetings, and will take on an appropriate amount of work outside of Council meetings, such as on a task team or in some liaison or policy review role (time commitment to be determined). Council members should also expect to be accountable to the community, working in a consultative, consensus-oriented format for conducting Council business.

Proposed: Meetings and Other Operating procedures

It is proposed that Council operating procedures (including the number, frequency, dates and times of meetings) be developed by the first council.

Initial expectations are that the Council would meet monthly, more or less, but that meeting frequency should be determined by the demands of the work, not an arbitrary schedule. Formal Council meetings would likely be supplemented by small group or task team work.

Documentation of Council proceedings would use a format best suited for reference and communication purposes (i.e. explaining issues and documenting key discussion points, decisions and assignments for follow-up or action). An approach using formal minutes and procedures seems less appropriate at this time for a consensus-oriented council.

Proposed: Communications Approach

In general, the Chair (or Co-Chairs) would be expected to speak on behalf of the Council, or may delegate that responsibility as appropriate. Other members would be expected to represent the Council in their policy work with other stakeholders or while serving as liaison to partners.

Wherever possible with important communications, key messages will be documented in writing for reference and communications purposes. In many cases, the Council will want to distribute material to stakeholders to inform them of issues, developments, plans and upcoming events.

Resources and support needed to accomplish the Council's goals:

Research with councils, networks, coalitions and roundtables in other communities has highlighted the importance of resources to support the work of the group – financial resources, but especially dedicated staff time. As the Food Policy Council is established and its terms of reference and workplans are confirmed, it will be critical to approach potential supporters and partners to make the project leadership and administrative resources at FPC's disposal as robust as possible. Support might be found through partners formally dedicating some allocation of staff time to FPC business; through health, local food, agricultural or other programs that align with FPC work; students on placements, internships, research grants or employment programs; and so on.

Proposed: Measures of Success/Performance Assessment

While specific measures of success, metrics to monitor progress, and mechanisms to assess the performance of the Council have not yet been proposed, it is expected that they would focus on achieving milestones and outcomes indicated in the workplan once it is developed. The ultimate measure would be making a difference in policies guiding the region to fully become communities with a more secure and sustainable food system. An annual forum with all community stakeholders could also be a potential mechanism for assessing progress and accountability.

Proposed: Timelines for Implementation

Given the substantive consensus at the Community Stakeholders Consultation on March 21st, it is proposed that the KFL&A Healthy Eating Working Group make an active effort to recruit candidates and select members of the new KFL&A Food Policy Council as soon as possible, with the first meeting scheduled for fall. It has been suggested that new members might be provided with one-on-one orientation before beginning their participation and be paired with an experienced Working Group “buddy” for advice and continuity. First orders of business would be expected to include formalizing the FPC’s terms of reference and considering how best to undertake a community food system assessment.

Other Notes:

Some Potential Implications to Consider:

A focus on evaluating and influencing policy would mean the FPC needs to have members with expertise and experience in policy matters, access to and influence with decision-makers, and skills in getting the key parties to undertake policy change. An emphasis on public education would suggest marketing/communications skills will be required. Improving coordination across sectors would call for project management and interpersonal skills, and contacts in each sector.

An advisory group would probably have to be larger to incorporate a full range of views; an action-oriented group would likely be more effective if it were smaller and included members who had the required resources, mandate or authority to make things happen.

The experience in other communities would suggest that resources (dedicated staff as well as financial) are essential to making real progress. Whoever provides significant resources to the group will no doubt want to have some degree of influence or play an active role in governance.

The approach, focus and structure of FPCs and similar entities in other communities tend to be driven by the source of momentum and commitment to change, whether it comes from the source of funding/resources, from health or social justice orientations, or from agriculture or other sectors on the supply side.

Conversations in other jurisdictions would suggest structure depends significantly on the leadership in the community, the degree of cohesiveness behind a shared vision, and the level of both trust and commitment among the partners. The less trust and commitment, the looser the structure and governance.

Food Charter: It's not just the plan, it's the planning and sharing the vision.

The development of a food charter is not only an end in itself, but also a mechanism for creating a shared community vision, building consensus, enhancing relationships or partnerships, and inspiring action. It is seen by some as a statement of community values.

Community Food System Assessment:

The Food Policy Council's key focus on identifying system deficiencies and policy gaps suggests a first foundational step might be to commission an assessment of the community food system.

A comprehensive assessment of the community food system is usually an early priority for action and, as with the food charter, serves as a mechanism to foster dialogue, understanding and partnerships. An example of typical priorities that arise from such an assessment include:

- increasing the accessibility of healthy food (affordable, available, urban agriculture)
- strengthening residents' food skills (education/skill-building, community kitchens)
- connecting urban & rural areas through food (engage the public, promote local food)
- supporting farms selling locally (farm gate, farm-to-institution, producer cooperation)
- finding ways to reduce food waste (address hunger, affordability, production economics)
- advancing food-based economic development (local food processing/food businesses)
- implementing the community food system plan (establish charter & council/coalition)

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