

Buffalo and Erie County Food Policy Council Meeting Minutes

January 31, 2018

Present:

Kelly Fletcher
Cheryl Thayer
Matt Kauffman
Rob Free
Dan Szewc
Della Miller
Beth Machnica
Julie Levin
Kathy Petersen
Lucia Leone
Birch Kinsey
Ingabire Adam

New Members:

Sarah Herbst
Alexander Wright
Antonina Simeti

Guests:

Rebekah Williams
Dr. Samina Raja

The meeting was convened and the minutes were reviewed. A motion was made by Julie Levin to accept the minutes, it was seconded by Rob Free, and all were in favor. Minutes were accepted as written.

New members were welcomed. Cheryl Thayer asked if anyone had any agenda updates that they wanted to add. Kelly Fletcher mentioned working group updates as well as member updates. New council members also will be introduced to the working groups.

Member Updates/Welcome to new Members

Matt Kauffman – 5 Loaves Farm – A potluck was held at their facility. They operate a community supported agriculture program for 30 families. They are focused on the Westside neighborhood. They also have an Elmwood Village farmers market as well as a farm stand on site where they are focusing on various ethnicities' with specialty crops. 5 Loaves farm is a ministry of the Buffalo Vineyard Church. Matt is on the urban food production working group. During 2016 and 2017 Mike Raleigh and Matt gathered the growers (Grassroots Garden, Journey's End, and Market Gardens) from Buffalo and worked on getting input from them and

came up with eleven main policy wish list items that they wanted to work on. They got to talk with Buffalo Council members regarding this. The FPC wrote a letter of support. In the fall there was a meeting where they broke into more concentrated groups to work on specific policies. They met this past week at the NESAWG conference where they were able to connect with some folks from Baltimore that had a tax credit program that had been implemented in Baltimore. Matt has had conversations with the planning office and was able to procure the actual legislation and is meeting again to come up with their own version by the end of the month. A 90% tax credit for urban farms that can prove that they are an actual farm. You must be farming for a full five years to receive the credit. If at any time during the five years you pull out you must pay back taxes on the property. They have been talking with Sean Mulligan from Councilman Rivera's office to see how feasible this would be in Buffalo. Animal husbandry which has not met and water access. Birch is on this group, she has been out of town but they will be meeting again in two weeks.

Dan Szewc – Erie County Dept. of Senior Services representing the older adults in Erie County. Both frail and homebound as well as the able bodied. There are nutrition programs and dining sites that are very well attended, as well as a home delivery meal program for older adults. He mentioned that they are near the end of a Senior SNAP benefit program where they are trying to get Seniors to enroll. He asked the group if anyone could offer ideas where there were seniors that could not access benefits.

Cheryl Thayer – Cooperative Extension out of Cornell University – She is involved in economic development mostly in supply chain facilitation on the market development side. The Cooperative Extension of Erie County did receive a farm to school grant to try expanding farm to school efforts across Buffalo. There has been a lot of work at the individual school level but there have been a few schools that given their size have not been able to be competitive in federal and state grants. The Erie County office is hiring a farm to school coordinator to work with three rural schools; these are Alden, Springville and Eden. They will be trying to expand efforts with Buffalo Public Schools as well. This is an eighteen month grant. Ms. Thayer said that this was not a working group update rather than a policy update, as there are also standing committees. There is an effort at the State level to try to advance favorable policy with regard to school foods so that reimbursement for schools is trying to be increased by twenty five cents. Right now there are a number of different organizations that are trying to seek support. NYS School Nutrition Association is leading the initiative; she asked the group that if it was something anyone was interested in she could circulate some information. However they are trying to get buy-in from partner organizations to support the legislation. They have been lobbying in Albany. She said that she circulated information three weeks ago regarding what the platform was, it was one of Governor Cuomo's big initiatives. Cheryl thought that it was good for our schools, as well as students and farmers as it is all about buying NYS products. She said that if anyone wanted information to send her a message or google Cuomo's initiative. They are looking for organizations to sign on to that effort to try to build capacity around it to get it passed.

Sarah Herbst – She is a new member and works for a pharmaceutical company that produces generic over the counter nutritionals, infant formulas, acetaminophens etc. and works as a sustainability person within procurement. Her job is driving sustainable products whether its

forward looking for new suppliers ensuring that they are good corporate citizens or on the backside, how do we drive purchasing practices that are, as sourcing nutritional inputs. There is a big focus on this part; the other side is an ethical side. They do a lot of social compliance audit, worker rights, ensuring that the factories they source from are good corporate citizens regarding labor practices. They are looking on the sustainable procurement side of things. Sara told the group that she grew up on a farm so she has a passion with reconnecting people with their land.

Alexander Wright – He is one of the founders of the African Heritage Food Co-op. Basically this is bringing fresh fruits and vegetables into communities that are predominantly in East Buffalo, with the mantra being ownership and control of food by the community. They have been doing this for almost two years and are pushing to find a brick and mortar, as they have some land to begin farming. The program will bring together seniors and youth to farm and bridge the generational gap. They want to break the cycle of racism and disenfranchisement regarding farming that has predominantly affected African Americans. His stance has been ownership by the community and knowledge and the power for the people who are around it.

Antonina Simeti – She is the Executive Director of Groundwork Buffalo that is a small environmental conservation organization working with youth from and around Hamlin Park, Delevan Grider, and Cold Springs. In Pratt Willert they have a newer agricultural entrepreneurship program launching this spring in partnership with Field and Fork Network and Grassroots gardens which will operate out of Delevan Grider Community Center. Students will learn the science of growing, business skills, how to sell produce, hopefully partnering with employers such as Alex Wright in the summer. She is also the director of the Western New York Environmental Alliance, an environmental organization that represents over 80 organizations, with environmental or sustainability objectives. Her interest there is as we sort of re-structure the way we design and support campaigns, as well as on the ground projects in the region making a better connection to agriculture and issues of climate change and climate justice. Antonina also has a consultancy and has worked with others at the table through it on projects like the hospital initiative, Field and Fork, and Cornell Cooperative Extension trying to change procurement and also design strategies for integrating local food into the healthcare institutions in Buffalo. Some healthy workplace, healthy corner stores, and some commercial kitchen work at the Broadway market.

Della Miller – She is a food advocate with a focus on entrepreneurship with businesses that deal with food. She worked on the operations plan for the Broadway Market, in addition to that operations and management. Della also in the last two years has paid particular attention to food waste. Not just from the home, but also the business atmosphere. She feels that young people have a tendency not to really appreciate food and dispose of it quickly. They are in a learning process, and she hopes to develop something around this so that people can learn the importance of not wasting food.

Ingabire Adam – She is a youth leader at Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP). MAP is a non-profit organization that employs youth to teach them how to do community work, working in gardens, and field trips. Ingabire recently traveled to Washington DC and Baltimore for the NESAWG conference.

Birch Kinsey – She also works at MAP. She has been focused on sustainability practices and has worked in the farm and garden. Recently Birch has become interested in the policy side of things, i.e. the Food Policy Council. Transition things, she has become an advocate of food sovereignty of people being able to access food where they are, at rates that are fair to them.

Rebekah Williams – Youth Education Director at MAP. She will continue at MAP until March 1, and then she will be focused on bringing the Good Food Purchasing program to Buffalo. MAP will keep her for a few hours a week to coordinate a campaign in Buffalo. This will be a national initiative partnered with the Center for Good Food Purchasing which provides institutional support for predominantly school districts to organize the communities around five values. Work force, environmental sustainability, animal welfare, local economy and nutrition. They are trying to boost collaborative efforts in regions.

Kathy Petersen – Mayor’s office of Strategic Planning. City of Buffalo. She manages the Broadway Market through that office.

Rob Free – Serves on the Erie County Board of Health and is a liaison with the FPC and Board of Health. He is the VP of Food and Beverage for the Buffalo Bison’s, Canalside, and Outer Harbor. He also serves on the State Board of the New York State Restaurant Association. One of their new initiatives is the Governor reaching out to the Albany offices and wants to speak with the State association on how to better promote farm to table and New York products within the Restaurant Association. They are also trying to figure out a way to reuse leftover food products. As an incentive the Governor’s office said that possibly there could be tax credits for those restaurateurs which would go a long way in making business owners realize the possible impact for them.

Julie Levin – She runs the sustainable dining hall at Nardin Academy which is an independent K-12 school in the city of Buffalo. They scratch cook food so that they use as little processed foods as possible. They try to purchase as much local food as within their means. They also have a waste divergent element. They teach the children to scrap plates and they partner with a company called Natural Upcycling which has a biodigester and the food waste is diverted and converted ultimately into electricity. They are currently in the 5th year of this program and it has been very successful. She is also a representative of the local procurement group that is one of the FPC working groups. They have put together a survey for local school institutional programs to see if their food directors were interested in some type of support from us. They did have some limited response but have been unable to determine what to do with the input. They are reassessing what they are going to go forward with in the future; as supporting policy like the Governor’s budget proposal to get more local food into schools; or supporting the Good Food Purchasing Program and disseminating that type of information and making it available to institutions.

Kelly Fletcher – Erie County Dept. of Health – She is a Public Health Educator and serves as staff support for the FPC. She went on to say that the grant for the United Way was submitted on January 11. This a grant for \$90,000 over a two year span. We are looking to get funded to do more strategic planning with the FPC to refine our focus. She serves on the Western New

York Healthy Communities Coalition; they are just forming a policy committee with a nutrition focus. She asked if anyone had an interest in this. She said that the FPC had a nutrition education working group at one point. Della Miller was the only person left on this group. They are looking where we as region should go regarding what policies to tackle, and those to support. The group is run by Phil Haberstro from the Wellness Institute of Buffalo. Phil chairs the Policy Committee for the WNY Healthy Communities Coalition which is run by the population health collaborative. They had their first meeting where a lot was discussed and want to focus on how they are getting their education about foods and what to eat out to the community. Kelly will send an invite out for the next meeting scheduled for February 6.

Beth Machnica – She now has a seat on the FPC. Beth is a registered Dietitian and holds dual master degrees in Public Health and Nutrition. She currently works at the medical campus Healthy Corner Store Initiative. She has been involved with the Healthy Retail working group.

Lucia Leone – She is on the faculty of the UB School of Public Health and Health Professions. She does research on related sustainable initiatives to increase access to healthy food. She worked closely with the Healthy Corner Store Initiative here in Buffalo. In addition to her research she also has experience starting and readying both for profit and not for profit businesses related to food access, global markets, and food delivery. She chairs the FPC Healthy Food Retail working group. They most recently met two weeks ago with a focus on trying to have better guidance around different key businesses and what types of regulations they face, and what types of permits they need. Especially regarding home deliveries, co-ops and CSA's. This started because a lot of mobile markets are doing cooking demos and could not figure out how to proceed on providing information on healthy foods. They have met with the ECDOH, Ag and Markets and do not have a definite answer. They are coming up with what the committee thinks it should be and then send out to the appropriate entities so that the policy becomes more consistent.

Cheryl Thayer said that there are working groups and some standing committees. Information will be sent out on the current working groups. With the grant that was submitted to the United Way we will focus on professional development and strategic planning. The reason is that we still struggle as a council on how to most effectively affect change. Whether it is through policy, planning decisions, we want to be called upon for new ideas and changes. She said that she had attended a National FPC meeting with different FPC's from throughout the country. This is a common challenge among a lot of FPC's figuring out what the focus areas should be. We are not a planning or zoning board or a traditional fixture in government. We need to figure out how we best fit in and part of that strategic planning process will inform that. Whatever comes out of this strategic planning process, our goal is to be a guiding force for short and long term goals of the FPC. We will find out if the grant is funded in March. We have operating procedures on a shared drive on Box that will also be given out to new members, current members have access. However we may be restructuring some of these things within the next year. She thought that the FPC had been bogged down in governance during the last year tying into committees and working groups. The working groups have done great work and should continue in this endeavor. Outside members are welcome to join the working groups. There are Procurement, Healthy Retail, Urban Farms, and Education working groups. Kelly Fletcher said that she thought that Nutrition Education might merge with the Policy Committee from the WNY

Healthy Community Coalition. If they are working on the same things, perhaps we can accomplish more if we bring them together. That group is already established and meeting. Cheryl Thayer said that this trend could continue as well. If there are other initiatives from the procurement side that are established and good coalitions being formed we could support them. We will send information out.

Cheryl Thayer said that Dr. Raja will speak on what FPC's can do. She also presented ways that you can affect different policies and planning. Ordinances, variances etc. that happen at municipal levels that we may be able to work within to help advance our cause.

Cheryl asked the new members if they had any questions. Birch Kinsey asked if we are responsible for creating policy, suggesting and approving it? Cheryl said that these questions would be answered through the strategic planning process. She said that different FPC'S throughout the country accomplish different things. A lot of it has to do with the municipality that they are serving under. The food system affects every facet of our community, whether it is growing, eating, recycling, waste, it affects all of us in different ways. So that when decisions are being made at the municipal level, i.e. City of Buffalo and Erie County, we need to be at the table having conversations. Will we be advancing policies, or supporting them or a combination of both. The Urban working group is doing a great job trying to enact policies that would assist urban growers, produce and do it more profitably. This is what we are trying to determine. Getting to the table where these decisions are being made would be tremendous. That would mean we are saying that the food system needs to be considered. Part of this would be establishing a relationship with our City and County representatives.

Alex asked how working groups and committees are decided upon. Cheryl said that if there is interest from the FPC one can be created and or per Lucia identified by need. Kelly Fletcher said that there is a section in the operating principles on how the groups and committees are created and how to bring them forward.

Kelly Fletcher said that Julie Barry proposed restructuring member composition. She has served as our representative from the Farmland and Agriculture Protection Board. When we did member selection one hole we were trying to fill was rural farmers. As we do not have rural representation at the table. Julie said that due to her work commitments she cannot devote as much time to the FPC. She is proposing to the Farmland and Agriculture Protection Board that they appoint someone else to take her seat. The person she is suggesting is Diane Held who has a very extensive background in farmland and agricultural protection. Julie Barry wanted to get the approval of the FPC that this substitution is amenable to the FPC. There was a motion to accept Diane Held, it was seconded and the motion was carried, none were opposed.

Dr. Samina Raja, UB School of Architecture and Planning - Her research focuses on planning and design for sustainable food systems and healthy communities.
She is the Principal Investigator of the Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab.
Dr. Raja gave to the FPC an extremely in-depth presentation

The next meeting of the FPC will be held on March 28, 2018. The meeting was adjourned.
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