



New Haven Food Policy Council

Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2008
8:30 AM - 10:30 AM
City Hall, Meeting Room 3

Present:

Diana Richter
Linda Townsend-Maier
Peter Stein
Catherine Jones
Tagan Engel
Phaedra Ebon
Roberta Friedman
Jennifer McTiernan H.
Elisabeth Moore
Benjamin Gardner

Introductions

Jennifer McTiernan called the meeting to order at 8:41 AM. The Council discussed individual member's activities. Tagan discussed her current work on developing institutional purchasing guidelines. Rob Friedman, Rudd Center Director of Food Policy and Government introduced herself and discussed her work on the federal, state and local level. Diana Richter discussed the most recent statistics for the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen. In 2007, DESK served 82,000 evening meals, 24,000 food bags, and 6,000 bagged lunches. Other successes included November and December food drives, including more fresh food to be served to soup kitchen visitors. City Farmers' Market Wooster Square is open once a month on the third Saturday of each month, January through May. The Council briefly discussed a January 16 New Haven Register article entitled "School Workers Petition to cut ties with ARAMARK." Phaedra Ebon discussed CT Campaign to End Hunger Action Plan. Benjamin Gardner briefly discussed a new system for the Council to share information via Google Groups. The Council agreed that this system should be used primarily for information sharing and not formal decision making. Linda Townsend-Maier briefly discussed the Montessori School on Edgewood Ave, of which she is Acting Director. She is looking for a partner to bring food into the school. The Council discussed Heather Zorlack, of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) based in Los Angeles, who contacted Yale Sustainable Food Project and CitySeed about ARAMARK. Zorlack is working to ensure better accountability and transparency in ARAMARK's contracts with New Haven Public Schools and will soon release a policy paper on the issue. The Council approved minutes from the December 2007 meeting.

Old Business

Two upcoming meeting dates were announced:

The School Food Subcommittee will next meet Friday, February 1, 10:30 AM at the Central Kitchen.

The Wellness Committee will next meet Wednesday, February 13, 8:00 AM at the Sound School.

Benjamin Gardner briefly discussed the forthcoming 2007 Annual Report to the Board of Aldermen. The report will include an overview of the Council, 2007 accomplishments, and 2008 objectives. The Report will be issued once the website is up, sometime in the next few weeks. Benjamin Gardner discussed the Food Policy Council's website. City Hall's IT support will assist in developing a webpage off of the City of New Haven website (<http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/>).

The Council discussed the federal Community Food Project (CFP) grant and meetings with Yale Law Clinic. Jennifer McTiernan pointed out that the grant aims to address community-wide issues and that school food is something the Council, as well as the community, has identified as a priority. Council representatives continue meeting with the Law School Organization at Yale, the Wellness Subcommittee, and Holt, Wexler, Farnam, who is helping to prepare the CFP grant. The grant specifically excludes funding for emergency food shelters, and the current proposal being developed by community stakeholders is a response to the specific RFP from USDA. The grant is meant as a one time infusion of funds to establish a sustainable program to promote a healthy community food system. Part of fulfilling the grant requirements could be a steering committee of organizational stakeholders representing different parts of the community.

The Law School Organization at Yale has taken on the Council, through CitySeed, as client to assess federal, state, local policy and develop recommendations, ultimately aiming to help the Council link local issues to real policy.

A policy summit/conference is being organized by Leadership Greater New Haven, in conjunction with the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity. The School Food Subcommittee, newly formed group within Wellness committee, is currently working on school food issues. ARAMARK has been receptive of community involvement from the School Food Subcommittee thus far, and has provided a significant amount of information about their use of federal food commodities and their facility. An initial meeting with ARAMARK and the Subcommittee aimed at gathering information such as what efforts ARAMARK has already undertaken to improve the quality of food served in the public schools. Some barriers still exist, such as kids not recognizing food items and not wanting to try them. The Council suggested some different strategies such as renaming the food to make it more interesting and conducting regular school food taste testing. ARAMARK still provides the schools with highly processed foods, even though it is trying to have more fresh foods. ARAMARK's contracts lead to running the schools' food service as a business, and much of the processing is outsourced as cost saving measure. Some Council members commented that it may be beneficial have highly organized union (SEIU) involved in this

effort to improve the quality of the school's food, as well as having other community resources and stakeholder organizations providing assistance. The Council posed the following questions with regard to ARAMARK's contracts and the development of a school food/wellness coordinator. Is food and custodial contract separate? Who does the coordinator report to? Will Clark? Advisory Board/Steering Committee? Jennifer McTiernan suggested that these issues are things Holt, Wexler, and Farnam are helping to resolve. The coordinator position remains as part of an ongoing conversation, though it is likely that it will not initially be created under the Board of Education. Jennifer McTiernan noted that Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools, Dr. Mayo, has been informed of the grant proposal and will be briefed on the Council and community's efforts in an upcoming meeting. The Council suggested developing a set of recommendations for the Board of Education if contracts with ARAMARK is not renewed. This may include a comprehensive effort to address community and farm food production needs, developing strategies to integrate many segments of the community food system, and furthering existing efforts to improve access to healthy food. Jennifer McTiernan noted that the CFP grant project would most likely start October 1 coinciding with the federal fiscal year. She also again noted that an advisory committee for the project may be formed out of the existing group of stakeholders currently meeting to address school food, which is important for accountability on both sides. Council members asked whether federal food subsidies go through ARAMARK, or if the Board of Education makes the purchases.

Jennifer McTiernan discussed a grant award to CitySeed by the CT Department of Public Health for obesity prevention, for which the Council provided a letter of support. CitySeed was awarded the grant to involve community in activities, increase access to healthy food, and keep people active. The focus of the grant changed from the development of cookbook to policy intervention for school food. Jennifer McTiernan suggested that funding from the DPH could possibly be used as a match for the CFP grant. It will be good to have a process and conversations about mutual objectives among community partners. This approach requires a layering of strategies for involving children in accessing healthy food throughout the community. For example, strategies may include having adults involved in exposing children to new food helps identification, involving parents directly (bring your parent to lunch), or hands on activities help expose children to new foods (eating off the vine in a community garden). It was noted that presentation is important for encouraging consumption of healthy food.

Jennifer McTiernan noted that the City will be holding a mandatory ethics training on February 7, at 6:00 PM, in Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 of City Hall.

New Business

Benjamin Gardner further elaborated on using the online discussion group. The Council briefly discussed required ethics paperwork to be filled out and returned to Patricia Lawlor and the upcoming ethics training. Jennifer McTiernan shared a preliminary agenda for the upcoming Leadership Greater New Haven (LGNH) Spring Conference on school food, at which the Council will present its policy paper. Jennifer McTiernan asked that Council members save May 7 on their schedules for the Conference. A timeline is being developed

for a Yale Law Clinici student to develop the policy paper, which will have two hours for presentation at the Conference. The Council will have an opportunity to have more input on the development of the policy paper at the February meeting. LGNH will seek out sponsorships for Conference (Yale-New Haven, Chamber of Commerce). The Council discussed foreseen problems with certain sponsors posing conflicting interests, but agreed that LGNH is unlikely to approach them. LGNH, however, should keep the Council informed before everything is finalized.

Jennifer McTiernan announced an upcoming Food Policy Council conference call on school food and the farm to school connection on February 5, 12:00 PM.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM.