



Food System Committee

Tuesday, September 24, 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	
Vacant	Fishing	
Rob Dhaliwal	Export Sales Farming	

Others Present: Trever Mullins, Scott Powell, Von E.O, Alan Chapman

Call to order: Trevor Gearhart started the meeting at 4:33pm

Land Acknowledgement

Determination of Quorum

Quorum met

Approval of minutes

Nikki motioned at 4:34pm to approve July 23rd minutes. Sean seconded at 4:34. All approved.

Public Comment

- Alan Chapman – Wanting to work holistically and systematically to address the needs and issues of agriculture concerns include other goals that are all competing resource of land.
 - Urban ag doesn't often come up but there are other county programs in Pierce and King county related to CSA programs and urban agriculture to raise things that aren't being raised and related to refugee communities to have access to food that those areas don't currently have access to.

Precedence for ways to set targets of meeting community goals with different ways of utilizing urban agriculture.

- Von E.O asked about how the committee sees the food systems plan tying in with the plans of the Housing Advisory Committee and [Resolution 2024-036](#) that mentions reaching Functional Zero Homelessness and supporting expansion of year-round shelter capacity.
 - Von asked in terms of food access for those that are unhoused, food autonomy/urban agriculture for high density areas, and how protecting agricultural land affects the land available for housing.
 - Different modalities of agriculture would definitely work into the food systems plan as a way to support and strength the health of the
 - There are quite a few goals that would overlap with some of the work being requested and it presents questions, ideas, and the need for more exploration. Trevor also suggested maybe a member or few of the committee could attend other meetings to think of points of collaboration and addressing the needs of the community. While also checking out the food systems plan to leverage those overlaps between county declarations and initiatives they want to move forward.

Meat and Greet

Trevor has heard talk and/or rumors of a meat processing plant that is going to be coming back into the county. But has yet to have any specific confirmed information and hasn't yet talked with the agriculture committee.

- Alan said that the agriculture committee will be talking about it at their next meeting and have some concerns. He also stated that there is already a plant in Skagit county.
- Noelle is excited about this potential and it could work to the ideas of Goal/Taskforce 3: Economic development and will try in loop in folks from those communities into their groups. She also briefly talked with Chris from WSU extension about the idea and how it could tie into more education and work force development opportunities within the county.

2025 Goals & Address Land-use Shifts

What are priorities regardless of staff or not? Low hanging fruit? Etc?

- Sean said that we should focus on our ongoing implementation of the actions as well as existing and emergent collaborations that are already established or in the works. While doing said implementation we should also be ensuring the food system plan's equity goal governs our process and planning.

Quarterly Report

Trevor noted that the last few meetings the committee have primarily revolved around the concern of a lack of a Whatcom county employee to support the work of the Food Systems plan. But, that concern should not hold us back from the important work being

done and what can be planned for the future. It is worth all of us to report what is actually being done and what we can leverage those details before the next meeting. What are we tangentially working on in our areas that are a part of the food systems plan? Then once we have those details, we will have a better understanding as to where we can strategize.

- Noelle asked what format might be best to showcase what we have achieved.
- There's probably already a document going and Task Force 3 does have a pretty substantive document so far of what they have done.
- Sean – a cross walk is a good idea and Rhys already has one started that is related to the comprehensive plan so could just look at that and see what has been achieved so far.
- Trevor isn't suggesting it to be completed by next month as we won't have a full picture concerning budgets and funding priorities until later, but is going to be a good tool as we start strategizing things.

Task Force Reports

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

- Task Force 1 - Equity: Rhys & Sean - Sean has met with Alan on how to collaborate with Agriculture Committee and attended Community 2 Community event regarding food systems. The task force's conversations are mainly outreach based around the goal of how we can hold ourselves responsible to county commitments.
- Task Force 2 - Land and Waterways: No one showed up for the last meeting besides Dakota. Some thoughts of working with other committees on upcoming potential regarding land use in the county.
- Task force 3 - Economy: Sean Rhys & Noelle met on September 10th – started with realigning sense of purpose and goals and that conversation then turned in to actions, approach and how to move forward on those actions ie funding.
 - Highlights included how to track WSDA funding and impact in WC, approaches to get low hanging fruit under actions of step 3, stakeholder engagement, what are existing collaborations
 - There was the thought of potential on collaboration with Healthy Children's Fund but after Noelle looking at it further there are specific buckets for how the fund can be utilized and if we wanted to request funding out of the (HCF) it would have to be very intentional.
 - Some diapers and formula recently funded for Food Bank Network
 - Would love for folks from agriculture committee to report back about meat processing. Alan will keep us informed as the Agriculture Committee talks about it at their next meeting.
 - Met with Jesse Stoner from Farmer John Coalition who approached members of the task force for a letter of support from the committee around a state bill for a tax break on the initial purchase of farm equipment once per year. This would expand it from the previous tax break for farm

equipment repairs, and be a very similar model. Sean has been working on a letter of support/resolution with Jesse Stoner and the task force and will most likely bring it to committee next month for approval

- Trevor says it is a continuation of a bigger trend and would be great for farmers to get a tax break on these purchases so that they can continue to support local food systems!
- Task force 4 - Food Access – Noelle & Sierra – meeting tomorrow regarding a drafted resolution stating that food insecurity is a public health crisis and getting input from the taskforces.
 - Some members of the task force were invited to a round table to discuss the resolution. There is no funding tied to the document but is simply a declaration that can be used as leverage to show support for the food systems plan and funding sources for implementation
 - Foothills food bank staffing has been getting a bit tight and they serve over 400 families in their community. Whatcom Food Bank network is still asking for 2 million dollars and food banks have been meeting with councilmembers to try and lock in support said funding request to pass.
- Task Force 5 - Climate Resilience: shares the same members as task force 2, thus did not meet.

Next Steps

- Get an idea from task forces of what to bring to October meeting for the report. Can use the cross walk and see if some of the potential options that were previously listed as successes/collaborations and a which have been achieved.
- Council will be voting on the resolution declaring food insecurity a public health emergency on October 8th.
- Food bank funding request is budgetary decision and will probably not be finalized until late November.
- Next draft of comp plan will come when it comes hearing late October probably November.

Wrap Up

Next meeting is October 22nd, at 4:30pm. Meeting adjourned at 5:31 pm.