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Ladysmith Chronicle

Council considers food plan

By [Allison Vail - Ladysmith Chronicle](#)

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Ladysmith is considering adopting a food charter.

Members of the Cowichan Green Community visited Ladysmith's government services committee meeting on Feb. 15 to talk about the Cowichan Food Charter, a document that outlines the future of food and food security in the CVRD.

"We are an environmental organization said Judy Stafford during a presentation.

The organization has been involved in building community gardens and is mapping food production in the Cowichan Valley.

Jessica Kerr, from the organization, said the food charter is a statement of values and principals about municipal food to help councils make policies and orient themselves around food.

The charter calls for a food system that is economically viable and ecologically sustainable.

According to the charter, in Cowichan's food-secure future, farmers will be better connected to consumers, buying local will expand, institutions will have incentives to buy local products, there will be no more chronic hunger and traditional

teachings about food preservation and eating seasonally will be supported.

Kerr said the charter incorporates input of community members and farmers.

“Food, health and environment are all connected,” Kerr said. “Food security is the centre of the knot.”

Kerr said she read the town’s visioning document and the food charter dovetails into the work already going on in Ladysmith.

Having the whole valley adopt the charter is really powerful, Kerr said.

North Cowichan’s environmental committee is also examining the charter and will make a recommendation to that municipality.

Coun. Steve Arnett asked the delegation from Cowichan Green Community if there is talk about food processing as well.

Kerr noted Vancouver Island has lost its small scale processing and cold storage and the group sees a need for the regulations to be there to allow those facilities to come back.

Ladysmith Mayor Rob Hutchins said he would like to see the word affordable in the document, when referring to food.

He pointed to increased food costs, like the price of flour tripling in recent years.

“The more local food you can produce the better,” Kerr said, pointing to the high costs of transported food.

There are challenges for farmers the charter wants to address.

“The trend is going towards local,” Stafford said, noting there has been dialogue with bigger grocery chains about carrying product. But she said farmers don’t get top price from


supermarkets.

“There’s still a lot of challenges around that model,” she said. “[The charter] is just one piece.”

The charter is a work in progress and a living document. A recommendation about the charter is going to be at Ladysmith’s next council meeting on March 1.

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