

MINUTES
LINN COUNTY FOOD SYSTEMS COUNCIL
Thursday, January 24th, 2019

The Linn County Food Systems Council meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. in conference room 3A/3B at the Jean Oxley Public Service Center, 935 2nd St. SW, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

CALL TO ORDER:

INTRODUCTIONS: Those present introduced themselves to the group.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT Laura Seyfer, At-Large, Co-Chair

:

RaeAnn Gordon, ISU Extension
Pam Oldham, Medical Provider/Registered Dietician
Lynette Richards, Restaurant/Institution
August Stolba, Feed Iowa First, Co-Chair
Chris Thoms, At-Large

ABSENT: Emma Johnson, Grower/Producer

Kim Guardado, HACAP
Sofia Mehaffey, Horizons
John Huntington, Food Distribution/Processing
Joe Stutler, At-Large

OTHERS

PRESENT Stephanie Schrader, Community Well Being Liaison

:

Kaitlin Emrich, Linn County Public Health
Cindy Feister, Linn County Public Health
Jim Hodina, Linn County Public Health
Brianna Gabel, Linn County Public Health
Jason Evans, Linn County Solid Waste Agency
Giselle Bruskewitz, Field to Family
Megan Morley, Mercy Medical Center

STAFF: Les Beck, Director Linn County Planning and Development
Mike Tertinger, Linn County Planning and Development, Staff
Jessie Black, Recording Secretary
Jake Kundert, IVRCD

Reappointments

Reappointments will take place at the next meeting on February 28th, when Sofia Mehaffey is present.

Election of Officers

Seyfer offered to remain on the council as co-chair. Stolba offered to be another co-chair. The nominations were approved by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Thoms, seconded by Oldham and carried, all members present voting yes, to approve the November 29, 2018 LCFSC minutes as submitted.

Monthly Budget Report

Tertinger said the remaining account balance as of the calendar year-end is \$3,975.00.

Guest Speaker Presentations with Q/A

Jim Hodina & Brianna Gabel , Linn County Public Health

Hodina presented a PowerPoint highlighting a few of the biggest food-insecurity issues within Iowa, and the work plan he's created to help resolve these issues. A few of the main points were:

- One in 7 children in Linn County do not have enough food to eat. One in 9 residents are classified as "food insecure"
- Almost 20% of all waste in Iowa is food waste.
- 13,000 tons of food waste annually goes into the Linn County Landfill
- 40% of produced food goes uneaten

Hodina proposed the idea of "Food Rescue" program, defined as the process of collecting over-produced (donated) food from caterers, restaurants, etc. and distributing it to people in need through local service organizations.

Hodina explained that the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act protects the food donors, in the event consumers get ill from donated food.

He also informed the council of the food rescue app, Chowbank. Chowbank allows restaurants, institutions, etc., to post their over-produced food on the app, giving local service organizations the opportunity to claim it.

Beck wondered how much of an issue transportation posed for the local service organizations and/or the consumers. Gabel explained that each organization handles their transportation differently.

Hodina did not get funding from EPA for the work plan, however he has made a budget request to the Board of Supervisors to provide funding for some of the proposed initiatives. He believes some type of social media platform would benefit; allowing for networking, tracking of transactions, amount of food recovered, etc. Direct costs for start-up of the proposed food rescue program would be approximately \$22,000.

Brianna Gabel, Linn County Public Health

Gabel presented several different Iowa initiative practices, giving a brief explanation on how each organization contributes to their local community. She mentioned that a lot of Iowa schools have recently begun participating in Share Tables; a program in which food-insecure students are given the option to take home leftover food. Gabel explained that in order to participate, each school must apply for a special variance, allowing them to re-serve un-packaged goods.

Beck asked Gabel if there were any local schools participating in the Share Table program. Gabel confirmed some were, but stated that none in our district have applied for the special variance to expand food options beyond pre-packaged goods only.

Some of the council members shared their past experiences of working with similar programs; what worked, what didn't, etc. Many of them also offered solutions for the issues they've come across while working with said programs.

Thoms questioned how much nutritional balance there is within food rescue programs, explaining that much of our population is overweight or obese and insisted that this be taken into consideration by all food rescue programs. Gabel confirmed that organizations participating in these programs have requested healthy foods as an attempt to combat the problem.

Barnhart argued that sometimes, when fresh produce is donated to families, the families don't know what to do with it, thus contributing more to waste. Gabel explained that some food distributors are providing educational classes or recipes for donated food in order to reduce waste.

Tertinger asked Hodina and Gabel what they find their biggest barriers to be. Hodina responded, stating that transportation is their greatest issue. Gabel mentioned time; getting food to people before it goes bad.

Jason Evans, Linn County Solid Waste Agency

Evans explained his role as the Director of Education for the Cedar Rapids-Linn County Solid Waste Agency. He showed the council drone footage of the landfill. A couple of key points Evans shared while presenting the drone footage are as follows:

- On average, the landfill takes on 500 tons of waste per day, down from 620 tons nine years ago
- Methane gas produced from the food waste in landfill is enough to power 1,100 homes in the area around the landfill; 1.6 megawatts of production each day.

Evans played a song for the council members, about dirt, explaining how all food has a connection to soil.

Evans informed the council that the Linn County Solid Waste Agency operates the region's largest composting facility. He explained that they are currently producing compost at a rate of 30,000 tons annually. Compost is free to residents; commercial entities are charged a small fee. This composting facility is at Mt. Trashmore.

Evans presented a video on composting. He explained that there must be an equal amount of carbon-rich waste and nitrogen-rich waste in a composting pile in order for it to be successful. Many times, people who compost at home, end up with too much nitrogen-rich food waste, causing their pile to rot.

Evans informed the council members that there are two schools in our community that have had almost little to no food waste for the last seven or eight years; All Saints Catholic Elementary School and St. Pius Catholic Elementary School. Transportation costs are often the reason other schools are not able to compost. Evans said they do not have enough money to transport their waste to the composting facility every week.

Beck wondered what kind of truck is used to haul compost. Evans stated that any kind of lined-truck would suffice. Beck wondered if the County might be able to be a transportation partner in some manner in the future.

Giselle Bruskewitz, Field to Family

Bruskewitz introduced herself as the Food Hub Manager with Field to Family, based out of Johnson County. She explained that there are several different models of food hubs. She informed the council that the USDA defines food hubs as, "A place that manages the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, marketing of locally and regionally produced foods".

She explained Field to Family's role in the community as:

- Working directly with growers for procurement purposes
- Farm-to-School programs
- Farm stand program within USDA defined food deserts
- Local Food-Finder
- Host events

- Food Hub

Bruskewitz said she has partnered with Iowa Valley RC&D to develop an inventory management system where every week, farmers upload a list of what products are available from their farm, at what price. From there, the food hub can share this list with their customers, allowing customers to order through the online portal. Field to Family will then take the product to the hub, where it is stored for a short period of time, issue out invoices, then deliver to the customer.

Bruskewitz let the council know she has also partnered with Table to Table; sharing office and warehouse space.

She informed the Council of an upcoming meeting later in the same evening (January 24th), at the Cedar Rapids Public Library from 5 p.m. - 6 p.m. She also mentioned that the 2019 Local Foods Roundtable Discussion would be held on February 9th at 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at Merge in Iowa City. Bruskewitz invited all growers within a 100-mile radius. She asked that if any council members had additional resources, she would be happy to discuss.

Beck asked where farmers are currently coming from for the food hub. Bruskewitz answered that most are in Johnson County, some in Linn County, but also a few within the contiguous counties. Beck also wondered where the purchasers are located. Bruskewitz stated mostly Johnson County, some Linn. In addition, Beck questioned how she solved the transportation problem that seems to be prevalent in all food-related programs. Bruskewitz explained that Field to Family will be hiring a driver within the next month.

Thoms asked if Bruskewitz has a facility to clean foods coming in. Bruskewitz said Field to Family is not doing any processing at the time; the warehouse just holds food at temperature, and maintains the facility in order to keep food safe. Farmers follow FSMA guidelines, so all food is assumed to be of good quality.

Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 10:43 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

Jessie Black, Recording Secretary

August Stolba, Co-Chair