

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b> Mayor and Members Board of Health	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> February 4, 2013	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> Plan for a Food Strategy (BOH13001) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)	
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health Public Health Services Department	<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Vicki Edwards (905) 546-2424, Ext. 3632
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**Council Direction:**

At the General Issues Committee of August 13, 2012, the following motion, introduced by Councillor McHattie was passed.

**City of Hamilton Food Strategy (Item 9.4)**

Whereas, food is a vital human right;

And Whereas the City of Hamilton supports community food issues through financial contributions to local food banks and community garden programs, and has been asked to support school nutrition programs, one-time food voucher programs, and other initiatives;

And Whereas strategic City investments in food projects such as the Community Garden Network have led to new community gardens and impressive matching funding coming forward;

And Whereas City Council would benefit from working on the important issue of food through a multi-departmental, coordinated strategy.

Therefore Be It Resolved:

That this matter be referred to Public Health Services for a report back on how a Food Strategy could be developed in consultation with the following departments: Community Services, Public Works and Planning & Economic Development; with a report back to the General Issues Committee before the end of the 2012 year.

**Information:**

Food is connected to Hamilton's health, environment, economy and community. Currently, there is no coordinated approach in Hamilton with respect to food issues. A food strategy (a formally adopted plan that will help the City focus on specific goals and actions to improve the food system) can build strong partnerships among City staff and community agencies that will inspire actions to achieve a healthy, sustainable and just food system.

With a food strategy in place, Hamilton's food system could achieve the following:

**Healthy:**

- Healthy food is readily available within walking distance for everyone in the City (grocery stores, farmer's markets, mobile produce markets, community gardens).
- All schools, workplaces, child care centres, institutions, City-run facilities and convenience stores have healthy food and beverage choices.
- Hamiltonians have reduced rates of cancer, diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

**Sustainable:**

- Land, soil, water and other resources are conserved for future generations of Hamiltonians
- Hamilton has a diverse, healthy and resilient food production system.
- The City of Hamilton encourages community planning, zoning and funding that supports healthy food choices (e.g. regulations, policies, by-laws, incentives).
- Policies are in place to support urban agriculture.
- The local food sector thrives because the City develops, promotes and celebrates it.
- Food waste is reduced, redirected and composted.

**Just:**

- All people in the City are able to access healthy, safe and personally acceptable food with dignity; and food banks are no longer necessary.
- Hamilton has community food centres, community gardens and other means for citizens to acquire healthy food.

- Hamiltonians are valued for their work and have sustainable livelihoods.
- Food is recognized as a basic right, not as a commodity.

While City departments currently engage in actions in the food system, there is a lack of understanding and coordination regarding the food issues that are under the municipality's control. As well, recent requests to City councillors for financial support to community gardens, student nutrition programs, good food box programs and emergency food services show a need for a coordinated approach to respond to food issues.

Three separate advisory committees with food related mandates currently report to Council:

- The Community Food Security Stakeholder Committee (CFSSC) reports to the Board of Health,
- The Food and Shelter Advisory Committee reports to Community and Emergency Services, and
- The Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee reports to Planning and Economic Development.

A comprehensive food strategy would explore linkages between and among these committees to strengthen and build support for food related actions.

Food strategies in other municipalities propose actions across the complete food system and involve all City departments, as well as external stakeholders. Many use a food charter as their vision. While some food strategies place a stronger emphasis on their region's agricultural economic development, others focus on the level of food insecurity in the community. All strategies incorporate policy development across the entire food system (how food is produced, processed, distributed, accessed, consumed and recycled).

Hamilton City Department Staff, Senior Management Team, members of the Community Food Security Stakeholder Committee, Councillor McHattie, Councillor Jackson and the Executive Director of Hamilton Food Share were consulted on how we could work together on a food strategy for Hamilton. Some respondents felt that the scope of the strategy should have a priority focus to address poverty and City funded programs that currently help people obtain food. Others wanted to see a strategy that includes all aspects of the local food system under municipal control. This would include support for:

- local food infrastructure (e.g., proposed Bill 130: Local Food Act, supply, demand, procurement and consumption),
- food-related economic development (e.g., production, processing, urban & rural land use),
- environmental sustainability and food safety (e.g., food-waste management), and

- community/cultural food events and activities.

Several respondents suggested approaching the food strategy with a multi-level plan:

- Actions we need to take now to meet the urgent needs of people in our community who do not have access to healthy food.
- Actions we need to take now, and over the next 5 to 10 years to achieve a healthy, sustainable and just food system.
- Actions we need to take now, and over the next 10 to 20 years, to achieve a healthy, sustainable and just food system.

In this way, a coordinated food strategy would prioritize responses to food insecurity in the short-term, while simultaneously building in actions to ensure a sustainable food system for all in the community.

A staff committee with a mix of senior staff (i.e. decision makers) and staff with content expertise from Public Health Services, Community Services, Planning and Economic Development and Public Works was recommended to develop the food strategy.

As a next step, Public Health Services will develop a Terms of Reference for the interdepartmental committee to identify:

- the governance model,
- the staffing requirements for a coordinated approach,
- the alignment with other strategic plans, and
- specific, actionable, attainable goals with defined timelines.

The Terms of Reference will be brought back to the Senior Management Team for consideration of staff appointments.

A draft Food Charter has been proposed by the Community Food Security Stakeholder Committee as a vision for the food strategy. This will be vetted through City departments for comments and fine-tuning before being presented to Council for endorsement later in 2013.

In addition, Public Health Services plans to conduct an environmental scan of City departments, food related committees and community agencies to identify:

- current mandates,
- responses to food insecurity,
- City of Hamilton food regulations,
- alignment with City and departmental strategic plans, and
- best practice evidence.

**Summary**

A Food Strategy is a formally adopted plan that will help the City focus on specific goals and actions to improve the food system. Public Health Services is committed to working towards a food strategy for Hamilton and will begin with drafting a Terms of Reference for an interdepartmental committee and conducting an environmental scan of current food initiatives. Our goal is a City with a sustainable food system where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.