# Whatcom Food Network Steering Committee Meeting

*Committee purpose/function:* Working to build common understanding and facilitate collaborative efforts toward an equitable, sustainable and healthy food system for all.

**Agenda**

Date: 7/18/2018

Time: 12-3pm

Location: Opportunity Council

## Present

Facilitator: Various  
Note taker: Diana Meeks

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| Adrienne Renz  Cheryl Thornton  Chris Elder  Holly O’Neill  Lisa Sohni  ~~Karlee Deatherage~~  Diana Meeks | ~~Kent Kok~~  Mardi Solomon  ~~Rosalinda Guillen~~  Sara Southerland  Pete Granger  Jen Hey, WSU  Krista Rome  Riley Sweeney  Rachel Lucy |

Red = DECISIONS

Yellow = ACTION ITEMS

Blue = Opportunities for Collaboration

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| **MEETING SUMMARY:** | |
| **Item** | **Summary** |
| Food System Planning | The proposed ordinance is drafted, Steering Committee provided feedback and it will be presented to PHAB and County Council this fall. |
| Forum | Much to discuss about the proposed Fall Forum on labor, a forum planning committee will begging meeting regularly to devote more time and energy to planning. |
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## PROPOSED NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:

Location:

## NOTES

1. **Welcome & Introductions**
   1. Welcome newcomers
      1. Riley & Rachel – Chair Public Health Advisory Board. Serving for 6-7 years.
2. **Food System Planning for Whatcom County**
   1. Rachel: 3-4 years ago PHAB worked with County on the Comp Plan and they got language in around forming a food system plan implementing it. With the work the WFN has done in the past year they are now looking at two routes to make this happen:
      * 1. Form a Committee directly under council
        2. Establish a food system a food system committee under PHAB
   2. In September, we will take recommendation back to PHAB, the subsequent Health Board meeting will be held in October.
   3. Riley: We are using ordinance to talk about scope of work to be done, values around work, and articulate how work will happen
      1. Wheras is the background information
      2. Comp plan is cited
      3. Food deserts are referenced
      4. The ordained part is the main section. A-E, will be work plan for this food system group, having them work from the Community Food Assessment.
      5. Prioritizes action items, fundraising, and timelines
      6. Exhibit A is what would go into County Charter (includes best practices)
      7. Food system committee would be appointment by the County Executive. Membership should reflect scope of work we want work to explore.
      8. Language lifted from WFN goals
      9. Reference to staff and funding support, and to report back on a yearly basis.
      10. Questions:
          1. Mardi – Did Health Department say yes, we have funding to support this?
             1. YES. A big part of Ali’s role is to support this work
          2. On item A – what are the thoughts around assessing current opportunities and challenges?
             1. Riley – this is an important step for member of the committee who might not have a close familiarity with our food system.
             2. Mardi - Could we swap out “draft a report” to conduct 2019 update of CFA?
             3. Riley – We add it to item E. add “including updating CFA as necessary” – add in a section about regularly updating and looking at indicators as needed.
             4. Section B in Appointed Members, name PHAB directly.
          3. Krista:
             1. Page 1 1/3 of the way down within market pressures, call out cost of land
             2. Under purpose specifically call out regular update of CFA here, and include provide oversite
             3. Page 3, section a for appointed members. Some concerns about having one farmer for local sales and one farmer for export sales. Should also calling out local for other sectors.

Cheryl: think we need to be clear what local means. And clear about what export means.

Chris: intention was trying to get more people to apply for the seats.

Krista: could we write in a priority around getting local people in

Riley: the County Executive will appoint the seats and this document helps direct.

Cheryl: could we change the word farming to agriculture, this could be a much broader range of people?

Chris: We were trying to get both farming perspectives in the County, the “large” and the “small”

Krista: Another break down we aren’t talking about is land owners vs. non-land owners

Adrienne: In the CFA we moved to acreage/income # for talking about farm size. This could be to specific for ordinance.

The intention in overall document is clear enough that the larger container would inform that.

County Executive or County Council could appoint. Running it through the Executive, one person, could lead to having a more cohesive committee. The County Council could appoint their own individual members which could lead to a breakdown in action.

The way it works for PHAB is that they help recommend and interview and give recommendations to County Executive

Is there any room on the board for consumers to be included. – This could be item B. for two members representing healthy people.

1. **Networking/Sector Updates**
   1. Whats going on in your food system sector AND your org. What do other sectors need to know?
      1. Adrienne: We have a ton of events coming up. Downtown Market Walk THIS Saturday, it’s a party. Baseball game on 5th of August (FREE tickets). Co-op is working hard on equity, diversity, and inclusion. We’ll have some more public presenting on that in Fall and unrolling programming for that later in the year. We partnered up with Chris for the Co-op to bring in blueberries from the new Farmworker Cooperative. Produce sales have hit all times highs.
      2. Lisa: We still haven’t heard about the FINI Grant. Probably has something to do with Farm Bill (they are working on merging House and Senate proposals). Maple Alley Inn this Fall we are partnering with WWU to host a flue clinic there. They are trying to bring more resources into that program. Fresh Bucks is still happening at Bham Farmers Markets, Twin Sisters is doing their own - WECU just let us know they have funds to donate towards this.
      3. Krista: Wanted to let you know 10 Mile Clean Water Project has a new partnership with the WCD. They’ll be doing more outreach to horse and septic owners. Been doing a lot of outreach for water supply outreach, we’re always still looking for connections out in the County for any community groups who would want to give input in water supply challenges. Currently the main effort is around resolving mitigating for any new water use/domestic wells but the conversation always comes back around to farming. There’s a big intersection there with the local food system as there hasn’t been any new water rights since the 90s. So solving this, getting legal water rights, to farmers is a big piece. If anyone has any email/listerve/community groups we could reach out to please send my way.
         1. We were also researching the Styrofoam and straw ban that a group of orgs. Have been working on but we are backing out of it for the moment due to diversity issues.
         2. Water week is coming up in September, SeaFeast Beach clean up!
         3. C2C – Farm worker march from Lynden to Sumas at Sunday, August 5th 4:30 AM, to get urban folks to see what farmer worker experience is like.
         4. Went to Protecting Mother Earth Conference – everything came back to clean water and food sovereignty. Krista will forward on her notes.
      4. Sara: Our Eat Local First Food Atlas is getting much closer to launching! We will be having a launch party in September, on the 24th at the Pickford. It’s free to list and there are two main audiences. One being public – like a mobile Food & Farm Finder. Second audiences is B2B – people can search for wholesale, farm inputs, commercial kitchens, etc. We’re expanding Eat Local First into Skagit, slowly but surely. Jefferson and Clallam Counties have also adopted brand. For waste we’re doing a new Food Waste Recovery Initiative, taking prepared foods from businesses and getting it to people in need. Has been a huge success and is a win for local food businesses and the community. We did a survey with food & farming businesses to see how folks are weathering this year because of labor costs. 47 businesses responded, Sara will share article. I compared # of restaurants per capita to rest of United States, data I could find from 2016. #1 city for restaurants/food establishments per capita is 1 restaurant for every 200 people – Bellingham has double that. Could coffee stands skew that?
      5. Cheryl: I’ve heard the same thing with restaurants – almost every restaurant I’ve delivered to is really struggling. The brick and morter are suffering because of all the food trucks. Working with food hub, but food hub sales are up over 70% from last year. There are 62 members. The struggle now is to find an economic model that keeps the hub sustainable without grant funding. How do connect with large accounts in Seattle, they change their sourcing frequently. WWU is now buying more local and wants to do more! Summer Harvest Day is coming up August 4th – we will feature mid-summer fruit. More educational day, a number of food system nonprofits come and table. We’ve been doing Farmer Roundtables with WCD, last one we did was growing organic peaches. We are starting to look at a grant we got with NABC and SC on helping growers technically and business models scale up – which will start in October. Growers in food hub are really excited. Will target a few growers to do in depth case study. Will be a three year grant.
      6. Diana: Sara covered most of what Sustainable Connections has been working on, the only other thing I would add is to invite all to the new Birchwood International Markets happening the last Friday of each month through September.
      7. Mardi: The last time we met the State Farm to School Network hadn’t launched, and now it has! We are moving into the next phase with this Network. Cheryl and I are on the Coordinating Team. There are three action teams including a policy and evaluation one. They are Communities of Practice (School Gardens, Farm Based Ag, etc). We organized regionally, we are in a region that is west of the mountains and goes south to Snohomish. You can sign up to be a member of a region giving you access to all other members in that region so you can connect. Possibility of doing a CFA event for our region. Mardi will put out a call for membership and there is a website coming, now housed on WSDA Farm2School site. Diane Smith and I did a CFA presentation for WSU Food Systems Group, we got added in last minute. The Whatcom Farm to School Support team will be transitioning to be under the WCF to being housed under the Bellingham School District. New commercial kitchen will have soft opening at the end of this year!
      8. Holly: The new Community Health Assessment will be released next week and it will be a good thing for us to look through and grab on to, especially veggie consumption. They will be breaking it up by district. The Foothills Foodbank got the rest of the funding from WCF! Have been working with folks in Nooksack tribe to do a Harvest of the Month with foods that are native to the Nooksack tribe. Related to labor conversation coming up, we need to figure out ways to assess what’s really going on with farm worker labor conditions. It would be good for us to try and figure out ways to look at stuff on C2C fact sheet and figure out ways to find out to clarify data sources. Could we start a group/conversation at a later date to work on this?
      9. Chris: PDR completed another easement and has a few more in the pipeline. Will be presenting on the updated Ag. Strategic Plan at the next County Council meeting, areas we changed (we have a goal to support new beginning farmers in finding farmland and transitioning farmland from retirees to new). One highlight, we did Ag. Status Report (history of permit activity, ag land use). Chris will share to listserv. WA State Farmland Preservation Roundtable, every quarter we meet up, WA State Housing Commition came to last meeting and there is a new fund that will dedication to farmland protection and access a 3million annually starter fund for Preservation Orgs. Climate Impact Advisory Committee, have hired an intern to do an emissions inventory. Next step is resiliency planning and implementation, which has nexus with food system. Twin Sisters Market seen %100 increase in sales, 9 members plus ½ members. Chris’ last year with market.
2. **Fall Forum**
   1. We want to make the fall forum a priority because labor is a tough topic.
      1. We want to identify a subcommittee to spend more time planning the forum.
      2. Initial idea for a forum on labor from the worker perspective, i.e. challenges, opportunities, where they come from, broad cross section of representation from the various sectors.
      3. Cheryl states that we want to confirm that it doesn’t become a gripe fest. Important to highlight that this intended to provide a lay of the land overview.
      4. Krista is concerned that workers might not be comfortable sharing criticisms of their employers.
      5. There is the idea that concepts or ideas or concerns could be shared in a more anonymous manner.
      6. Might be interesting to compare and contrast the experiences between local versus export market operation employees.
      7. Important to highlight food system jobs that are more vulnerable positions, highlight seasonality and/or lack of protections for agricultural workers. Balanced approach would highlight the vulnerability of farmworker positions/livelihood.
      8. Cheryl brings up the question of whether an owner who is also a farmworker should be represented on the panel.
      9. Diana brings up the point that previous forums have focused almost exclusively on owners or managers.
      10. Could WFN reps help frame the ownership position and/or concerns?
      11. Adrienne talks about using data to find common ground and drill into what the conditions.
      12. Holly talks about the ALICE report which highlights deficits in the food system. Important to remember to highlight the solutions. Are there any creative/innovative solutions to close the gap.
      13. What is the real cost of food? Questions about the word labor in titling of the forum. Discussion around how can we make this successful.
          1. A Day in the Life: A food system worker discussion
          2. Look for representatives from farmworker, fisher, food processer, bartender, cook, etc.
             1. There is the idea to have presenters also show photos, help them do a video.
             2. Could panelists bring photos/presentations?
             3. Should we have a keynote speaker?
      14. Discussion around possibly postponing the labor topic to include the data that C2C is now collecting and possibly publishing in the Spring of next year.
          1. Instead focusing on the Community Health Assessment, Farm Bill, Food System Planning Committee, Anti-hunger coalition, and tariffs.
      15. The Forum planning committee will meet in early August to pick this back up and will email to keep the Steering Committee in the loop and gather feedback.
3. **Subcommittee Updates**
   1. Did not get to this, will add it to the next Steering Committee meeting agenda.