



# Food System Committee

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

4:30-6:00 PM

Zoom and in-person

## Minutes

### **Members Present:**

| Name                 | Sector                   | Present |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Margaret Gerard      | Local Sales Farming      |         |
| Nikki Oleson         | Processing/Distribution  | X       |
| Sierra Crook         | Food Access              | X       |
| 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     | X       |

**Others Present:** Laura Ridenour, Henry Bierlink, Cliff Strong, Cameron Miller

**Call to order:** Rhys-Thorvald started the meeting at 4:31 pm.

### **Land Acknowledgement**

### **Determination of Quorum**

Quorum

### **Approval of minutes**

Nikki motioned, Trevor seconded, all approved.

### **Public Comment**

Cameron introduced himself as a board member of Sustainable Connections. Noelle asked if there was any update on the incubator farm property on Lawrence Road. Cameron said he couldn't update on behalf of Sustainable Connections and referred the group to the Herald article.

### **Ag Innovation Center**

Trevor had drafted a letter of support for a proposed Ag Innovation Center and invited Henry Bierlink, of the Washington Red Raspberry Commission to answer questions. Henry shared that this has been long in the works and it will be modeled after the ag research station in Skagit County, which is led by WSU Extension. The Raspberry Commission has provided a lot of financial resource into a WSU position specifically for raspberry research and hopes this site can host that research. The site will host a wide range of research activities in addition to raspberries, but the Commission needs external support.

The Food System Committee asked about what other community input would be provided and how much more money will be needed. Henry said he was interested in exploring what else can be at this

research station and who would operate it. He said the Raspberry Commission is providing some capital to purchase land and will be asking for Port EDI funds to support more purchasing.

Ideally, the land will be purchased by this fall and it is hoped a support letter will be signed next month. The Committee will review and add to the letter of support. The Committee is interested in visiting the Center in Skagit.

### **2025 Comp Plan Kickoff**

Cliff Strong from Whatcom Planning and Development Services joined the meeting and reviewed some of the comments that were sent to him. Rhys-Thorvald had created a crosswalk (map) of the policies in Chapters 7 and 8 with the actions in the food system plan. Ali had sent to Cliff and Cliff said that was sufficient for the Comp Plan. Ali will send the crosswalk to the Food System Committee for them to fill it out by Friday.

### **Retreat Planning**

Rhys-Thorvald is interested in holding a retreat for the food system committee sometime in April. This retreat will allow for some structured conversations about the next 18 or so months of food system plan implementation and the role of the food system committee. Members of the public will be allowed to join, per the Open Public Meetings Act. Committee members will fill out a when2meet for availability.

### **Visiting Professor from Syracuse**

A professor from Syracuse is visiting in March to interview the Food System Committee about their experience with labor at the table. Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern will be interviewing members of the committee and conducting a focus group. She will likely participate in next month's food system committee meeting.

### **Wrap Up**

Planning to have a retreat sometime in April of this year. Members of the public will be welcome. Next Food System Committee Meeting is March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 from 4:30-6pm. Meeting adjourned at 5:53pm.