

CT Food Policy Council Meeting Minutes

December 14, 2017

Members in attendance: Steve Anderson (DoAg), Don Casella (DAS), Bill Seedman (DSS), Flavia Pereira (DOT)

Non-Members in attendance: Mike Puglisi (UCONN), Shannon Yearwood (EHC!), Kelly Shreeve (CT CORE), Meg Hourigan (Hartford Food System), Sarana Biek (Grow Hartford Youth Program), Tom Maziarz (DOT)

Meeting was called to order at approximately 1:10 pm.

Welcome/Administrative

Participants all introduced themselves. There was discussion regarding the role of new participants from DOT on the FPC. Steve Anderson, Shannon Yearwood and others discussed briefly roles for DOT – helping to link people to healthy, nutritious food in an affordable way through public transit, easier access to food stores and farmers markets, etc.

Other state FPCs and organizations involved in food security have partnered with their DOTs to address barriers and strategies to ensure that we minimize or eliminate anyone being in a food desert. Bill Seedman (DSS) also pointed out that transportation is an important consideration in SNAP employment and training programs.

There was brief discussion about Connecticut Fast track – white collar use, benefits through travel time savings and to those dependent on transit system, stops at or near supermarkets.

There was also discussion on possibility of obtaining data on CT Fast Track's impact on food access, likely through on-board surveys.

Administrative updates – Steve Anderson (DoAg) said they are working on appointments and have made progress on agency appointment letters and at least one legislative letter for the appointment of John Bovay from UCONN – there has been a request sent to Senator Fasano from UCONN. DoAg is still working on the other legislative appointments as well as the remaining agency appointments.

Local Food Policy Council Updates

Meg Hourigan stated that Hartford Food System started annual report, policy recommendations which included the following:

- *Increasing healthy food retail* both as economic driver and public health driver for city of Hartford - convening food leaders in Hartford and have meeting with mayor on needs, and examining process of licensing of new food businesses

- *Decreasing food waste* - convening businesses in front street district. Some are already composting food waste, present them as champions of waste diversion. Work with UConn to do both recovering and composting. Compost can sometimes be given back to the business that contributed and/or go into community
- *Increasing city land used for agriculture* - talking with city anti-blight director to examine which parcels of land can be used for gardening (raised beds). Goal to develop longer-term lease agreements, land is at will of the city so no incentive to put time or money into the land because it could be taken away. Could possibly develop 5-year lease agreements for certain pieces of land – balance between development and farming priority
- *Increasing school gardens* - developing sustainability plans for 4 or 5 school gardens so they are funded and staffed for the next years so they are active and not being unused because food corps assignments changed
- *Increasing healthy food consumption* increase federal nutrition programs such as emergency food, SNAP, and WIC. Working with food pantries to see what is the capacity to present fruits and vegetables, and other ways to get outreach materials about SNAP at farmers market at food pantry to develop those connections

Hartford Food System also doing community food security awards in March. Please send nominations!

- Looking for low-cost space in Hartford
- Suggestion: the judiciary room in the Capital

In 2018 arranging events on different topics to build capacity of food policy councils. Everyone is welcome to attend!

What is the overlap with other cities' councils?

- New Haven doing some similar work
- Stop light program
- Bridgeport is working on urban agriculture work. Hartford already did that, it's legal to farm, but challenge is how to you promote and increase occurrence of farms
- Convening of other local food policy councils is every other month. More information about overlaps to come.
- Councils all really well aligned on values and mission

There was discussion about the role the state food policy council(s) plays on the local level activities.

Building the State Plan

Identify one or two key items from local food policies for potential for state food plan

Links sent around prior to meeting

- From Vermont, MA, RI
- NH also has one
- CT only state in New England without a food action plan

What have other states included and how do we want to move forward with ours? DoAg needs to check on resources in budget and will report back to the CT Food Policy Council at January's meeting.

- Some state food plans were rooted in legislation, should we do that as well?
- Are there things we could identify as a state initiative, or is there something at the state level that can facilitate regional work?
- How can we map out all the programs and where they are as a visual, including outlet retailers etc. Where are the gaps and how can we close them?

Discussion of creating a map of food justice organizations/hunger map/retail outlets/food work in general.

- How would map be created?
- Which organizations would be included or excluded?
- How would it stay updated?
- Agreement to have further discussion about connecting CTCORE's food justice guide work with CT food policy council action

Member/Guest Updates

DSS (Bill)

Carve out portion of bonus for SNAP recipients going for training, contract with Norwalk Community College so will be serving SNAP recipients, received money from Federal Government and will use to develop job development program at Capital Community College, received \$100,000 to put a person at state Board of Regents, colleges have been a foundation in their work.

Staff person at Board of Regents to administer partnerships, \$80,000 to bring on additional partners, still in conversation, maybe second chance or 'best chance' program. Returning to individual sign up with Capital Workforce Partners to get job training (culinary, etc.) Direct benefits important but next best way is indirect job training.

DOT (Tom)

Access to jobs transportation problem is that once funding is committed to transportation you don't have flexibility, training programs are different offered once a year at different sites, so more flexibility.

Recent budget agreements, transportation was decimated, so looking at possibility of transit cuts. Hoping for action from legislature to correct, but we won't know for 3-4 months.

If moving forward without funding, can End Hunger CT! and Food Policy Council representatives be part of discussion of which routes will be cut? Take into consideration

routes to farmers markets, summer meals sites, DSS Regional offices, WIC offices, and super markets.

Major corporations infamous for asking for specific routes out to far away communities; can we think about where farmers markets are located so they are easily accessible by current routes?

- Where Summer Meals Programs are located are determined by federal government.
- Some folks might just not know how to use the transportation services. Closing knowledge gap of transportation system and how it does and can intersect with nutrition program access. Looking at bus maps and then seeing which areas might be eligible for the program around that.

UConn (Mike)

Working on App for people receiving SNAP benefits that gives recipe ideas that are inexpensive, along with notifications of sales, and other useful information for shoppers using SNAP benefits.

- Randomized control trial to see how people use SNAP, some are using 60% of their monthly benefit in first couple weeks.
- Trying to smooth out the spending patterns and reduce food costs

Inter Campus Fellowship on Dialogue – will be reaching out to people soon. Try to bring people in CT food systems together for a dialogue for future ideas.

- Group: Jiff martin, Spencer (Trifecta Systems - aquaponics), Julia Cartigiano (farm at UConn)
- Some sort of short event soon

Dept. of Agriculture (Steve)

Attended all day session at Farm Credit East on solar developments.

- Commissioners of Ag from northeast
- 40-50 people all sharing ideas on how to balance the need for clean energy with the need for food
- Every state has their own ideas and approach
- CT DoAg hoping state can find ways to minimize impact on prime farmland from large solar projects

Visited Trifecta Systems

- Doing a lot with aquaponics, growing various greens
- Building relationships in community through education in schools, teaching students the science of aquaponics, and located downtown Meriden
- Start-up company with CSA
- Moved to larger facility this year
- Energy challenge in aquaponics is the intensive lights
- Field trip for CT Food Policy Council?

Follow Up

Anything else helpful to send around to folks?

- Re-send links. Once we see how other states do a food state plan we can have questions and go from there

Next meeting January 11th, 1 PM – 3 PM at End Hunger CT!