

**MINUTES**  
**LINN COUNTY FOOD SYSTEMS COUNCIL**  
**Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020**

The Linn County Food Systems Council meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. electronically via GoToMeeting.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT**    Laura Seyfer, At-Large, Co-Chair  
:  
                  RaeAnn Gordon, ISU Extension  
                  Lynette Richards, Restaurant/Institution  
                  August Stolba, Feed Iowa First, Co-Chair  
                  Chris Thoms, At-Large  
                  Stephanie Schrader, Community Well Being Liaison  
                  Kim Guardado, HACAP

**ABSENT:**    Emma Johnson, Grower/Producer  
                  Sofia Mehaffey, Horizons

**OTHERS**    Ilsa DeWald, Johnson County Food Policy Coordinator

**PRESENT**  
:

**STAFF:**    Les Beck, Director Linn County Planning and Development  
                  Mike Tertinger, Linn County Planning and Development, Staff  
                  Sue Bennett, Recording Secretary  
                  Jake Kundert , IVRCD

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Thoms, seconded by Oldham and carried, all members present voting yes, to approve the February 27, 2020 LCFSC minutes as submitted. There was no March meeting.

Sue came in at 9:06.

Members discussed the challenges facing farmers, restaurant owners, food stability service providers, and consumers during COVID-19. Members brainstormed for ways to get food from providers to consumers.

Part of the discussion revolved around Farmer's Markets. Some farmers have already pivoted to CSA and Farmer Market outlets to sell product - however, these solutions will be difficult to coordinate during social distancing. Many farmers have excess livestock they are willing to

donate or sell at a reduced price, but are unable to get the livestock processed as local processing plants are already booked out through August. It was noted that many farmers have offered produce to groups like food banks and HACAP, but the difficulty there is that the produce needs to be prepared for the food bank and no one really has the room for it. It was suggested that both schools and local restaurants are equipped to handle and store large amounts of produce, and possibly, they could help. Kim and Stephanie will work together to see if that is a feasible solution.

Ilsa discussed working with farmers to help them sell product online, however they are faced with the same storage and staff issues. Ilsa mentioned that Iowa City SNAP is partnering with Amazon and Walmart to allow recipients to purchase items online, but no provision has been made for recipients to pay online at Farmer's Markets. It was mentioned that plastic tokens might be used as payment at Farmer's Markets.

Raeann mentioned that, because meat is difficult to buy (and may become even more difficult to buy) that families are purchasing foods like dried beans, and many do not know how to cook them. Information is being dispersed to help people.

The question was asked - how can local government help? What should the FSC recommend to the Board of Supervisors.

Could we apply for a grant to purchase already prepped food from local vendors and distribute it to those in need? A large scale operation is necessary, but even a small one would help at this point. In order to write the grant we would need to work with local vendors and farmers on pricing items. It was suggested that we contact our list of vendors and see who would be interested, and who is already pivoting towards other types of sales.

Charlie noted that the Federal Government has set aside money for COVID 19 and we might be able to get funding through them. Especially if we could show how COVID 19 has impacted local food supplies.

It was suggested that Linn County partner with Johnson County on this. Mike said that may be possible.

For our next steps:

Mike and Charlie will talk to Darrin Gage to see what funds might be available for the Food Systems Council.

Ilsa recommended that we should let farmers know up front, so they are in the know. Possibly send out a survey to see who might be interested in partnering with us. Mike has the data from the previous contact.

Mike will have Nikki contact Kim.

Jake will follow up with Kim Guardado regarding assisting HACAP.

## **2020 Project Update**

Steph will update the group when she has had a conversation with the city.

Ilsa is looking at teaching container gardening classes. Kim mentioned HACAP accepts starter plants.

**Adjournment** - The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

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Sue Bennett, Recording Secretary

, Co-Chair