

Food and Nutrition Commission Minutes
Monday, November 4, 2013
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Ramsey County Plato Office Building

Members present: Bernie Hesse, Colleen Schlieper, Diane Dodge, Helene Murray, Pat Trotter

Others present: Anne Hunt, Jaya Ginter, Julie Seiber, Alex Liebman (Twin Cities Agricultural Land Trust), Eleonore Wesserle (West Side Community Organization)

The meeting was chaired by Bernie Hesse in the absence of the two co-chairs.

Brief updates included:

The East Side Food and Wellness Hub and the East Side Gardening are sponsoring a Harvest Dinner on Nov. 12, 6-8 pm at the First Covenant Church, 1280 Arcade Street.

The City of New Brighton has formed an Urban Farming Taskforce to determine if regulations on urban farming are needed.

West Side Community Organization is hosting a Q. & A. regarding the Urban Ag. amendments on Tues., Nov. 5, at 3:30 at 1 West Water Street.

The Urban Agriculture zoning amendments were discussed at length. A hearing is scheduled at City Council for 5:30 on November 6. Bernie and Diane will attend.

There was consensus that the proposed amendments will be an important step forward for urban agriculture in Saint Paul. Bernie Hesse commented that these changes will increase food access in the city, clarify the status of urban farmers, and at the same time, respect neighborhoods. The members agreed to submit a letter in support of the changes and Helene Murray said that she would edit it.

Concerns discussed included issues around hoop houses. The time allowed is not sufficient to use at both ends of the growing season and the size allowed without a building permit is insufficient for most users. Farmers' market regulations were another concern, particularly having to get permission from the Planning Commission to sell items other than farm produce. The farmers who sell at the WSCO sell other items to help make it profitable enough to be there at all. Permission from the Planning Commission seems like an unnecessary step.

There was discussion about the 100 ppm lead level allowed without taking extra measures. Anne Hunt said that number came from the PCA. The current language says that if it is over 100 ppm, a farmer/community garden can submit a site plan with raised beds or soil

barriers. The discussion was that children might be in the gardening area and there is concern about lead in the air from running around, digging, etc. The University of Minnesota Extension Service Master Gardener program suggests that the lead level be less than 300 ppm. Lead isn't absorbed much by vegetables, according to the Diane Dodge, a Master Gardener. Another concern was the cost of fees to start a community garden or urban agriculture business and the additional expenses of a shed and, potentially, access to water which can be \$4,000 to \$10,000.

The members wanted to send another letter in support of having a Food and Farm Bill passed by Congress. Three Minnesota legislators are on the conference committee—Sen. Klobuchar, Reps. Peterson and Walz. A draft for the letter will be ready at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30.

2014 MTG. DATES	MEETING DETAILS: 90 W. Plato Blvd., Saint Paul, 55107 , 5:30 – 7:30 pm
January 6, 2014	Plato Conference Center, 1 st Floor
February 3, 2014	Plato Conference Center, 1 st Floor
March 3, 2014	Plato Conference Center, 1 st Floor
April 7, 2014	Star Room, 2 nd Floor
May 5, 2014	Plato Conference Center, 1 st Floor
June 2, 2014	Plato Conference Center, 1 st Floor
July 7, 2014	Star Room, 2 nd Floor
August 4, 2014	Plato Conference Center, 1 st Floor
September 8, 2014	Plato Conference Center, 1 st Floor
October 6, 2014	Star Room, 2 nd Floor
November 3, 2014	Star Room, 2 nd Floor
December 1, 2014	Star Room, 2 nd Floor