

LOCAL FOOD COUNCIL NETWORK

October 8, 2015 | MEETING SUMMARY

On October 8, 17 people met at Gleaners Community Food Bank for our second in-person meeting in 2015. The agenda included an introduction to the Detroit Food Policy Council's history and work, an update from CRFS on Good Food activities and discussion on how local food councils can contribute with possible funding, work on strategic and advocacy plans with consultants and peer review by other councils, a brief on federal policies from Senator Stabenow's office, and presentation on resources from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition as Michigan Voices for Good Food Policy ends. Four participants joined in a bus tour of the Detroit food system with Michigan Association of Planning Conference participants. Below is an overview of each item and links to more information.

Detroit Food Policy Council – History, Highlights, Future Work

Winona Bynum, Executive Director of the Detroit Food Policy Council, shared the history of the Council, its success and challenges. Take away points were:

- City of Detroit adopted a Food Security Policy drafted by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network in 2008. The Detroit Food Policy Council was one part of that policy;
- The council was created by a unanimous vote of Detroit City Council in 2009. The council has 13 members from different food system sectors, 4 at-large members, a youth member, and 3 local government representatives; it also has 2 full-time staff and 4 committees
- Successes are consistent monthly meetings, 2 food system reports, an agriculture ordinance in 2012, a voter's guide in 2013 for Detroit elections, and annual food summits since 2011
- Key allies are why they can get so much done
- Current projects are a food security policy update, support of economic analysis, a local food finder on their website, the 1st Annual Golden Beet Awards in November and their sixth annual food summit next March

Click [here](#) to access her presentation from the meeting.

MSU Center for Regional Food Systems Good Food Activities Update & Possible Expansion of MLFCN Role

Liz Gensler of CRFS shared information about the Center's current activities and networks. She explained how CRFS sees local food councils and our network as uniquely positioned to bring a variety of food system actors together on a local level to further develop the collaboration infrastructure in Michigan to advance good food work. CRFS is considering offering small grants to build capacity of existing local councils and to start new councils. The grants could be used for operations, strategic planning, food system evaluation, training, data collection or travel funds to network meetings. Expectations for grant recipients may include participation in MLFCN,

contributing to shared measurement, a connection with the Good Food Steering Committee, mentorship of other councils, participation in the grant review committee and/or sharing of lessons at the end of the grant.

When asked for feedback, representatives of local food councils said they would appreciate opportunities for partnerships, such as Washtenaw County partnering with DFPC to create a voter guide. They also expressed the need for structure and organizations to sustainably plan. They also wanted opportunities to share other than meetings, since some people cannot attend during the day. They thought there should be separate pools of funding for new and established councils. Participants expressed a need to build the field of food work overall, especially at the local level. They saw a need to work with others across the state. A public awareness campaign about the food system was suggested, to establish a common language. They would welcome coaching.

In terms of the logistics of the proposed grant program, they welcomed a role on the review team. When the idea of a match was suggested, the councils expressed that an in-kind donation of time would be more realistic and palatable than a monetary match. Guidelines for the funding would need to be clear. Councils said that a \$2500 grant could have a great impact on their growth.

At the close of this portion of the program, facilitators asked councils present to share their policy successes:

- Detroit Food Policy Council restated the policy changes shared in their presentation
- Washtenaw County Food Policy Council succeeded with Washtenaw County passing a local food purchasing policy and is currently advocating for a plastic bag ban
- Macomb Food Collaborative saw a local purchasing policy passed by Macomb County
- Ottawa County Food Policy Council has helped local food banks adopt Healthy Eating Policies and assisted the Holland Farmers Market to retain EBT capability
- The Food System Workgroup in the Lansing area concentrates on programming rather than policy

Advocacy and Strategy Plans

Jean Doss, a government affairs consultant from Lansing working with CRFS, started out by briefly reviewing the handouts given out as part of the previous webinar. Since different groups were at different points with advocacy planning, the councils were broken into two smaller groups: Macomb Food Collaborative and the Food Systems Workgroup in one group; and Detroit Food Policy Council, Washtenaw County Food Policy Council and Ottawa County Food Policy Council the other group.

Macomb Food Collaborative and the Food Systems Workgroup do not generally work in the policy realm. The discussion centered on small steps to invite policy makers into the discussion and also how to efficiently manage multiple agendas within groups. The other groups did work intensively with policy change and shared their experiences and challenges. At the end, Jean asked groups to share their answers to two questions. See summary below, with local council making or echoing the statement in parenthesis:

What do you know now that you wish you knew then?

- Keep it simple. Know you can't do it all and narrow work to 4-5 items (Detroit)
- Find the right way to engage multiple groups, knowing each group might need to be approached differently (Washtenaw)
- Importance of paid staff, currently feel stymied due to lack of paid staff (Washtenaw)
- How to make money to create behavior change and how to get established in a new community (new Detroit resident)
- How you engage community, where are other people to get involved and how to rally them (Macomb)
- Act as resource/forum for policy conversations even if not going to take stance and advocate yourself (Macomb)
- Who you affiliate with is very important, such as government or collaboration with health departments. The Food System Workgroup cannot get elected officials to join them, perhaps because they do not have a government connection (Food System Workgroup in the Lansing area)
- Health departments have state support and policy expertise to effect public change (Ottawa, Washtenaw, Food System Workgroup in the Lansing area)

Who are the players that are most difficult to connect with?

- People outside of the "food bubble"
- Municipal leaders (Detroit, Washtenaw, Macomb, Food System Workgroup in the Lansing area)
- Farmers (Washtenaw, Ottawa). Ottawa mentioned that they wished they would have worked more to show farmers how the Council could help them and was there to do more than just ask them to donate more food.
- Broader community (Washtenaw, Macomb)

Jean closed by sharing a legislative tracking report (find a copy at this [link](#)). She encouraged participants to keep tabs on legislation as it moves through the Michigan House and Senate. Her contact information has changed recently to jdoss@capitol-services.org and phone number of 517-372-0860.

Federal Policy Update

Terry Campbell from the office of U.S. Senator Stabenow gave an update on federal policy. She reported that work on the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act has come to a halt. The mark-up is on pause and nothing is scheduled at this point. Spending on feeding programs has been extended through early December via a continuing resolution.

Terry shared how, in the current environment in the U.S. House, action is difficult. She recommended participants keep the following in mind when communicating with federal policy-makers:

- General guidelines are helpful
- Policy makers need to know the specifics but also the degrees of freedom
- Compelling stories make a difference

She gave out copies of urban agriculture resources, which can be found [here](#).

Sticky Note Exercise on Activities, Challenges & Priorities

During lunch, participants were asked to write down their council's activities, challenges and priorities. We will develop a survey for those councils who did not attend to combine with this information to create a snapshot of what local food councils are doing across Michigan. The themes for the information gathered at the meeting were:

- Almost all of the councils had challenges with funding and sustainability
- Education and community engagement are priorities for many of the councils
- Projects for a number of the councils were annual conferences

End of Michigan Voices for Good Food Policy

Lindsey Scalera, the grassroots organizer for Michigan Voices for Good Food Policy, shared lessons learned from the now-ended project of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). Lindsey hit the highlights from a presentation done at a national conference (see at this link). Main points were:

- A grassroots model of engagement for good food policy based on storytelling and media, education and learning, grassroots action, relationship and network building is rooted in the essential question: How do we engage diverse grassroots communities in advocacy for good food policy?
- The three steps to stay engaged are: stay informed, take action, and spread the word.
- Policy Alert sign ups from NSAC are available at <http://sustainableagriculture.net/>

OUTCOMES:

- 17 people from 5 Local Food Councils and other agencies and businesses had the chance to network and learn from each other.
- Increased network knowledge about how to advocate for policy change
- Increased network knowledge about the food system in Detroit and the work of the Detroit Food Policy Council
- Increased network knowledge about work and challenges of local food councils across Michigan

GOALS FOR NEXT MEETINGS:

- Further explore CRFS grant program
- Training on structural racism in the food system
- Resources on membership development

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