



Food System Committee

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

4:30-6:00 PM

Zoom and in-person

Minutes

Members Present:

Name	Sector	Present
Margaret Gerard	Local Sales Farming	X
Nikki Oleson	Processing/Distribution	X
Riley Sweeney	Food Access	X
Noelle Beecroft	Nutrition/ Public Health	X
Sean Hopps	Labor	X
Trevor Gearhart	Natural Resources	X
Rhys-Thorvald Hansen	Whatcom Food Network	X
Paul Burrill	Fishing	x
Rob Dhaliwal	Export Sales Farming	

Others Present: Ali Jensen, WCHD and FSC staff; Kate Steensma, Hannah, Laura Ridenour, members of the public.

Call to order: Riley started the meeting at 4:34 pm.

Land Acknowledgement

Determination of Quorum

Quorum.

Approval of minutes

Sean motioned, Trevor seconded. All approved.

Public Comment

Kate Steensma was there to contribute to the discussion around Goal 5.

Ejido Community Farm Update

Sean shared updates on the Ejido project, a land trust land property with a farmworker-owned farm. The farm has been in operation since 2017 and the County Council recently wrote a letter of support for the farm to receive local community project funding in the State capital budget. Ejido Community Farm is relevant to 1.1.1, 1.1.2, and 2.1.6 in the Food System Plan and the support from council is a good sign for things to come.

Food System Plan: final version, council date, asks

The final (but still updatable) version of the plan can be found on the food system committee webpage.

Riley will present to Public Works and Health Committee on April 11th (time TBD) and then again at the 6pm council meeting. He will share the plan and introduce a resolution, committing to the plan. The plan will be on the April 25th council agenda as well.

Riley encouraged people to write letters to their councilmembers, encouraging them to pass the plan. He will circulate some talking points and an email. Committee members are asked to join for the April 25th. There will be space for public comment during that meeting.

Implementation

Ali shared some other communities' implementation plans.

Ali offered to create a draft implementation plan for the Committee to look at in May. Ideally, the plan will have small, medium, and large-scale groups of actions, will include those key categories, list of potential partners, potential leads, resources for implementation. She suggested subcommittees, as a means to invite more people to participate. Funding needs will need to be considered.

Laura Ridenour has some advice for implementation. She suggested connecting with Jennifer from the port of Bellingham (contractor) to see how the port's plan is being implemented. She also suggested having an agreed-upon group process and decision-making tool for carrying out implementation.

Sean added that leadership identification in outreach and development is important to flag in this process.

Indicators

Having indicators will help us track and see how we are doing. Indicators are proxies for the well-being of the whole population. WFN used indicators in previous WFN CFA updates. Ali asked committee members to start thinking of indicators and said the Health Department's internal data team can support the development and collection of those indicators. Rhys and Trevor (and Laura) offered to support the development of draft indicators.

The group shared desired indicators, such as farmers market foot traffic counts, training/pipeline viability, and new farms opening and closing. Kate asked that any indicator around greenhouse gas emissions from be really clear about what kind of farming practices are happening and other considerations (ie she has cows, but they are pastured and their milk is sold locally, as opposed to GHG emissions from trucking). Wage theft and defining a living wage were also suggested.

Other discussion

Margaret had some edits to the food system plan document. Most were cosmetic and will be addressed in the next round of edits (likely after April 11th council meeting). Pages 7 and 19, Margaret noted, have some language that needs some refinement. Ali and Margaret will make edits together.

The group discussed celebrating the food system plan. For the committee, the May meeting will be a celebration. Currently, it will be held at the Garden Level Conference Room in the Civic Building in Bellingham. The WFN offered to help host a larger community celebration.

Next meeting: May 23rd from 4:30-6:00 pm

Meeting adjourned at 5:50pm