

MINUTES
LINN COUNTY FOOD SYSTEMS COUNCIL
Thursday, April 25th, 2019

The Linn County Food Systems Council meeting was called to order at 9:04 A.M. at NewBoCo Café in the Geonetric Building, 415 12th Ave SE Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401.

CALL TO ORDER:

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Laura Seyfer, At-Large, Co-Chair
RaeAnn Gordon, ISU Extension
Lynette Richards, Restaurant/Institution
August Stolba, Feed Iowa First, Co-Chair
Chris Thoms, At-Large
Emma Johnson, Grower/Producer
Sofia Mehaffey, Horizons
Joe Stutler, At-Large

ABSENT: Kim Guardado, HACAP
Pam Oldham, Medical Provider/Registered Dietician

OTHERS

PRESENT: Stephanie Schrader, Community Well Being Liaison
Cindy Feister, Linn County Public Health
Ilsa Dewald, Johnson County
David Tominsky, Chief Relationship Officer at NewBoCo
Ted Myers, Co-owner of Urban Greens
James Patton, Owner of Midwest Mushroom Company
Ronan DeCarlo, Manager of Urban Greens

STAFF: Mike Tertinger, Linn County Planning and Development, Staff
Charlie Nichols, Planning & Zoning Division Manager
Jessie Black, Recording Secretary
Jake Kundert , IVRCD

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Johnson, seconded by Mehaffey and carried, all members present voting yes, to approve the March 28, 2019 LCFSC minutes as submitted.

Monthly Budget Report

Tertinger said the remaining account balance as of April 25th, 2019 is \$3,844.15.

Introductions

All members of the council and each guest speaker introduced themselves to the group.

Learning Session (Part V) with guest facilitator Scott Koepke

Intro/Recap

Koepke reiterated the need for diversification within our food system. He explained that the goal of this meeting is to identify some policy recommendations that can be presented to the Board of Supervisors to support the Food System Council's goals.

Guest Speaker Presentations

David Tominsky, Chief Relationship Officer at NewBoCo

Tominsky briefly shared some background information on the Geometric building and NewBoCo. NewBoCo started in 2014; he has been with the company since. His role as Chief Relationship Officer is to manage an innovation team. Tominsky explained that the goal of NewBoCo is to emphasize on the entrepreneurial mindset of small business by investing in them and helping to build their business.

Tertinger wondered if NewBoCo would be interested in partnering with the Food Systems Council to host a summit or program related to food systems. Tominsky expressed interest in collaborating.

Ted Myers, Co-Founder of Urban Greens & Ronan DeCarlo, Operations Manager

Myers presented a PowerPoint about Urban Greens, sharing some of their history. He explained that Urban Greens started in early spring of 2017. They began with limited production space and funding. After determining their market, they began to produce microgreens. They first tested out their product at the Iowa City Farmer's Market. The community seemed receptive & supportive, but they later realized that the average consumer had no idea what to do with microgreens. Myers said that local restaurants were very excited about purchasing local microgreens, however, delivering became too much of a hassle for the company, so they were forced to stop.

Shortly after, Urban Greens shifted from traditional soil-based growing to hydroponics. Instead of microgreens, they began producing baby greens to sell at a larger volume and reach a broader customer base. Myers explained that having the label "locally grown" was a focal point of sales; other growers did not have the freshness and quality that Urban Greens could provide. Their new method of growing allowed for more sustainability and provided them with more opportunity to move locations and continue their business.

DeCarlo introduced himself and shared what sparked his initial interest in Urban Greens. He expressed his appreciation and gratitude for being given the opportunity to work for such a great company.

Koepke asked if Urban Greens had plans of becoming a franchise. Myers said that would be ideal, but not yet possible.

Tertinger wondered if Johnson County was helpful in the process of starting a home-based business. Myers explained that he had a lot of concern when first starting out, but after working with the county, found out there were not a lot of restrictions, other than keeping neighbor complaints to a minimum. Myers has not had any problems to-date.

James Patton, Co-Owner of Midwest Mushroom Company

Patton introduced himself and Midwest Mushroom Company to the group. They are located in Hiawatha and grow gourmet mushrooms year-round. Patton said his company was started a year and a half ago and they are still in the process of exploring their market. He explained that they are currently selling to seven or eight local restaurants, but would like to expand. Patton added that he built a sterilizer out of a walk-in cooler.

Patton explained that his company is able to save on labor due to the small number of employees and Patton's ability to create equipment out of every-day items, such as the sterilizer made from a cooler.

Q/A

Tertinger asked Patton and Myers if, hypothetically, a grant from the Food Systems Council would be beneficial to their companies. He insisted that identifying more local needs for funding will help the Food Systems Council obtain their own grant program, approved by the Board of Supervisors. Myers said a grant would be extremely helpful and added that he is currently working with some investors that may help in the future.

Tominsky thought a grant would greatly benefit anyone starting a new business. He wondered funding could potentially help pay for education from a business development center.

Next Steps

Stolba announced that the Food Systems Council has been invited to Dubuque to attend a meeting with Dawn Thilmany, a food systems representative from Colorado, on June 5th. He suggested sending a few representatives from the council to attend and report back at the June 27th meeting.

Koepke asked the council members to continue recruiting members, as there are two vacancies left.

Gordon announced that she and Tertinger attended a food systems conference in Des Moines a couple of weeks ago. They will share some highlights with the group at the next meeting.

Tertinger wondered if any of the guest speakers would be willing to support FSC's presentation to the Board of Supervisors regarding proposed grant program. Myers and Tominsky offered to help.

Nichols brought up the Wellmark grant program, explaining that the previously discussed Food Systems Assessment could potentially be funded through this grant. The application is due Mid-June. Nichols asked for letters of support. First, they need to define scope of project, then figure out who would perform assessment.

Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 10:31 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

Jessie Black, Recording Secretary

, Co-Chair