

MINUTES
LINN COUNTY FOOD SYSTEMS COUNCIL
Thursday, July 25th, 2019

The Linn County Food Systems Council meeting was called to order at 9:12 A.M. in conference room 3A/3B at the Jean Oxley Public Service Center, 935 2nd St. SW, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

CALL TO ORDER:

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Laura Seyfer, At-Large, Co-Chair
RaeAnn Gordon, ISU Extension
Pam Oldham, Medical Provider/Registered Dietician
Lynette Richards, Restaurant/Institution
August Stolba, Feed Iowa First, Co-Chair
Sofia Mehaffey, Horizons
Cindy Feister, Linn County Public Health
Kim Guardado, HACAP
Stephanie Schrader, At-Large

ABSENT: Emma Johnson, Grower/Producer
Chris Thoms, At-Large
Joe Stutler, At-Large

OTHERS Brianna Gabel, Linn County Public Health

PRESENT: Chuck Isenhardt, State Representative
Dave Baker, Dubuque County Supervisor
Jodie Huegerich, UNI Local Food Program Manager
Linda Gorkow, Iowa Food Bank Association
Art Staed, State Representative
Scott Koepke, Facilitator
Ilsa Dewald, Johnson County

STAFF: Les Beck, Director Linn County Planning and Development
Mike Tertinger, Linn County Planning and Development
Jessie Black, Recording Secretary
Sue Bennett, Linn County Planning and Development
Jake Kundert, IVRCD
Charlie Nichols, Planning & Zoning Division Manager

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Guardado, seconded by Mehaffey and carried, all members present voting yes, to approve the June 27th, 2019 LCFSC minutes as submitted.

Monthly Budget Report

Food Systems Council ended FY19 with \$3914.00 in account, which was absorbed back into general fund. New allocation for FY20 is \$4,000.00. Remaining balance from FY19 can be requested back for fall amendment to be put toward Wellmark grant.

Learning Session (Part VI) with guest facilitator Scott Koepke

All in attendance introduced themselves to the rest of the group.

Koepke reiterated the top priorities Food Systems Council has identified over the past several months of meetings and learning sessions with different guest speakers; diversification, production, procurement and policy recommendations.

- **Discussion Topic – Regional Collaboration among Food Policy Councils**

Huegerich introduced herself and informed the group of some of her roles and responsibilities as the UNI Local Food Program Manager. She works in collaboration with ISU Extension offices in seven counties. A lot of her work is done through a group called Cedar Valley Regional Food & Farm Network, a coalition bringing several counties together to work on access, awareness, education and economic development.

Gorkow introduced herself to new members, explaining that she used to be a member of the Food Systems Council on behalf of HACAP, but has since taken on a different role with Iowa Food Bank Association and spends a lot of her time in Des Moines. She works with several different food banks in the state of Iowa. Gorkow commended eastern Iowa for the food systems collaboration that has taken place.

Recap recent LCFSC efforts/upcoming initiatives

Stolba gave a brief recap on what the council has been working on the for the last six months. He explained that two of the council's top priorities are to complete a local Food Systems Assessment and to start a mini grant program; both proposals were denied by the Board of Supervisors, citing that the Food Systems Council does not have enough "wins" under their belt in order for the supervisors to fund such projects yet. Stolba explained that FSC's main objective at this point is to bring awareness to the group and showcase progress made in making Linn County more food-secure and diverse.

Tertinger let the group know that he and Nichols expect to hear back on the Wellmark grant by August 15th. Said grant could potentially provide up for \$50,000 worth of funding towards local food systems assessment. Tertinger also announced that he and Nichols would be working closely with Dewald and Johnson County to work on an agri-tourism policy.

Tertinger explained that the Food Systems Council is partnering with Linn County Public Health on implementing a successful Food Rescue Program. Gabel added that Public Health is currently in the beginning stages of putting together a governance committee. She said they would eventually like to host a networking event, inviting producers, donators, etc.

Tertinger announced that a group of select members from Food Systems Council will be invited to attend a “strategic doing”, facilitator led, meeting in the fall that will help the council create a much smaller, more doable, work plan. This meeting will

Discuss Chuck Isenhardt Proposal

Isenhardt discussed how to get the attention of policy makers in order for Food Systems Council to progress in making policy recommendations. He insisted it is much easier at the local level than it is state and national. He added that it has been about 10 years since state legislators have taken a look at current food policy. At that time, the conversation wasn't very involved; they simply put some basic provisions in place. Isenhardt explained that, with so many objectives, the Food Systems Council may be trying to bite off more than they can chew. He suggested the council finds a good starting point, pick out a few important issues and long range goals and go from there. Isenhardt stated collective effort will not go very far until there is better partnership at the state and federal level. He added that public policy is supply and demanded; elected officials will eventually supply what the public demands.

Isenhardt suggested that it is most important to get in front of representatives as a state-wide community, instead of just Linn County, and demonstrate that recommendations would not just be benefiting urban communities, but rural as well. Consistent presence in front of legislators is key, Isenhardt insisted.

Koepke asked Dewald how many Food System Policy Councils exist in Iowa. She said Johnson, Linn, Dubuque and Cass County, but added there may be other coalitions, lacking the policy aspect, in other counties. Gorkow stated that Polk County has a strong council, as well.

Isenhardt informed the group that one week from Saturday, he and Dawn Thilmany will be speaking at National Caucus of Environmental Legislators about food production and the impact it has on environmental resources. They are hoping to gain support of national legislators.

Dave Baker, Dubuque County Supervisor, shared some takeaways from the last work session he attended on Monday with grant recipients. He thought the grant process felt rushed and was hoping the monies would be spread throughout the county, but all allocations stayed inside the city limits of Dubuque.

Beck wondered what the total amount of ask was, vs. available funds. Baker said there was \$32,000 requested, \$20,000 available. He stated that everyone who applied received

something, even if it was a small amount. Beck asked if the types of applications received revealed any trends. Baker said distribution is an issue, almost exclusively.

Gordon asked Isenhart how to ensure everyone is represented around the table when in front of legislators. Isenhart said not to. He insisted a small group of people who are 100% committed to the main goal is best.

Koepke shared his thoughts with the group, explaining that he may need to reevaluate his own personal long-term goals, and instead of trying to change the business model of farmers and CEO's, he should create a parallel model with diversification in mind. Isenhart agreed, stating that if the market changes, so will business models, but until then, no point in trying to change them. Isenhart insisted on bringing financial institutions to the table to help.

Stead said legislators are looking for groups, such as Food Systems Council, to support. He stated that once FSC has determined their top priorities, Staed could put the council in touch with legislators to try to gain support. Staed also mentioned that the media could be a big help in bringing awareness to the council and its main goals.

Gorkow announced Day on the Hill to Fight Hunger will take place on February 25th. 2020 at the Iowa State Capital.

Seyfer expressed concern for the state of our current local food system, wondering how to bring more awareness to the crisis that is going on.

Motion by Mehaffey, second by Gordon, all present voting aye, to initiate regional collaboration between other Food System Councils in order to establish common goals and work towards policy recommendations.

Isenhart wondered if anyone was interested in volunteering to be part of a subcommittee to spearhead collaborative efforts. Dewald suggested establishing goals first, then wait until after farming season when more members are available to help.

Gordon will reach out to Eric Christiansen, ISU Extension and Outreach Government Specialist.

Beck suggested getting ideas in front of the Urban County Coalition.

Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 10:43 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

Jessie Black, Recording Secretary

, Co-Chair