



Food System Committee

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

4:30-6:00 PM

Zoom and in-person

Minutes

Members Present:

Name	Sector	Present
Margaret Gerard	Local Sales Farming	X
Nikki Oleson	Processing/Distribution	X
	Food Access	
Noelle Beecroft	Nutrition/ Public Health	X
Sean Hopps	Labor	X
Trevor Gearhart	Natural Resources	X
Rhys-Thorvald Hansen	Whatcom Food Network	X
Paul Burrill	Fishing	
Rob Dhaliwal	Export Sales Farming	

Others Present: Laura Ridenour, Ellie Duncan, Sierra Crooke, Louise Trapp, Cliff Strong

Call to order: Margaret started the meeting at 4:32 pm.

Land Acknowledgement

Determination of Quorum

Quorum

Approval of minutes

Trevor motioned, Noelle seconded, all approved.

Vote on New Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary

Rhys-Thorvald and Margaret nominated Rhys-Thorvald for Chair. Margaret motioned to approve Rhys-Thorvald for Chair. Trevor seconded. All approved.

Trevor said he would be willing to serve as vice chair, but also acknowledged he'd be supportive of Margaret continuing her role as Vice Chair. Margaret nominated Trevor. Margaret moved to approve Trevor as Vice Chair. Noelle seconded. All approved.

Noelle and Nikki have been serving as co-secretaries. Noelle said she could continue. Sierra (new Food Access representative) said she would be willing. Nikki nominated, then motioned to approve Sierra as secretary. Noelle seconded. All approved.

2025 Comp Plan Kickoff

Cliff Strong from Whatcom County Planning and Development Services introduced the County's 20 year Comprehensive Plan update. He asked the Committee to review and make comments to Chapter 8: Resource Lands and Chapter 7: Economics.

Cliff shared this information about timing:

January – February: Staff will bring relevant CompPlan sections to the advisory committees for review. The committees will review unedited (existing) versions of applicable CompPlan elements identified by staff in #1 above. Each committee will make general recommendations, in the form of a memo, on how to meet the GMA requirements and Council priorities. The Committees will not make specific wording changes at this point in the process.

The Committee is to send policy recommendations to Ali/Cliff before the next meeting. At the next meeting, we will review and identify the top additions. The list will be sent to the consultant and Cliff will come back to a summer meeting to review the updated plan.

There were some questions about how the general public and each sectors' constituents will be engaged in this. There will be some community engagement.

Ag Innovation Center

Trevor shared that some agencies are exploring bringing an Agricultural Innovation Center, similar to the one in Skagit, to Whatcom County. About 60 acres of land will be used for some berry innovation and opportunities for other agricultural research. WSU Extension is leading, but will not own the center. Trevor asked for the Food System Committee to sign a letter of support in the next meeting.

Updates on the Food System Plan

Ali introduced Louise Trapp, new Assistant Manager of the Community Health and Human Services division. She is Ali's supervisor.

Ali said she's working with a regional group of food system planners from Skagit, Island, and San Juan Counties, on creating a regional dashboard that could house our food system data. WCHCS will continue to have the health-related food system data.

Ali said we were given \$50,000 to fund Market Match (a SNAP Farmers Market project) in 2024. All three markets that accept SNAP in Whatcom County will participate.

She is also planning to apply for an EPA prize for some food waste reduction projects and a Better Food Policy Fund unrestricted grant for about \$60,000.

Continuation of Prioritization: Impact vs Feasibility

Last meeting, the committee was asked to identify 3-5 actions in the food system plan they wanted to see accomplished first. The Committee evaluated each action for its potential impact to our food system and the feasibility (financial, time, political will, etc) that it can happen. The grid looks like this:



The group has more work to do on this and will pick it up at a future meeting.

Public Comment

Sierra Crook, in attendance is the new Food Access representative for the food system committee. She is currently the co-director of the Ferndale Food Bank. Her appointment for the committee will happen at the January 23rd evening County Council meeting.

Alex Spaulding from the Whatcom Community Foundation invited food system committee members to attend a Millworks Food Campus Presentation and Listening Session for Food-Focused Organizations on Tuesday, February 6th from 4:00-6:00pm.

Noelle is going to Friesla, an organization that builds mobile butcher units, in Everson on Friday at 9am. She invited the committee to join.

Wrap Up

Next Food System Committee Meeting is February 20th, 2024 from 4:30-6pm.
Meeting adjourned at 6:00.