



New Haven Food Policy Council

Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2008
8:30 AM - 10:30 AM
City Hall, Meeting Room 3

Council Members Present:

Diana Richter
Peter Stein
Catherine Jones
Tagan Engel
Phaedra Ebon
Jennifer McTiernan H.
Frank Mitchell
Roberta Friedman (nominated but unconfirmed)
Benjamin Gardner (staff)

Introductions

Ms. McTiernan asked the Council to move introductions and updates to a later point in the meeting to accommodate guests from the Yale Law School Legal Services Organization.

New Business

Robin Golden, faculty, and Anne O'Hagen, student, from the Yale Law School Legal Services Organization discussed a draft outline of a Policy Paper on school food Ms. O'Hagen has been researching for the Council. The topics for the Policy Paper so far include a federal/state level policy allowing local school districts to participate in Department of Defense bulk commodity purchases, and in particular, increasing participation and perhaps, enabling a pilot program through which CT farms could become part of the DOD program; federal subsidy and nutrition guidelines for school meals through the Child Nutrition Act and related nutrition standards determined by the USDA, and local purchasing guidelines found in public school food service contracts. A second student present at the meeting, Shaan Chaturvedi, from the Yale School of Public Health, has also become involved in the Legal Services Organization Law Clinic's efforts to help the Council research and present policy recommendations for improving school food.

Ms. Engel went into detail on the variety of fresh produce that is available through the Department of Defense school nutrition program ([DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#)). A question was raised: How can the public school system work within the DoD program to improve the variety and source of produce that is available in through it? Ms. Engel pointed out that the Connecticut-based distributor Fowler & Hunting tried to participate in the DOD program by incorporating locally grown food, but after much effort was not permitted to participate. She also pointed out that the New Haven Public Schools Central Kitchen could be capable of preparing a greater variety of food, especially food sourced from local farms, if it could be made available through the DOD

Fresh program. Ms. McTiernan suggested that the LSO students might be interested in meeting with Dave Yandow, head of Fowler & Hunting, possibly incorporating some of the information gleaned from him about sourcing locally into the Policy Paper.

The Council discussed the purpose of the Policy Paper. By analyzing policies on the national, state and local levels, the paper seeks to take into account the complex and inter-woven policies affecting the kind of food urban school districts are able to serve. For example, Ms. O'Hagen pointed out that while it is important to research the development of purchasing guidelines on the local level, it is also necessary to appeal to leaders on a state and federal level for adequate funding to support them. This policy paper will help inform the community of choices it can make in the given its existing resources and how to better leverage resources from leaders on a state and federal leaders.

Ms. Golden added that it is important to also investigate developing a program, like a farm-to-school program, that will educate children and families about eating healthy food and ultimately lead to healthier foods being *consumed*, as opposed to simply offered in schools.

There are many local resources to help with this effort. Jane Suplecki of the CT Department of Agriculture Farm-to-School Program will be contacted about providing the Council with relevant information about sourcing locally. Ms. Engel suggested contacting John Turenne, who is a former Executive Chef for Yale's Berkeley dining hall, was involved in the creation of the Yale Sustainable Food Project, and currently works as a consultant on local food sourcing issues. Ms. Engel will determine whether Mr. Turenne is available to speak to the Council.

Ms. Engel suggested that the Council and the LSO students identify information about the nutritional benefits of food that has not traveled long distances as a means of promoting local food sourcing for public schools. Ms. Friedman also suggested identifying more progressive alternatives to the USDA nutrition standards such as [Institute of Medicine standards for school food](#).

The Council discussed how related unions are working on a national level to remove ARAMARK from school food service contracts. The Council discussed the Policy Paper released by SEIU, Unite-HERE, and AFSCME unions entitled "Putting Kids First? Aramark procurement practices and food quality in New Haven Public Schools." (Full report available at <http://www.campaignforqualityservices.org>.) The Council discussed the statement in the executive summary of the report, which reads, "Local nutrition advocacy groups such as City Seed, the Food Council and Yale's Nutrition Detectives are already working together to help improve New Haven's meal program." Council members expressed concern that the "Food Council" is referenced in the report, even though individuals authoring the report did not come before the Council, nor otherwise engage it in a detailed discussion of these issues. Another concern was that the Council has only recently begun to discuss the issue of school food, while the Wellness Committee - which has effectively been working towards promoting healthier school food for years - was not given credit in the report. In light of these concerns, members discussed whether to request that references to the Council be omitted from this document. Council members voted to request that references to the Council be removed from the report, so that it may best continue to work with all community stakeholders on improving the quality of school food. A request to this

effect will be mailed and emailed to the report's author(s) upon the Council's approval via email of a draft.

Old Business

The Council briefly discussed the upcoming Spring Conference on school food, which has been rescheduled for Thursday, May 22nd. Since there are a limited number of Council meetings leading up to the conference at which the Policy Paper will be presented, LSO students will be asked to have a draft by the March 27th. The May conference has been shortened to a half day. Members suggested that the focus for the Council's presentation at the May conference should be on locally relevant information to encourage greater local, community participation. Information should include clear policy recommendations, nutritional standards, reimbursement rates, as well as path for advocacy on all levels. Mr. Stein suggested that Rep. Rosa DeLauro's Congressional agriculture staffer should be invited to meetings regarding the development of policy recommendations, as well as the May conference.

The Council discussed the final draft of its 2007 Annual Report. Copies of the report should be distributed, to local officials including the Board of Aldermen, the Mayor's Office and Chief of Staff, the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools, the City Community Services agency, the City Health Department, State and federal Representatives, Food Policy Councils in Connecticut, and other local and state stakeholders. Ms. Engel suggested that a revised version of the Hunger Card developed by Council members for Hunger Awareness week in 2007 be included with the Report. The Council voted to accept final report with changes.

News and Updates

The Produce Initiative Committee of Emergency Food Council is looking into recruiting farmers to grow produce for the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, which will pay the farmers for fresh, healthy food. The Rudd Center has been investigating menu labeling, which would list calories in chain restaurant menu items. This topic may be reserved for future Council discussion, along with banning trans-fats as local and public school policy, and possibly conducting area supermarket price surveys. Local agencies will eventually be invited to attend a training session with DataHaven and the Council to help collect data related to community food security. Ms. Engel has been conferring with Central Kitchen production manager, who she reports has been open to trying new recipes. She is interested in working with the Central Kitchen to incorporate healthy ingredients into school meals, but balance it with education for eating healthy foods. Ms. Engel's local purchasing guidelines being developed through a Yale grant-funded project will be completed by end of March. CitySeed is operating a year-round market in Wooster Square, which offers a local, community-gathering place to find Connecticut grown, healthy food, once a month leading up to the market's regular season opening in May.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM.