



Food System Committee

Thursday December 3rd, 2020

1-3 PM

Go To Meeting

Minutes

Members Present:

Name	Sector	Present
Vacant	Export Sales Farming	
Margaret Gerard	Local Sales Farming	X
Kendall Whitney	Fishing	
Vacant	Processing/Distribution	
Riley Sweeney	Food Access	X
Amber Noskoff	Nutrition/ Public Health	X
Vacant	Labor	
Krista Rome	Natural Resources	X
Mardi Solomon	Whatcom Food Network	X

Staff: Ali Jensen, WCHD; Kerry Eastwood, WFN

Whatcom Food Network Steering Committee Members: Gavin Willis, Naomi Siegel, Ander Russell, Sean Hopps, Elma Burnham, Laura Ridenour

Call to order: Riley started the meeting at 1:03

Land Acknowledgement

Determination of Quorum

Quorum

Update on Food System Committee: Ali stated the goals of this meeting: steps for Food System Committee (FSC) regularly meeting, increasing cohesion between FSC and WFN, and discuss future FSC membership (several openings).

The Food System Committee was established by [County Ordinance](#) and the purpose is to draft, implement, and provide oversight of a food system plan. The Committee is made up of 9 sector representatives.

Ali discussed the status of the Community Food Assessment (CFA) and proposed the addition of a COVID-19 section. FSC members have conducted about 45 subject matter expert interviews. The CFA will evolve as time goes on.

The Food System Committee has four openings, including a WFN representative to replace Mardi, who will be stepping away from the WFN at the end of the year.

Report on Whatcom Food Network: Kerry shared the Whatcom Food Network's (WFN) goals and values and described Steering Committee make up. The main goal of the WFN is to increase communication, coordination and collaboration through a listserv and biannual forums.

The WFN changed the theme of the Spring 2020 forum to a conversation about COVID's early impacts on the food system. The WFN Steering Committee is refocusing on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion internally. This focus led to the creation of the Fall 2020 Forum, which was ultimately cancelled. More internal work needs to be done before bringing work to the broader network.

The WFN received the Co-Op's SEED funding for 2021, which will go towards hiring a JEDI facilitator.

The group discussed the overlap between the WFN and the FSC. The FSC is an advisory to the Whatcom County Council. The Food System Plan will serve as the policy recommendations on behalf of the food system. Sean asked about how advocacy could play a role in both the FSC and the WFN. Krista noted the Council did not respond to this summer's letter about immediate actions to take in the food system. The FSC should lean on the broader food system (with help of the WFN) to get the word out about recommendations to Council/ Food System Plan.

Ali noted that the County requires Committee (such as FSC) members to be citizens and residents of Whatcom County, which will limit some positions on the Committee. The WFN does not have this barrier to involvement.

Each group is interested in having a system for resolving conflict between sectors.

Next Steps: Community Food Assessment

Ali will begin/continue to draft sections of the Community Food Assessment: distribution, consumption, and natural resources have enough interviews to begin drafting. Ali will also work on a COVID section. The goal is to have a snowball effect with outreach. Voices may be unintentionally left out of the CFA, so it is on everyone in the WFN and FSC to promote participation.

Ali and the FSC will share the list of prospective interviewees with the WFN steering committee and ask members to add in people we should talk to now, groups and people we should share drafts with, and get feedback.

Group Discussion

There were several things that came up in the group discussion. Many were related to the role of the FSC. The WFN is interested in co-drafting a list of immediate actions around COVID-19 to be adopted by council. The group agreed that Ali would send [FSC letter to council from the summer](#) to the WFN SC to add any additions. The FSC would then send back to council, actually requiring action at this time. The group needs a process for agreeing on what should go in this letter. WFN members may want to opt out of the letter.

For the Food System Plan development, the Whatcom Food Network can rally excitement. The WFN can host events to discuss the Food System Plan.

The group agreed we need more data around the impacts of COVID-19 on the food system. Derek from Sustainable Connections offered to share some information about the food and farming team's

research. The group discussed finding data on land ownership and loss of farmland during this crisis. They also discussed how rent moratoriums did not cover business rent. Did restaurants or other retail suffer?

Public Comment

Bill Angel acknowledged the important work the FSC was undertaking.

Wrap Up and Adjourn

Next steps and action items:

- Ali will schedule next FSC for January.
- Ali will share advertisement for open FSC positions.
- FSC and WFN will work on drafting a second letter to elected officials.
- Ali will work on the CFA.
- Ali will update calendar for finishing Food System Plan.
- FSC will revisit the values and adopt.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55