



Food System Committee

Tuesday, June 25th, 2024

4:30-6:00 PM

Hybrid: In-person at 509 Girard St, Admin Conference Room and via Zoom

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
	Fishing	
Rob Dhaliwal	Export Sales Farming	

Others Present: Trever Mullins, Louise Trapp, Aden Houran-Corkum, Kristy Matta, Laura Ridenour, Alan Chapman, Cari Chan

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

Land Acknowledgement

Determination of Quorum

Quorum met

Approval of minutes

Trevor motioned to approve May 28th minutes. Noelle seconded. All approved.

Public Comment

- Paul, who was representing fishing, has been unable to attend quite a few meetings and has since resigned from his role on the FSC. Ali Jensen invited the Director of the Dockside, Cari Chan to come to a meeting, and see if they would be interested in joining the committee as the fisheries representative. The Cari had also invited some folks from the Lummi seafood market to attend tonight's session, but they were unable to make it.
- Aden will be interning with Health and Community Services this summer supporting food systems work.
- Alan Chapman, chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee and wanted to follow up on thoughts for a few committees to collaborate and narrow down common goals and responsibilities. Rhys has yet to receive a timeline update for draft guidelines from planning, and it could be until September or after before that is accomplished. Sean and Rhys will coordinate with Alan on those collaborations when they have more information.

- Following an investigation from the Attorney General, Albertson's has relinquished its property restrictions on its previous location in the Birchwood neighborhood which had essentially barred any other grocery store from opening in that location until 2038. There is still work to be done around food access in that neighborhood but is a good step in the right direction.
- There were questions regarding how one can become a part of a task force as applicants have not been hearing back on their requests. Rhys answered that previously Ali had been the keeper of those forms and will work with Louise to remedy that situation as well as make the FSC website a place to see a clear path of transparency and opportunities for engagement for the public.
- Laura represents Whatcom Food Network and wanted to continue to advocate for a dedicated food systems specialist position within Whatcom County staff. This position would allow someone on the inside of the county to have the knowledge and ability to push forward and support food systems work being done in the community and integrate the many different aspects that are needed when talking about food systems work. Because it spans so many areas of County departments it could be beneficial to have the position housed in or alongside planning to advocate for the work needed.

Letter of Support for Twin Sisters Farmers' Market – Noelle

- Noelle brought forth a drafted letter of support from the committee for Twin Sisters Farmers' Market requesting 200k from the county council to support programming to support local producers and consumer and progress goals within the food systems plan. Said funding would be used to fund senior market vouchers in food insecure areas and fund a produce buyback program which allows farmers to still be paid for the produce they give even if it is not sold and then given to food banks. It would also fund market match programs that have been very successful within eastern Washington.
- The food access task force had drafted up the letter and is presenting it at this meeting for official signature and endorsement from the committee.
- Nikki Olsen motioned to sign and declare this letter of support for Twin Sisters request to county council. Noelle seconds. All approved.

Report to Council on June 18th Recap

- Rhys presented to the health and public works committee of the County Council to primarily share stakeholder updates on the implementation and critical aspects of food access as well as to advocate for funding for the dedicated food systems specialist position. Next steps are to meet with Councilmembers Galloway and Scanlon to continue conversations and Rhys is soliciting for any input from the committee or community to ensure all voices are represented.

Budget Process - Louise

- Louise is currently the Associate Manager for the Community Health and Human Services Division within Whatcom County Health and Community Services. She described the budget process and noted that county leadership has been told it is going to be a tight year for funding. September may be the best opportunity for this Committee to submit a proposal to council and get their foot in the door with a strongly compelling argument and plenty of face time with leadership in such a hard moment for funding. On Oct 18th the Exec Office will make a recommendation to council and the next day the budget is finalized.
- Rhys asked what would be the best method to advocate for their request? Within Health's request or outside of it? Louise stated that it would best be routed to the Director to include in

the overall department's budget and advocating with council members to get better grounds vs within the standard process for one shot of funding for two years. Councilmembers are in a problem-solving mindset with such constraints and thus this is the time to take as much face time as possible expressing importance of request and increasingly familiarity with your issue amongst all the others they are considering.

- Noelle has been seeing food specialist positions pop up all over the nation, so it is a fairly new but needed thing and could be a good idea to utilize other states and counties as examples. If aware of any particular ones email them to Louise and she will reach out to the jurisdiction to get information regarding it. an
- Sean wanted to clarify if these requests for funding would be for the work of the FSC or to fund ongoing work and projects from those working with food systems in the community. Sean also asked if there are other pathways to funding than the general fund for food systems projects at the county level or if it is only at the state level.
 - Louise stated that Food system work is not currently funded from the county side not even grant funds, from her understanding, Foundational Public Health funds that were available for other aspects within Health and Community Services were not able to be applied to food systems work. There is currently not dedicated funding, but there could be provisions within county code that dictate some class of funding but Louise will have to look into things a bit more.
- Rhys knows that this committee is composed almost entirely of volunteers and a lot of things are not possible without a dedicated position within the county supporting the work. As we build the task force model we will be able to support projects and requests and have the opportunity for better community engagement to build out work plans around critical pieces of the food systems plan. Rhys had been working with Ali to find out a pathway within this critical funding window to fund the position. They will follow up with Louise round pay scales, job descriptions and ideas and welcomes comments from everyone to take opinions into account.

Task Force Reports

The task forces were created for each goal area and has a FSC member as lead.

- Task Force 1 Equity: Sean and Rhys noted the Whatcom racial equity taskforce and are planning to attend and build relationships within that task force in order to identifying interested members to hold food system conversations with those that have been historically marginalized within the county.
- Task Force 2 land and waterways: met a month ago to talk about structure and will be meeting next week again to get the ball rolling then bi monthly. Been doing a little bit of work around the impact vs feasibility matrix.
- Task force 3 economy: Have yet to find a meeting time Rhys will send out another doodle pool to find a time for everyone to be available for the first couple of meetings.
- Task force 4 Food access: Will meet in July for bi monthly schedule. Letter of supported. Remarked that multiple food banks in the county did not receive the big WSDA grants they have in past years but are not quite in the red zone yet, and the task force will be chatting about it more. Talking to Ali about food access and what she's learned around a couple specific goals and the programs to make sure the ball doesn't drop for programs and work she has been doing.
- Task Force 5 Climate Resilience: Met at same time as task force 2 since it is primarily the same members and have set up bimonthly meetings. Been doing a little bit of work around the impact vs feasibility matrix.

Continuation of Impact vs Feasibility Matrix

- Suggestion of matrix about 3-4 months ago was before task forces were created. Rhys suggested that rather than as whole committee the task forces should weigh in and then bring that to the whole committee to have a collaborative quicker offline process.
- Decided that meeting in august is going to be a good idea in order to help ensure work can be done around proposals for the position and goals before September. Use and prioritize task forces as an asynchronous way to draft work plans and had previously decided September as the month to start anchoring the implementation, budget and comprehensive plan update.

Wrap Up

Next meeting is July 23rd at 4:30pm. Meeting adjourned at 5:36 pm.