

12/14/09

Burlington Food Council Minutes

Facilitator: Mandy Davis

Note taker: Benjy Adler

Timekeeper: Sam Fuller (NOFA-VT)

In attendance: Mandy Davis, Benjy Adler, Jessica Hyman, Jen Cirillo, Carrie Mclane, Rachel Schattman, Arshinder Kaur, Rebecca O'Reilly, William Robb, Jenn McGowan, Sarah Heim, Sam Fuller, Bobby Young, Jennifer Green

Committee updates:

1. **Brighter Planet:** despite Benjy's best efforts, we did not win the grant. Should we do it again? Benjy: we can, but every time we try, we burn a little bit of social capital. Jen: I agree with Benjy...I'd rather put that people power towards a 100k grant. Decision: we will not move forward, but will monitor it for the moment.
2. **USDA food grant:** Association w/Africans Living in VT have submitted this grant with help from George Wright. Food Council does have a role in it to help organize some community food circles, to do asset mapping in Burlington & Winooski. If we do get the funding, we can talk more about what that would look like. There is no money coming our way, it's a minor role.
3. **Website:** site map should be completed today. There will be a blog...because ppl who want to post info about events can post & tag it as a volunteer, which will automatically update the volunteer page. If we all do it, it could really simplify things to create a clearing house if you are interested in volunteering. The people at Union Street Media have been great so far and very interested in creating a website that works. There is an opportunity with the BFSP to build onto the site.
4. **Matt Tucker has asked if the Council would like to sponsor a group of UVM students from a social marketing class** to help build content for the website and possibly make a video for the site. Is everyone ok with that? YES! If anyone wants to help with the website or write the proposal for the class, it would be helpful. Mandy does plan to call a Strategic Planning Committee in January to work on website content.
5. **Jen Cirillo: Burlington Food School Project** got a Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Grant, but they cut 15k less than in previous years. We're waiting for the award letter, we'll know what we got. We did put in \$1000 for Burlington Food Council...we'll see how GMCR decides to divide up the money.
6. **Michelle Obama invitation:** Advisory Board for Burlington Area Community Gardens is inviting Michelle Obama to come and tour the gardens...to help tell the world how far VT has come to achieve a more sustainable food system. Hoping to have some community supporters of the visit with a letter signed by the chair of the board & the mayor as well as a list of orgs that would welcome them. The request is for a logo & an electronic version of your signature. Gary Hirschberg has agreed to put in a plug once the letter is sent. **Mandy:** how does everyone feel about the Council signing the letter? Everyone is ok.

Upcoming speakers:

Next: Bobby w/BFSP. Followed by someone from Parks & Rec...possibly Lisa Coven?

Education & Enrichment: Guest speaker is Rebecca O'Reilly from VT Campaign to End Childhood Hunger. Rebecca is here to speak about what the Campaign does in general & the Cooking for Life Program.

What is hunger? What is the definition?

USDA uses two different terms:

1. Low food security
2. Very low food security

Campaign uses "the old terms":

1. Families that are food insecure: this family has food to eat, but probably low quality. Not a lot of variety. Possibly struggling to pay for food on their own, but they have a good safety net in food stamps, food shelf, cooking skills. Typically, food is a struggle for these families. The food budget is being cut to pay for other costs.
2. Very low food security/food insecure with hunger: mom or dad is skipping dinner so the kids can have more. When the food safety net just isn't there. The food money is running out before the end of the month. Child goes to school where there is no food available.

How many families in VT are food insecure? 81,000 families. 1 in 6 are struggling w/food, 1 in 8 are food insecure, 1 in 10 are food insecure with hunger. Of course we want the best food available, but we start with just making sure food is getting in the bellies.

We work with **FRAC (Food Research Action Center)**, our umbrella/national level org.

What does the Campaign do?

We work on "when the food shelf runs out of food." We work to increase food security on the policy level. We advocate for the Federal Wheels Program. Ex: free breakfast became available for all students. We have registered lobbyists in Montpelier advocating on our behalf.

We also work on improving food quality from federal programs.

We do outreach to ensure that everyone who qualifies is using these programs/funds and also helping to ensure they get the highest quality they can in this process.

Where is hunger in VT the worst? In rural areas where ppl don't have access to a food

shelf because there is none in the area or they can't drive there.

Hunger has been getting worse in VT recently. VT is the 6th hungriest state in the country. Three years ago, we were the 14th. Why? The economy. VT just increased eligibility (now ppl who are 185% of poverty can access food vs 135% which is the federal standard). Thus...this situation should improve.

Cooking For Life (CFL):

- different from the rest of the Campaign's work. It is a direct service program, one on one with families to help increase their food resources, to play an active role.
- It is a statewide program.
- Idea is to give families the tools they need to prepare fresh ingredients in their homes...teaching skills on how to prepare food.
- 6 week series of classes...once a week for 6 weeks. ½ of each lesson is spent w/a volunteer chef. Other ½ time is spent working with nutrition educators.
- Each week has a specific target (ex: whole grains, sources of calcium, etc).
- When they go home, they take a bag of groceries to recreate the meal they just made from that night.
- On week five, they don't do any cooking...they take a field trip to a grocery store. They get a tour, talk about "shopping the perimeter" and where within the aisles they can find nutrition.
- Cooking for life has three curricula: Youth (11-14...body image discussions, being active), Parents/Adults (child feeding issues...picky eaters, combating advertising, food safety); Young Adult (teens...typically in some type of transition...leaving for college, in state custody, students who are low income & not going to college but taking the step to live on their own).
- Over 4000 ppl since 1999 have taken Cooking For Life.

Who makes it happen?

- VOLUNTEERS!
 - Volunteer chefs & ppl with very solid food knowledge.
 - Volunteers in the office: help break down bulk foods, stuff envelopes, etc.

Who do we work with/where do we work?

- Hosts to offer the series...parent/child centers, afterschool programs, Wik offices, Food/School groups.

CFL Local Food Pilot: Rachael (Vermont Center For Sustainable Ag) speaking:

- Trying to adapt Parent curriculum of CFL to highlight of local food products to bring awareness to what the participants get sent home with...
- Pilot is in Chittenden & Caledonia counties

Goals:

- Increase access to local food for food insecure Vermonters.

- Increasing marketing for Vermont producers
- Strengthen Communities/building relationships in communities

How can the Burlington Food Council help?

- Help the Campaign find chefs
- Introduce Farm producers into the curriculum...either bringing a farmer into the class or bringing the class to the farm.
- In the book “Nation Of Farmers,” it is made apparent **that ppl don’t have access to the tools (measuring cups, knives, etc).**
 - Recycle North & Goodwill could be good resources for equipment
 - Possibly we should begin an “equipment drop” at food shelves?

Discussion on how to connect CSAs & food stamps ensues. Logistical issues discussed.

Discussion on the rural/urban connection...issue is that a lot of rural communities are needy, but the big grants go to areas with more population density (ex: Detroit). The question to us becomes: how can we look at this as an integrated system between our urban center (Burlington) & more rural areas.

Evaluation

Strengths

- Rebecca was great & lots of good connections were made.

Weaknesses

- Mandy forgot to reserve the room.
- Expression that Rebecca left immediately afterwards so connections couldn’t be made...”sometimes the best stuff comes after meeting.”
 - Perhaps we should allow 5 minutes for networking intentionally at the end of these meetings.

NEXT MEETING: 8th of February