

Buffalo and Erie County Food Policy Council Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2018

Present:

Kelly Fletcher
Kelly Asher
Cheryl Thayer
Antonina Simeti
Allison Dehonney
Beth Machnica
Patricia Watson
Elias Reden
Lucia Leone
Della Miller
Birch Kinsey
Dan Szewc
Sarah Herbst

Via teleconference:

Julie Barry
Alexander Wright

The July meeting minutes had been sent out to the FPC members, there were also copies at the meeting. The minutes were accepted as written.

There were no added agenda considerations.

Ciminelli Update

Sara Herbst said there was a meeting with 15 stakeholders regarding agro-hood. There were no concrete updates, they asked for us to keep the information in the group. They plan on inviting the community at a later date. They did not define the community. There were a lot of outstanding questions but there were only two community members present. Sara voiced a concern regarding engaging local farmers and being transparent in what this means, as to how you are engaging them. There was no information provided on to when the next meeting is.

Good Food Purchasing Program

Cheryl Thayer said that there was a meeting today from 2:30 to 3:30, Julie Levin may be there. Cheryl was at the prior meeting. They meet the last Wednesday of every month. Buffalo Public Schools gave an update of what they are doing with farm to school. This comprised the entirety of the meeting. They announced a handful of new partners. They also announced that the FPC formally retracted. There were no other updates on GFPP. Alexander Wright road tripped with

the GFPP, they went to Chicago to speak to their Food Policy Council, and their GFPP constituents and how they put it together. He thought that this is giving shape to what our GFPP could look like here. He was under the impression that once the GFPP firms up and the FPC has a clearer picture that we could revisit this. He did not know if this was clear to the GFPP. Cheryl Thayer said that she will attend the GFPP meetings, so that the FPC could consider rejoining at some point. She suggesting having a conversation with Rebekah Williams reiterating this point.

Buffalo Public Schools puts out formal bids; they have to accept the lowest bid that comes in. For produce one distributor has always responded, then wins by default , as the only one responding. If three people responded the lowest bid would win. Latino Boulevard is the distributor they work with. Bridget O'Brien Wood and her purchasing department have modified the produce bid so that smaller companies could bid on a certain percentage of it. Things like geographic preferences awards a set of points but doesn't lower the price. They do not want to harm the farm to school program that has been going on for four years. They have received considerable funding from federal and state government, and from community partners. There is an incentive on the table for all schools to buy NYS product, then they get 19 cents more per meal served. They presently only get 6 cents so this is a considerable increase. In order to qualify they must purchase 30% of their food from NYS. Alexander Wright said that when they were in Chicago they found out that there are national funders who will pay for the baseline assessment so that it may not have to come out of Buffalo Public Schools pocket.

FPC presentation to WNY Healthy Communities Coalition

Cheryl Thayer said that two weeks ago Kelly Asher and Sarah Herbst did a presentation to the WNY Healthy Communities Coalition. Sarah said that there were about twenty people in attendance . Phil Haberstro from the Wellness Institute invited them to give a presentation to his class at Damon College. It was a good opportunity to share what the FPC is doing. Following up there will be a phase two and three in the fall and spring where they asked Dr. Raja to speak on the regional food system, and speak on FPC's more broadly. Phase three will incorporate on how to implement a regional food policy council of the western eight counties, bringing in one or two from the council. This will funded through a grant from the population health collaborative. Kelly Fletcher said that this is an open coalition so if your organization does anything with physical activity or nutrition you are welcome to attend the quarterly meetings. The policy committee meets monthly.

UWBEC grant update and next steps

Kelly Fletcher said that at the last working group meeting they had voted to task the working group with reissuing the RFP. Re-developing the RFP, and getting some input and advice from the County. In the previous RFP there were some issues that could have been considered a conflict of interest. Antonina Simeti said that she intends to apply with her company and partners when the RFP is released, she also applied the first time. Before the conversation had gone any further she said that she would recuse herself from the meeting. Kelly Fletcher said that since Antonina had been a member of the FPC or employed by a member in the last 12 months of the council she was not eligible to apply for the RFP. This is county language in any

county proposals we go forward with. We were advised on this and also this is coming from the United Way as well. There was an RFP passed out to members that included an Eligibility and Requirements section stating that “any individual or consulting firm who has not had an affiliation with the FPC is invited to apply. If an individual has served or a consulting firm has employed a member of the FPC in the 12 months immediately prior to the proposal they are not eligible”. Kelly Fletcher went on to say that one of the reasons for this is because we are serving on the council, and part of serving is having the expertise at the table. Part of this is getting some fresh eyes on the council. In having someone who has not been involved with the RFP development, this opens us up to looking at an outside perspective saying that this is an unfair advantage; if someone sitting on the council gets awarded the grant. If you go onto page 8, #10 on how to apply, this is direct county RFP language. Upon consulting with the county attorney we were advised by our department counsel that since the FPC is a sub commission of the EC Board of Health we are all housed in government. We have to be careful with the United Way and funding from General Mills. Cheryl Thayer asked is it was debatable. Kelly Fletcher said that she did not think it was as there had been many conversations with the county attorney regarding these issues. Cheryl thought that our hands were tied as a council; she said that she had no intention of applying however every other FPC that they have spoken to does not do this, because it excludes the exact people who are qualified and are have the expertise to do this type of work. Most people do not have members resign but step away. She went on to say that the FPC is not a county agency. Sarah Herbst said that when she analyzed case studies, a consultant was hired for a few months, then he was let go. He was there to guide the experts at the table to come to a strategic plan. He was facilitating, compiling, and coding the transcripts and concept maps that people made, assessing them and then walked away. Cheryl Thayer went on to say that it needs to be decided who are we looking for and who is the most qualified. Are we looking for the person to code data or are we looking to see if they have or does not have subject matter expertise. She felt this would come out in the review process. Kelly Fletcher said that this protects us from scrutiny going forward as an entity. We are also reflective on the county, as we are vesting the interest of the county constituents. Alexander Wright said in the current political climate there are accusations going on etc. everyone is a little more on edge as well. Even the appearance of impropriety starting out as a council is not worth the risk. He felt it better to have the prescribed language incorporated, as we can point to it as a shield to defend ourselves. Kelly Fletcher said most of the language of the RFP did not change. There were safeguards added. We did come upon some scrutiny with the initial proposals going out, when we brought it to the United Way and the BOH a closer look was taken.

Everyone had not had an opportunity to look at the new document. The contracting entity will not be the county; there will need to be several changes made. The final copy of the RFP with included changes was e-mailed to the FPC members. The working group worked on the RFP. Kelly Fletcher said that if anyone wants to come back on the working group they will be able to. Everyone on the working group will have to sign a conflict of interest disclosure form when the applications come in, so that if anyone is employed by someone who is applying for the actual RFP is going to have to disclose that to the group that is working on it. The County Purchasing Dept. will send out the RFP, it will be put onto their website, and they will manage it for us. They will clarify that it is not a county contract. Kelly Fletcher said that she will track it to list serve on the date, if there are any amendments to any questions or follow-ups to the proposal she will have to distribute it to everyone that received the information. She asked everyone if they

forwarded the RFP to let her know. This will also build up our data base. There was discussion on placing ads in the Buffalo News and other official papers in Erie County.

There were only two responses to the former RFP that was put out. There was a survey put out regarding the RFP with 12 responses received. It was felt there are impediments involved in the RFP for the money being offered. Part of the feedback Kelly Asher said in the original document, it was thought that a strategic plan and a food charter needed to be done. There were people interested in it but were daunted by it, such as geography, spending time preparing it, and then not getting it, because local preference would be given. \$3000 was budgeted for travel in the new RFP.

Kelly Fletcher put together meeting notes from April 29, 2014 that were formulated into a strategic plan. This is included in appendix b. There were ten goals in the plan. Kelly Fletcher bucketed them based on the meeting minutes. There were three buckets that seemed to be coming out with policy, community engagement and advocacy or justice. She then took the other goals and placed them under the buckets. She also took notes on what members wanted to do under each. This was the strategic plan for 3 to 5 years. Five years would bring us to 2019. It is legitimately a current work plan. She then took one region forward and put the data tables for the needs assessment in Erie County as of 2014. The needs assessment is something that we need to update; as this has not been done since 2014. Kelly Asher said that two questions from the vital signs will be added to the Community Health Assessment. Kelly Fletcher said that she took bullets from measurable metrics that we have been doing; such as letters of support , number of workshops hosted to educate the public i.e. People's Food Movement. A food charter could come into play. She asked for feedback. Cheryl Thayer asked if the strategic plan was taken out of the RFP, Kelly Fletcher said that no we didn't. This is serving as a guide. Kelly Fletcher said that the next appendix we are now looking into the project timeline. So this must be altered based on information from the United Way, as we are behind on what we said we would do. Allison Dehonney questioned metrics, are we going to enhance, change or approve the current metrics. Kelly Fletcher said that with the consultant's assistance we will come up with a new strategic plan that goes from 2019 through the next five years. Such as advocating for justice and equity in the local food system. Kelly Fletcher said that this is a big point. Lucia Leone asked who we are looking for in terms of a food policy council expert or someone who is good at just getting people together and doing strategic planning. She said that she did not think that we will find someone who is good at both of these things; and she is not clear on what we are looking for. She felt that this is a flaw in our application. Kelly Asher quoted demonstrating experience in development of a FPC or similar advisory council. She asked if there was a preference for either. We will probably not get someone with all of these qualifications. Kelly Fletcher said that we were looking more for a strategic planner. She asked for everyone to look at the document and to get back to her on Monday by noon for changes. Kelly Fletcher wanted everyone to be able to look at all of the comments/changes. Kelly Asher suggested that members copy and paste changes and send a reply to all. Everyone will then see all the changes.

Deliverables can be the plans that were reviewed (that were extensive) and adoptable. Everything needs to be more upfront. Revamping required versus preferred or in some capacity clarifying, focus on a strategic plan. Food Policy expertise is sitting at this table, so excluding people from being able to apply would mean we will not get anyone locally anyway. So that

there is more emphasis on a strategic plan. There should be expertise on how Food Policy Council's operate and having expertise that can be brought to the table at a FPC. Lucia Leone thought that we had the later. Kelly Asher said that there are many different structures of FPC's. Lucia Leone said that there are people that do work on best practices for FPC's. Kelly Asher said that it is different for every area. She said that we are unique in Erie County because we have such a big disconnect from where our food is produced and where it is consumed. Cheryl Thayer commented that this is not uncommon, especially in big cities. She thought that there are best practices, as there is a center that focuses on doing nothing but best practices. She thought there is a lot we can learn from people on how things can be pushed through. We have county representation, and consumer representation but we do not have the authority to be own agency. There are some nuances, there are best practices. She thought this should be included, as it is important. How the public could be engaged in such a diverse thing as a food system, as everyone is coming at it from a different vantage point. Kelly Asher said she had learned that a lot of food councils have changed their structure as they have evolved. She said that at some point the FPC will come out from under government and sustain itself. Cheryl Thayer said that it was a huge asset to have Erie County involved in the FPC. Senior Services is now onboard as well as Environment and Planning. Kelly Asher said that she hoped that we will be able to keep seats on the FPC but not under our auspices forever. She thought that perhaps in a strategic plan there could a plan to move away from government. Lucia Leone thought that perhaps this could allow for them to subcontract with experts that don't necessarily want to take on a job like this, but would be able to inform and bring the knowledge, but not do the strategic planning. This would be a team based approach. Kelly Fletcher said that under the application there is a space for partners. This could also be changed to subcontractors.

Kelly Asher said that she had received a lot of information on FPC's from the Johns Hopkins website. Kelly Fletcher reiterated that everyone forward their comments to her by noon on the following Monday. She will send out a final RFP for everyone to peruse on Tuesday by noon. She asked if 4 PM on Wednesday would be agreeable to everyone for a conference call. Julie Barry commented that she commended the group working on the RFP, as it is a lot of work, she thought it was important to get it right and airtight, and if it takes several attempts to do so and working with legal counsel it is fine, along with input from the United Way as they are funding the effort. In terms of Erie County DEP they work with their legal team on every RFP and contract they put out. She commended everyone working on it. Alexander Wright thought that he would like to go over the information before commenting. A food charter also needs to be looked at also. Community engagement should also be included with skill, time as part of the strategic plan. This has been included in the time line, and well thought out by the working group. Kelly Fletcher said that this is being done in conjunction with the Community Health Assessment with focus groups, and community conversations for this, she thought it to be a perfect pairing to do community conversations and incorporating them into the food charter. This will be done at six different locations throughout Erie County. Then in a year come back and ask if everyone is happy with the deliverables. We are working with the population health collaborative to do our Community Health Assessment as a region, this will also tie in with the regional work that we are doing with the WNY Health Communities Coalition policy work, because these community conversations will be happening countywide. The hospitals will also be involved in this effort, as they are doing their own focus groups.

Kelly Fletcher also wanted to touch upon the conflict of interest policy. She asked everyone to take a look at it.

Working Group Updates/Executive Committee Nominations, Membership Terms

Kelly Asher asked if the group was going to do nominations today, she thought that we needed to review the definitions, and getting some roles filled. She passed around definitions, and proposed additions. There was ensuing conversation on this matter such as conflict of interest etc. There was mention of Ms. Amadori's recording of FPC minutes; she is being paid by Erie County. The job description of the secretary involves taking the meeting minutes, attendance, explanation of action items, recording all votes on action items and receiving documents like request for support, letters, presentation materials that are presented at meetings. Distributing meeting minutes, and distribute to members at least one week prior to the next full council meeting, taking attendance records at all council meetings to review eligibility in accordance with the policy and procedure manual of the council. Provide a voting roster in the secretary's report that should be given at each meeting. The second secretary will serve when the first secretary is not available. If the secretary cannot attend a meeting they must make sure that the second secretary will be available.

The sergeant at arms, this a new position, there will be a Roberts Rules orientation given. The sergeant at arms is responsible for keeping order at the meetings, including parliamentary duties plus they must understand Roberts Rules of Order for the conduct of meetings, the Sergeant at Arms will call for a point of order when there is a departure of proper parliamentary procedure. A treasurer position was discussed. This responsibility will be left with Kelly Fletcher at the present time. Kelly Asher asked the members to send her comments regarding this issue. At the next full meeting the positions can then be voted on.

Kelly Asher said that she cannot chair the policy and procedures committee, but will be able to sit on it along with Dan, Kelly, Birch, Ingabire, Cheryl, and Sara Herbst agreed to chair. Kelly Asher motioned that Sara becomes the Chair, it was seconded and all were in favor.

Healthy Food Retail was on hiatus until a strategic plan is put together. Lucia spoke regarding supporting healthy corner stores. Lucia asked Alex Wright if he would be interested in being on the Healthy Food Retail working group to which he agreed. Lucia said that the group is looking at how specifically policy issues affect mobile markets and healthy corner stores, cooking demonstrations. At the ECDOH state levels were looked into. NYSDOH Ag and Markets is responsible for produce, and if it is not produce they expect us to look to the county. Kelly Asher said that the ECDOH gives permits to vendors.

Procurement Working Group – Lucia Leone not on group, Julie Levin and Cheryl Thayer on.

Urban Food Production – Matt Kauffman, Kelly Asher, Cheryl Thayer.

Development Work Group (added new working group)

The meeting was then adjourned.