



New Haven Food Policy Council

Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2008
8:30 AM - 10:30 AM
City Hall, Meeting Room 3

Council Members Present:

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

Introductions/News and Updates

Tagan Engel discussed the purchasing guidelines she is developing for the Yale Sustainable Food Project, which includes information about working with farmers, best practices for different categories of food items, suggestions for questions to ask. Peter Stein noted that the Regional Growth Partnership released its CEDS and is open for comments. Roberta Friedman announced the Rudd Center's website feature sharing information about federal legislation and food policy nationwide. Diana Richter announced two upcoming fundraisers for Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen: Walk-a-thon May 4th, Taste of the Nation at Omni Hotel April 17th. Tagan reported that she testified at the Board of Aldermen Public Hearing on ARAMARK, along with representatives from the CT Food Bank. Roberta noted that she will be meeting with the subcommittees of school food and wellness policy changes for Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act 2009 hosted by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity at the Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington DC.

Old Business

McTiernan discussed distribution of the final report. City officials and Board of Aldermen already received the report. Additional recipients will include state and federal representatives, local food policy councils, and other groups.

The Council discussed the Board of Aldermen Public Hearing at which the Education Committee held an open discussion about the school's food service contract company and current bid process, and gave time to the Board of Education to respond. There will not be an opportunity to change bid language for the current RFB. In the case that an interim company is hired, there might be opportunity to submit new bid language. Tagan noted that school systems successful in changing priorities on food are self operated and have had pressure from the community to bring more

start-up money into the program. Central kitchens are often best utilized by processing more fresh commodities in house and using most of the system-wide labor within the central kitchen.

Jennifer discussed the Campaign for Quality Services changing its report, “Putting Kids First?” to remove references to Food Policy Council, following the council’s request.

Jennifer briefly discussed the draft of the Policy Paper, a complete version of which will be reviewed at the April meeting.

The May Conference on school food is scheduled for May 22, starting at 7:45 AM, at the Yale Medical School. Aldermen and City officials were asked to save the date in a cover letter sent out with the Annual Report. Jennifer discussed the possibility of break out sessions at the Conference, one of which could discuss the Policy Paper and its recommendations. Jennifer also discussed providing a sponsorship of \$500 from the Council toward a local lunch, mailing a notice, printing the Policy Paper or summary, or providing other supplies.

The Council briefly discussed a proposed language for a City Ordinance that would allow residents to keep a small flock of hens. Council members voted to offer support for the language as written (see attached).

New Business

The Council welcomed John Turenne who shared his experience in transitioning institutional food service to fresh, local and sustainable purchasing. John reflected on process working with institutions, pointing out that even under the best conditions, making systemic takes a lot of steps. John’s current work is to bridge the gap between what food service has become and what the ideal is. He noted that the best approach for making changes is to have everybody play a role. Past successful endeavors involved getting everyone around a table, establishing goals, identifying resources and timeline, and deciding upon responsibilities of the groups involved. He suggested treating the school/institution as customer who should write their own specifications. Other suggestions include: develop relationships (who the players are, understanding), assess business (size, skill, budget, infrastructure, purchasing accounts, recipes/menus), collectively create action plan (with timeline), develop recommendations for resources to accomplish action plan, and establish methods for measuring success (cost, customer satisfaction, employee morale) to maintain reforms. Also, the goal of action plan should take account of the big picture including: food, staff/labor/infrastructure, information/communication/education/staff training.

Both self-operated and management-company-operated food service present assets and challenges when making changes. Self-operation can be complicated given specific local dynamics. Large companies can leverage purchasing, a trend starting in the mid- to late 90’s. The focus in purchasing has shifted to procurement of the greatest variety, at the lowest cost, requiring a minimal amount of staff. Brief discussion ensued on cooperating with other progressive school districts for purchasing power. John explained that changing bid specifications is the best means of changing suppliers’ and producers’ products. Having a bid specification is the best way to have success contracting with a management company. He also pointed out that, until a comprehensive assessment is done, it is difficult to know what it would take to make desired changes.

Finally, John shared some questions to bear in mind: Where do customers stand (is it the BOE or students and parents)? Who are the “movers and shakers” in the administration who can create momentum for change? For example the Board of Education, Superintendent, and COO are interested in making positive changes that do not cost anything, and are open to the possibility of creative solutions and small changes. More significant change would require changing the food service’s framework, such as developing new purchasing or RFB guidelines.

The Council discussed the need for finding funding at the federal level, as well as grant funding that could create capacity, education, and build constituency for it.

Jennifer announced that Julie Newman and Elisabeth Moore have resigned from the Council, but Melina Shannon-DiPietro of the Yale Sustainable Food Project is interested in joining. Tagan suggested making additional contact with a representative from the Long Wharf Terminal or a local grocer.

Jennifer discussed meeting attendance, suggesting there be consistent monthly meeting reminders, notification of anticipated absence, and notation of excused and unexcused attendance on meeting minutes. The Council was agreeable.

Upcoming events include the Baum Forum Conference in New York City on Saturday, April 12. There is a meeting at Rosa DeLauro’s office on Friday, March 28, 9:30 AM regarding school food and nutrition. Also on Friday, March 28 at 10:30 AM, the School Food Wellness Sub-committee will meet at the Central Kitchen.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM.