

Minutes

St. Paul/Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission workshop/meeting on October 11, 2010, 4:00-8:00, at Neighborhood House at Wellstone Center, 179 Robie Street East, St. Paul, 55107

Members attending were Becky Meyer, Bernie Hesse, Colleen Schlieper, Hai Truong, Helene Murray, Katie Koecher, Leonard Russo, Linda Littrell, Metric Giles, Nadja Berneche, and Seth Kuhl-Stennes.

Others attending were Branden Born (presenter), Julie Seiber (staff), Margaret Adamek (consultant), Anne Hunt, Vanne Owens-Hayes, Lindsey Hoeft, Laurie Burns, Marijo Wunderlich, Tamara Downs-Schwei, June Mathiowetz, Deb Haugen, Margaret Humphrey, Jeanette Fordyce, Collie Graddick, Samantha Henningson, and Jaya Ginter.

Maggi Adamek gave a brief introduction of Dr. Branden Born from the Seattle/King County area. Dr. Born provided background information about the initial Acting Food Policy Council which he worked to develop. The choice to use “acting” in front of Food Policy Council was a strategic choice to address the fact the group was not recognized formally or receiving any funding. Eight to ten people met over the course of 2 years to define the goals & visions of the Food Policy Council. A special retreat was held with a variety of people to develop the focus of the Council. This retreat helped the group decide not to use the formal Robert Rules method for running meetings, but instead a consensus group style. A “five-finger approach” was to be used for voting with 1 finger meaning not supportive and five fingers being most supportive. This method was best for the members to vote, discuss when there was not consensus, and then make a collective decision with all the information on the table.

Dr. Born provided the Commission members with strategies to use when developing and establishing their Food Policy Council. Branden pointed out the need for both process members and project members. He stated the Commission must recognize both types of members are important. The Seattle/King County group developed two op-ed pieces with press releases on topics of political interest, for example, a piece on the Farm Bill and one on climate change (which was related to the food system in a large way). The Council developed white papers on these topics with analysis done by research students at the University.

Dr. Born identified some areas of challenge within the Council. The community engagement strategies were okay, but not great according to Branden. The Council publicized their group via list serves and networking. The Acting Council held public meetings where people could sit in and hear what the Council was doing. Eventually they recognized they had not been engaging the immigrant population among others. Decided to invest in better outreach activities and invite more people to the table. Another challenge was attribution for work done especially when using research students or other analysis groups. Turf issues with governments not being as supportive were also challenges. The Council tried to help the government groups recognize they were a bridge, not a threat. The way to improve this challenge was to shift the language. For example, defining what “local foods” is can lead to many arguments, but if collective groups can recognize their common values behind eating locally they can work to be supportive of each others efforts. Dr. Born addressed how it is another challenge on how to prioritize issues based on who’s interested in the work being done. The group needs to be opportunistic and strategize and sometimes work with the big ticket items. Having an academic, such as Branden

Born, who is not representing the city or the county, was a value to the Council. This person can do the “dirty” work.

Dr. Born gave the Commission members some of the lessons learned from Seattle which included:

- Be patient because systems and environment change is a long multi-year process.
- Learn how to make decisions as a group and manage internal conflicts.
- Remember to not threaten others who are doing the same work, instead bring them in, harness their energy, and work together.
- Recognize champions in elected official regimes, how to make lasting partners, and strategize your messaging.
- Prioritize your topics of focus- short, medium, and long-term goals, make them relevant.
- Recognize each Commission member is an expert for your region; keep in mind “evidence-based approaches” and the need for a base to back up ideas/recommendations.

Once the background, strategies, challenges, and lessons learned were presented by Dr. Born the Commission members asked clarifying questions. One was how to reach and include the multi-cultural groups. Dr. Born believed their Council did not do this well in the first place, but then went back and starting inviting other people to the table, such as Native tribes and youth groups.

Recap of information:

1. Recognize the strategic processes involved.
2. Develop a decision marking process that works for your group. Seattle/King County chose consensus model.
3. Communication strategies to use- editorials, mass media, list serves.
4. Community engagement strategies- find those in the “halls of power”, political, and foundations.
5. Invest in on-going learning of Council members- evidence bases to inform and intra-learning by group members.
6. Need good information to make good decisions.
7. Strategic about issues to work on- issues with leverage may be best at first.
8. Focused where they have impact- “low-hanging fruit.”

Maggi Adamek provided a recap on the Homegrown MSP presentation and how they developed their four areas of focus along with task force development and implementation strategies. The Commission members identified their “buckets” of focus (*see below for list*). Members of the Commission shared their opinions of prioritizes for this group and the areas of focus they cannot forget (*see below for list*). The Commission members also shared their ideas for citizen engagement and where to find the people and involve them (*see below for list*).

Next meeting:

November 1, 2010, 5:30-7:30
Ramsey County Public Library, Roseville
2180 North Hamline
Roseville 55113

Things to consider:

- Process that involves others- can we debrief as a group?- reflect on the last 3 sessions
- Need to develop agenda-setting role of commission in our own work
- What and how can we connect with work in county/city?
- What is transparency and communication of this Commission

The “buckets” of prioritization/focus developed by Commission members:

- Food Literacy
- Food Access/Affordability
- Food Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Urban Agriculture Initiative

Over-arching theme through = structural racism and economic, social, and environmental impact!

All areas of priority identified by Commission members:

- Food pre education- food values, food literacy, summer activities, nutrition
- Access to community based food
- Creating health, sustainable people and economy
- Good jobs in the food sector
- Affordable, healthy food
- Understanding of social, environmental impacts
- Urban agriculture umbrella
- Small-scale entrepreneurship
- What is our timeline (landscape)
- Regionalize food shed
- Cohesive, cost-effective distribution system
- Affect policy in support of local foods
- Inclusion of race, age, etc, in all levels of our work
- Build in implementation process
- Ongoing review of performance mods.
- Access to gardens
- Access to healthy foods
- Composting
- Food as community development

Process ideas for initial involvement:

- ✓ Web-based information
- ✓ Check ways to inform and engage
- ✓ Community listening sessions
- ✓ Attend existing community meetings
- ✓ Visit recreation centers or community events where people are gathered
- ✓ Connecting one-on-one