



Food System Committee

Wednesday, April 17th, 2019

4:00-5:30 PM

Ferndale Library

2125 Main Street, Ferndale

Minutes

Members Present:

Name	Sector	Present
Andy Enfield	Export Sales Farming	
Margaret Gerard	Local Sales Farming	X
Riley Starks	Fishing	
Adrienne Renz	Processing/Distribution	X
Riley Sweeney	Food Access	X
Amber Noskoff	Nutrition/ Public Health	X
Maureen Darras	Labor	X
Krista Rome	Natural Resources	X
Mardi Solomon	Whatcom Food Network	X

Staff: Ali Jensen, WCHD

Call to order: Riley started the meeting at 4:06

Land Acknowledgement

Public Comment

Bill Angel submitted a public comment via email: "Growing food locally is the best and most important Homeland and community security action that we could take for our nation, region and local people.

Commodity agriculture has reduced our ability and nearly erased our opportunities to affordably grow even a meager amount of staple foods.

A strictly competitive market approach to securing lands and lease to grow food for local tables won't work. This important food system body can vision, investigate, plan and recommend the needed robust cooperative and novel methods needed to secure arable land to grow lots of food for local consumption.

Given the state of our environment, under duress by the current and coming ravages of the climate crisis, I hope that this body can outline for our community leaders, the magnitude of their responsibility to lay plans for feeding county residents. This area used to be a capital of peas and carrots. We've still got potatoes, but we need to consider starting at a place where vegetable growing and processing capability is robust enough to not only fill every school-house cafeteria, but the hospital, nursing homes, prison, college, senior centers, and several grocery stores. Then go from there to enhance a program

that prevents a hundred thousand hungry people from needing rescue rations after the regional earthquakes and or major floods.

The exploration should include an honest look at the imbalances in the food system, including the invisible and forgotten field workers, whose value is taken for granted and undervalued at every step of the path from field to table.

Do your best for the most.”

Alex McIntyre from the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters (BFDF) share that it has been 3 years since the Albertson’s in Birchwood closed. A non-compete clause has prevented new grocery retail from moving into the empty space, but a Big Lot will open in the space soon. BFDF is calling for a boycott of Albertson’s brands for the month of May (Haggen and Safeway are owned by Albertson’s). The City of Bellingham is trying to implement a ban on non-compete clauses.

Determination of Quorum

Approval of minutes

Motion: Approve minutes: Krista moved. Adrienne seconded. Approved

Staff Update on Food System Plans

The Food System Roundtable has since disbanded, but a group called the Washington State Conservation Commission Food Policy Forum has been created and has similar concepts to the Roundtable. Chris elder is a representative from Whatcom County.

The Seattle Kitchen Cabinet does annual updates and seems to be going strong. They are supported by the Executive’s office, but it is unclear if these efforts are funded. There was also a regional food policy council that had created a food action plan, but that group has not met in a few years.

The Multnomah County Food System Plan no longer exists, but elements have been incorporated into the 2020 Climate Plan.

Douglas County/ Lawrence Kansas has a robust Food Policy Council

- They engaged the community in the development of their plan, by employing Community Coordinators to do outreach- this is because they had a grant to work on community-informed policy
- They started by setting 5 goals (ie As our cities grow, we prioritize natural resource conservation and maintain working lands to promote soil health) and worked for a year to define objectives and policies to achieve these goals (using community input) (from initiation to adoption, was about a year)
- The Food System Plan is rooted in government (not super dependent on community groups)
- Distinction of this “visionary” plan as opposed to a Food Action Plan.
- 3 action groups work on 3 of the broader goals
- They learned that having specific sector silos were not super inviting to some people in the food system, so they have more lax structure (although they have 23 members)

- They do a lot of direct elected official engagement- invite officials to their FPC retreat; Annual report every year delivered to county commission;
- They use an implementation framework to keep the plan flexible (through the years/needs of the community/different elected officials/etc)
- They want to do more community engagement (I think we should use the WFN as our engagement avenue)
- The FPC integrates their plan into other plans, such as the County Comprehensive Plan. They also engage in State-wide plans.
- They did a community food system tour early on in their FPC days- this sounds fun.

Proposal of Strategy

Group discussed strategy for creating a food system plan. Riley started at the end, by suggesting the group create a decent draft by 12/20, then worked backwards. Group decided to simultaneously update the Community Food Assessment.

Proposed timeline:

- Want to review older drafts of CFA.
- Now through 12/19 – first round of fact-finding.
- By 1/20 start public process gathering public testimony for both CFA and plan
- By 12/20 finalizing CFA and action/policy goals
- By 12/21 have complete draft plan

Motion: To approve this timeline: Maureen moved. Amber second. Approved unanimously.

Food System Committee has to report to the Council every year by June about what has been done and accomplished. Group decided that an implementation plan should have the County Council's support.

Group should consider funding streams along the way. The Committee can make policy recommendations to the County Council throughout the process. It is possible the Council may fund some items. The group should also identify community partners.

Fact-finding process

The group should have guidelines for meetings with subject matter experts so there is consistency in those conversations. Multnomah plan had some guidelines for that process (principles: Local, healthy, equity, and process were their words). Group will agree on guiding principles to structure interviews, then decide on interview questions. Group will come up with a list of subject matter experts for outreach. Each Committee member will agree to a certain number of experts or hours to spend on interviewing. It is encouraged to bring other Committee members to subject matter expert interviews, especially if that person is involved in more than one sector. Group requested bringing in a trainer on how to interview subject matter experts or having a guide with key talking points.

The Committee realized there is no waste representative on the committee (or land or water) and to consider that when thinking of people to interview.

Review of Homework (Community Food Assessment sections)

Land & Labor (Amber, Riley Starks, Mardi): Amber felt the land portion was richer than labor and that labor had many missing elements. Labor challenges are clear but what to do about them? What are

outcomes of union meetings? How are changes being made? Riley Stark, absent, submitted these notes: “Neither [land or labor sections] look very hard at fishery problems related to these, except to note frictions on the Nooksack. Labor issues around our local seafood processor are serious and ongoing, because of the erratic and often unpredictable volumes of various fisheries. Immigration reform is the last best hope for this problem. A vibrant processing sector would enhance the value of our local seafood harvests, keeping more money within our community.”

Waste & Water (Adrienne and Andy): Things in water have changed a lot since the CFA. What goes on with water in counties affects the cities. What conservation efforts are happening? Things also have changed in waste. New opportunities have arisen. With changes in recycling market, the CFA should reflect these updates.

Processing & Distribution and Farming (Krista, Riley Sweeney): Processing was very market-focused. Non market-driven groups were left out, such as neighborhood farmers markets, bartering, etc. The farming section is export agriculture lens instead of looking at the whole system so local farmers can grow more food. The CFA does not discuss storage and it lacks data to support findings.

Consumption & Fishing (Margaret & Maureen): Where is there more potential for collaboration, and bringing together groups dealing with food access issues? The restaurant industry wasn't represented.

There were some assumptions written as facts (ex. assumes there will always be farm owners and workers rather than that they would be the same).

Consumption refers only to food, rather than water, carbon use, etc. consumed in food production.

Social justice was only mentioned once. Food access is the focus instead of food sovereignty. Agency is an important consideration in creating food sovereignty.

Fishing: Little room for collaboration. The tribes (Lummi & Nooksack) Natural Resources weren't mentioned at all in the CFA

Some other questions came up during the review. There have been drastic changes in trade since 2017 (e.g., tariff war with China). What are the local impacts of that? Long-term labor question is cost of land and access to capital so people can afford to farm and produce food.

Assignment of Homework:

- Come up with 4-5 values to propose
- Propose some questions for our interviews
- Think about people to interview

Announcements:

- Krista: Stream Flow Restoration Act (formerly the Hirst decision). Projects are being proposed that trade away ag water to build future homes. There will be open houses coming up with the DOE. Bigger picture is to do conservation countywide.
- May 1 is International Workers Day. There is event being put on by RAID Relief to Reunite Families about what it's like to be an undocumented worker in the food system. Report back

by workers who were released from the detention center. There is art & music. Tickets are for sale. Held at Local Group Studio on Prospect St.

- C2C is pushing for a bill that will create oversight of the H2-A program. This is likely to pass. C2C will do a forum about H2-A program.
- The Whatcom Food Network Forum is May 16.
- **Next Food System Committee meeting:** May 15, 5:30-7:00 in Lynden Library.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm