

From Jesse Brown
Mason St City Farm
& The Vic High Learning Farm
June 20th 2022

Trustees

Thank you for the opportunity to speak again. I really get that we're in a bind here. I trust that we can find a solution that gets us by. I prepared a letter, so I may speak concisely and not babble on and needlessly take your time.

The silver lining for me in all this is that it is an opportunity to bring the awareness of what is really going on with the vic high garden to this board. Clearly after the retirement of Greg Kitchen, we are in need of champions at the district who have a real sense of the value of this garden to students education, their physical and mental health, as well as an awareness of the appreciation we revel in, of the broader Victoria community who enjoy the beauty of this garden and the over 4 tons of healthy produce we offer annually.

It was amazing working with Greg. He really valued and understood what we are doing here. I remember one of my last meetings on site with him in the spring of 2020 as covid was settling in. He shared his elation with the success fo this project. He asked me if we can recreate this model on other schools in the district and what would it take? I told him, all we need are more farmers. And we're cultivating some right here.

I would love to find another champion or two out of you, who share Gregs curiosity, support and understanding of the value of this project, to students, to the community at large and to other school district in BC.

There are a lot of school gardens as you know. And as you likely know, they inevitably tend to require some kind of financial and labour support from the district over time. To this day, over 7 years, we have not asked for that type of support once. In that time we have served some 6-700 Vic high students, while providing significant benefit to Victoria's food security.

And because of this, this model is currently being implemented by a college named Ben Ziatin in SD 68 in Nanaimo. And over the past 7 years, Farm to school BC, a non profit connected to the BC government has been using this model that we created specifically at this site, to design and start implementing sustainable educational farms at no cost to school districts all over BC. Countless regional BC and school district officials have toured this site with farm to school BC.

I would love to speak now to the proposed solutions outlined in the agenda.

It turns out, the one I would be most pleased with didn't make the cut for this list. This is the potential redirection of the pipe that would completely avoid the indigenous garden,

the camas meadow and would run in a straight line down the path of the annual production space to the man hole, drastically reducing the impact on the completion of our season.

If Marni is here, I suspect she can speak to this option. Naturally there's an added cost to this one. This seems like a feasible option. I'm not sure why it didn't make the cut.

Option 1 in the agenda

This is impossible. I'm happy to answer questions as to why, rather than bore you with ecology

Option 2:

Commence with construction and compensate the farm.

I'm very appreciative of Kims recognition that we are in a very tough financial situation if the construction proceeds in July. The unreasonable notice leaves the district responsible for losses with respect to our MOU. I'm thankful this option is on the table. While it leaves out the emotional and ecological impacts of our relationship to this land, the compensation, if negotiated in good faith and to a reasonable value, would allow the project to remain solvent and we could rebuild.

I have sent an updated compensation package to trustees. This number given reflects the true cost of the loss of revenue we will incur. Details are in the package.

Option 3:

Delay until September.

I get it. This is costly. But it's our second choice with a redirection as our first choice.

A delay of two months would allow us to complete 2/3rds of our season, completing our obligations to food box participants and would give the plants from the indigenous garden a solid chance being moved to a new site.

Lastly, I wish to create a new MOU, that protects both the farmers and the school district within this pioneering relationship.

We have shown for the past 7 years that we are committed and reliable partners of this district. We have created something novel, that is beginning to be replicated all over BC. We would like to continue on this mission and very much look forward to repairing and rebuilding and cultivating food and food growers for years to come.

Thank you for your time.

