

Buffalo and Erie County Food Policy Council Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2017

Present:

Rob Free
Kelly Asher
Kelly Fletcher
Cheryl Thayer
Julie Levin
Sara Jablonski
Della Miller
Lucia Leone
Nathan Attard
Kathy Peterson
Pat Watson
Mike Raleigh
Elias Reden
Matt Kaufman
Julie Barry

Guests:

Rebekah Williams – Massachusetts Avenue Project/Peoples Food Movement

The meeting was convened and the minutes were reviewed. Kelly Asher made a motion to accept the minutes as written, it was seconded all were in favor. Minutes were accepted as written.

Della Miller questioned members on the Awareness and Education Committee renamed as Community Engagement. The members are Julie Levin, Connie Ervin is the secretary with Kelly Fletcher as the chair. Della Miller is on the Advocacy and Justice Committee.

There will be discussion on standing committees, as well as breakout sessions.

The People's Food Movement 2017 Update

Cheryl Thayer spoke on the Peoples Food Movement that was held on April 8th. Food was served. Cheryl thanked everyone who participated in the event. Kelly Fletcher told the group that the movement was a collaborative way of bringing citizens together to voice what they thought relevant to food issues. Attendees were really engaged and came from all over the community. Planning an event like this in the future would benefit from having an event program prior so that it could be viewed ahead of time.

Rebekah Williams of the Massachusetts Avenue Project was called upon to speak regarding the People's Food Movement. There were approximately 150-200 attendees at the movement. It was incepted to effect policy change and engaging the community in participating.

Massachusetts Avenue Project is an urban farming organization. They also have a commitment to local food systems as well as equitable distribution of good food and then engaging the community primarily through young people that in other ways affect positive change especially around food systems. As they were embarking on a mission to involve their organization in understanding the scope of policies going on in Buffalo, it was very necessary to involve the communities to engage partners. The Food Policy Council (FPC) was the first partner that they thought of because of the logical connection. Kelly Fletcher and Cheryl Thayer joined the project for a few meetings. The other organizations were Grassroots Gardens, who has a similar mission. African Heritage Food Co-op were very committed to making sure that everyone is included in the conversation. People from the east side in the communities there are very engaged in understanding the work and influencing change.

Rebekah has information regarding the format, as well as posters which had generated conversations so that the community could input in what they want to see, what they are interested in and what they feel is the need in the community. Kelly Fletcher thought that this would be beneficial in guiding the work plans of the FPC regarding what they are working on as well as what could be done in the future. A list will be compiled of all the attendees at the People's Food Movement and all that has happened upon the inception of the FPC. There is a new e-mail address of FPC@erie.gov for anyone in the community that would like to know more about the FPC can be referred to this address. Rebecca showed the meeting attendees the posters that had engaged people at the movement. Action alerts were incorporated by Matt Kaufman, Mike Raleigh, and Della Miller regarding participatory budgeting. There were also 2 minute talks on what individual items were and how people could give input. Round table conversations were structured where small groups of 5 to 10 people were sitting with a UB food lab volunteer who engaged the table in giving input to the action alerts. There were post it notes that were partial feedback to the action alerts. The other method people could get input from were teenagers from MAP accompanied with a staff person who interviewed food systems folks in the community. Matter was gathered and organized that could be utilized and expanded for future events. Kelly Fletcher said that the FPC could take on a larger role in any upcoming co-sponsorships. Upon the FPC new website launch there could be more advertising done regarding events.

Pat Watson brought up discussion regarding sustainability, healthy foods and the use of styrofoam and plastic products at the event. If we destroy the planet it really doesn't matter if our organic beds are healthy. There needs to be some values clarification for the group, if such matters are important to others they should be important to us. Everyone agreed on this. It was noted that someone from Crossroads Collective and the Western NY Environmental Alliance mentioned this issue also. The Buffalo Public Schools provided food and partnered for the People's Food Movement. Compostables and recycling will be looked into for future events.

Review of Standing Committees

There were handouts regarding standing committees. Kelly Fletcher said that the standing committees originated in the operating principles to make sure that the FPC is keeping on track with our goals and what we are doing. The first iteration of the FPC came up with three different committees. One was Policy Monitoring to keep the pulse on Buffalo and Erie County. To

make sure we are aware of any policies that are out there that people are talking about such as the green code. Community Engagement keeping people aware of what the FPC is, how to get in touch with us; and if there are events that they would like to be co-sponsored by the FPC. Advocacy and Justice was more identifying those issues that are relevant to consumers that are underrepresented and underserved groups. We are tapping into groups that represent the food system. These groups are always doing this. The working groups are more task specific. They are set up to address a particular task, i.e. healthy foods certification program, or developing local food procurement policy. The real work of the Council were these three standing committees. The working groups were not. The second iteration shifted more to working groups to address more specific issues. When the operating principles were incepted both of these definitions were included. Cheryl Thayer interjected that in the first iteration of the FPC they did very well with standing committees. They created them and there was some action happening intermittently.

Kelly Fletcher said the standing committees are not task specific; and we break out into working groups to have a representative from each standing committee on each working group so they can speak to the issue of policy, community engagement and advocacy and justice within their working group. We wanted to make sure that if something came up in the policy group that needed a working group it be task specific. There was a breakout of the standing committees at the January meeting. There was hope that the standing committees would meet once or twice after that meeting to review. There was ensuing conversation regarding the frequency of the three main committees and the standing committees meetings. It was decided to keep FPC meetings on a quarterly basis, and break out into standing committees at those meeting. If a specific topic needed to be addressed a meeting could be called for that reason. Kelly Fletcher said that she could revise the operating principals to reflect this issue. Cheryl Thayer interjected that the only concern she had regarding quarterly meetings was that they could sometimes be challenging, as people drop off and then there is a big surge a week before the meeting. If we see this happening then perhaps we should go to every other month. When report outs are done by the working groups we are accomplishing things. Kelly Fletcher will revise. There is a Board of Health meeting scheduled for May 9, where the operating principles will be handed out to the board members. The revisions will be sent out on May 1st in an e-mail and comments will be accepted by May 4 for a vote. Kelly Fletcher will also put the operating principles on the newly developing website.

Breakout into Standing Committees

The FPC broke out into their respective standing committees. Cheryl Thayer said that Lucia Leone will be setting up a Google group for the Policy Monitoring Group for easier communication.

Working Group Updates

Cheryl Thayer called upon **Healthy Food Retail** for an update. It has been a little over a month since the group met. They have two issues that they wanted to bring to the FPC for their input. The first was the issue of permits for food demonstrations for mobile markets, and other types of healthy food retail programs (healthy corner stores etc.) Kelly Fletcher has been researching

NYS Agriculture and Markets; and temporary food stands that are run through the ECDOH, Environmental Health Division. The permit process through Environmental Health originated for food vendors at events as opposed to food tastings for samplings of food people are not used to tasting that are locally grown products. The other option is that some of the mobile markets fall under NYS Ag and Markets and that we could encourage them to be the ones regulating food demonstrations. The Healthy Corner stores can fall under the store, but for mobile markets and farmer's markets they do not exactly know where they fall. They spoke about what would work on a best practices guide and present it to Ag and Markets looking at what people are doing across other states and how this is handled. If Ag and Markets is okay with this, this could be shared on the FPC website and through them if anyone wants to do this kind of work. If they are not amenable our second thought was that we would have to work on changing policies with Env. Health or NYS Ag and Markets. We are hoping to accomplish a low key approach of just saying these are the best practices for when you are having taste testings. It was suggested that the softer approach is easier than the more challenging prospect of changing policy. It was established that the NYS Ag & Markets is a difficult website to navigate and extract information from. Kelly Fletcher spoke to the NYSDOH regional manager regarding this issue. Kelly said that supermarkets conduct demonstrations where food is passed out and no permits are obtained, as they fall under the store's food processing license. Eat Smart New York obtained temporary food permits for the healthy corner stores. The group will compile a best practices guide as mentioned above. They will also pull together information regarding food safety for temporary food service permits. Most of the mobile markets do not have hand washing stations. Also it is a burden to obtain a permit every time a tasting is done. Everyone agreed that the best practices guide could be compiled by the working group and then presented to the FPC. This must also be presented to the Board of Health. Ultimately this could also be added to the FPC website. Prepared food (i.e. restaurants) falls under Environmental Health this is where the distinction lies. Supermarkets fall under Ag and Markets. Rob Free said that there is a grey area for a temporary permit; the food must be prepared in a commissary and brought to the location. A catering license deems that the food can be brought into the store and the license can be displayed.

A map of the food system in Buffalo is being worked on. This has been accomplished in terms of healthy food options in terms of farmers markets. They are trying to figure out what should be included. This would also be incorporated onto the FPC website, however the information could also be used for strategic planning regarding healthy food retail. Mobile markets, farmers markets as well as retail could be included to indicate if they are selling healthy food. Perhaps a healthy food retail certification could be offered. We will be contacting Independent Health as they have a healthy options program for restaurants. They have an informal certification for restaurants perhaps they would be willing to partner up with FPC for retail outlets that sell food.

Procurement

Julie Levin spoke regarding the survey regarding Scratch Cooked, Local sourced food service in Elementary and high schools that they are planning to distribute on line. She passed out copies of the survey to the group. They will be compiling information on the responses. Cheryl Thayer said she hears from food service directors in public schools regarding a need for learning opportunities. Perhaps peer to peer learning opportunities could be organized from others who

are doing well or are facing challenges. This is a sub goal to be able to pull information out. This could be a fundable endeavor at the State level. Ag and Markets is co-hosting a meeting with NYS School Nutritionists Association (which is a lobbying arm for K-12 schools). This will include food service workers and food service directors. There will be a panel of different food service directors and food growers to help support farm to school activity in public schools. NYS School Nutritionists Association has failed two years in a row but they are attempting to advance a policy at the Statewide level to allow for more cents being reimbursed per meal served if they source a certain percentage of goods from NYS. They are trying to incentivize schools to buy local. This endeavor would be something that the FPC should support.

What does the term locally sourced offerings mean. Within New York State being local or a certain radius. A locally sourced product? NYS grown farm goods? This needs to be clarified.

Urban Food Production

The group has been meeting with Buffalo Environmental Management Commission regarding soil testing, they are putting together recommended procedures and remediation steps for soil quality. Water access is also being addressed. They are meeting with growers and community gardeners with developing policy. Cheryl Thayer asked if they will require signatures for the policy. It was mentioned it would be good to have the FPC's name on the document. The document will be based on the input of all the growers. They asked everyone for input so that the policy would be representative of the people that the policy is going to affect. They are lobbying City Council members for support. It was mentioned that the FPC draft a letter of support so that it is known that the FPC is behind the food production group. Kelly Asher made a motion to draft a letter of support, the motion was seconded. Kelly Fletcher told the group that she would put this together by Monday along with the operating principles.

Membership Review/Recruitment Group

Kelly Asher said that all the members are in place until next January.

Nutrition Education

Nathan Attard and Della Miller mentioned that the group has met twice. They are looking specifically at wellness policies and how they impact nutrition education. They are working on a survey to be sent to school district health officials. They will bring the survey before the FPC before distribution. They are looking at school district wellness policies review. Having the food available and teaching people the value of it is important. Similar to the healthy corner store group a guide for best practices for developing the school wellness policy that incorporates nutrition principles around education.

Cheryll Thayer made mention of the NYS budget to the group. NYS manages a farm to school program. The State upped the budget from one quarter million to three quarter million. So there is a lot more money available for schools that want to apply. Buffalo Public Schools received a program in 2015. This could be good for Western NY and or Buffalo and Erie County.

Springville and the East Aurora school district are looking to grow their farm to school programs.

Ms. Thayer also mentioned that last year in NYS per the farm bill of 2014 launched the industrial hemp pilot program. If you have a permit through NYS you can now legally grow industrial hemp. It will be opened up to an unlimited number of permits. Ten have now been accepted and there is a processor on the west side of Buffalo that was awarded a permit.

The Farm to Food bank bill that the FPC wrote a letter of support for has passed. If in the future we want to move policies forward information on why the policy matters should be made available.

Housekeeping Updates

An MOU for the Erie County Board of Health Food Policy Council and the Erie County Dept. of Health will be presented to the EC Board of Health for the BOH's signature on May 9, 2017 date of the next BOH meeting.

Kelly Fletcher gave the attendees a refresher on Google Drive in regard to Food Policy Council information. The Council will revert to the Box.com system in the future.

There was mention of government funding and what sort of research it is being directed toward. A group has been lobbying for directing more research toward food policy research and healthy food retail research. It is setting the agenda for the nutrition division within the National Institute of Health.

The next meeting date was set for July 19, 2017 at 5:30. A motion was made to adjourn, and it was seconded. The meeting was then adjourned.

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