

Whatcom Food Network Steering Committee Meeting

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

Agenda

Date: 2/5/2020

Time: 1:30-3:30pm

Location: Sustainable Connections

Present

Facilitator: Various

Note taker: Kerry

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|---|---|
| Cheryl Thornton Ali Jensen Mardi Solomon Gavin Willis Ander Russell Kerry Eastwood | Naomi Siegel Kether Scharff-Gray Amber Noskoff Becky Snijder van Wissenkerke Sara Southerland |
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Red = DECISIONS

Yellow = ACTION ITEMS

Blue = Opportunities for Collaboration

| MEETING SUMMARY: | |
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| Item | Summary |
| Agenda | Approved. |
| Review Food System Definition & Vision | Reviewed our purpose as a Steering Committee, and some of our accomplishments to help orient new members and retain focus on our goals. |
| Cross sector activity prep | We went over the vision for this assignment and worked out who is meeting with who. The senior committee member in each pairing is expected to reach out to set up their meeting. |
| Restructure of Chair & Co-chair positions | The Coordinating Team will act as the leadership and guiding group for the work of the Network Coordinator. The Network Coordinator will act as the voice of the Network on behalf of the group and any written statements in public responses will include the signatures of the Coordinating Team. |
| Spring Forum Planning | The theme will be consumption and distribution: Current consumer trends and how local producers are creating innovations that better serve them and their community. |
| Sector updates | Sector updates were shared from all. |

| FOLLOW-UP ITEMS: | | |
|------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| By when | Action Item | Person(s) responsible: |

| | | |
|------|--|----------|
| 2/11 | Send introduction email to Amy about setting up her cross-sector meet-up with Amber. | Kerry |
| 2/14 | Contact Amy at Boldly Grow Farm about doing a 5 minute presentation and panel at spring forum. | Sara |
| 2/14 | Contact Bowhill Blueberries about doing a 5 minute presentation and panel at spring forum. | Cheryl |
| 2/14 | Contact Whatcom Red about doing a 5 minute presentation and panel at spring forum. | Gavin |
| 2/14 | Contact Bread Lab about doing a 5 minute presentation and panel at spring forum. | Mardi |
| 2/14 | Contact North Cascades Meat Cooperative about doing a 5 minute presentation and panel at spring forum. | Kerry |
| 2/29 | Add the year that each SC member joined to roster to help us determine future leadership. | Kerry |
| 2/29 | Meet up with cross-sector activity partners to learn about each other's sectors and events – try to attend an event or two of the sector you are learning about. | Everyone |
| 3/12 | Attend the March 12 networking event to help strengthen our connection to members, as well as our cross-sector awareness. | Everyone |

PROPOSED NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:

April 1 Date & Location: TBD

NOTES

1) Agree on agenda for meeting

a) Agreed.

2) Review Food System Definition and vision:

- a) Sector representation + core values with a focus on creating collaboration and communication across the food system.
- b) Our values are the core pillars, but the SC is not the driving force of the work. What we do is create the space to collaborate and move those values forward.
- c) Cross-sector work is an important component in achieving the level of integrated collaboration that we envision.
- d) Another main function of the SC is forum planning.
- e) Community Food assessment (CFA) – data collection across the food system (started by WSU, now led by the Food Systems Committee housed by the Whatcom County Health Dept.)
- f) CFA should be utilized more – maybe we can pull content for social media.

g) Steering Committee members are expected to attend 4 out of 6 of the annual Steering Committee meetings, as well as both forums.

3) Cross-sector activity:

a) This helps create more intentional cross sector sharing – be more integrated within our SC and in our work in food system.

b) Meet up to learn and chat about your sector and events going on in your sector – try to attend an event or two of the sector you are learning about from your activity partner. [Everyone]

c) Creates cross-promotional opp, and even the possibility to share funding opps.

d) Ping Amy to set up meet-up with Amber. [Kerry]

4) Restructure of chair and co-chair:

a) Coordinating team as a whole will be leadership going forward.

b) Add the year that each SC member joined to roster to help us determine future leadership. [Kerry]

c) Kerry will be voice 'on behalf of the WFN Coordinating Team.'

d) When we are creating a collective response, we will include all Coord Team signatures/names on the response.

5) Spring forum planning:

a) Date & Location: May 13 (9am-1pm) at the Ferndale Pioneer Pavilion.

b) Theme: Consumption & Distribution

i) Shelley Balanko from the Hartman group will present on consumer research around food consumption and sustainability.

(1) Leading research on food trends and sustainability related to food choices.

(2) She will update us on where we're at in relation to our work in supporting local farmers and food producers.

(3) Innovating in our own way and keeping up with consumer trends and demands.

ii) Online food sales – 5% now, in ten years will be 20%

(1) Kitsap online farmers market – food hub & Distribution direct wholesale rate

iii) Boldly Grown – one of the only producers that's addressing year-round produce to help fill niche of year-round local sourcing – they distribute through the Food Hub.

iv) Puget Sound Food Hub rep might have perspectives on food trends that relate to what farmers can do to adapt and meet demands.

v) Acme food boxes or Dandelion Organic delivery – year-round CSAs.

vi) Buyers want processed food – broccoli florets, cut squash – consumers want things that are ready to go:

(1) How is that affecting what farmers are growing;

(2) Fresh stuff is waning, processed stuff is leading.

vii) Producers are looking for products that are consistent throughout the year.

viii) Panel of how consumption trends drive what farmers are growing. (e.g., Farmers have to either go niche or go cheap – going niche is more of a risk.)

ix) OR panel about how farmers are trying to drive the trends with their own innovations and new ideas (e.g., to fit best growing practices locally as well as market demands).

x) Meat producers Skiyou Ranch, Alluvial, North Cascades meat cooperative, Island Grown Farmers Cooperative, Saxon meats

- xi) What are the take-away's that we want for attendees:
 - (1) A lot of forum attendees are consumers – can we help inform them to positively affect their shopping choices?
 - (2) How can we adapt to meet food trends as they develop to help our local producers compete in the market?
- xii) There are efforts to push farmer-beneficial trends – could we get a presentation on what those behaviors are that consumers can do? Farmer-guided trends – plenty of examples of these types of campaigns. Ideas for farmer-led trends to affect the market and meet consumer
 - (1) Boldly grown – Amy from Boldly Grown – farmer led trend – year-round CSA and local produce [Sara]
 - (2) Bread lab trying to reduce water use in their processing – they're looking to shape the market by growing grains that grow well here and that the local bakers want to use. Inquire about whether any of their PhD students could present as they are the on-the-ground researchers / experts in the field. [Mardi]
 - (3) Whatcom Red – Grace Harbor Farms working with John Maberry to create value-added product. Adapting different varieties of berries from the producers end – what trends you're driving and why. [Gavin]
 - (4) North Cascades Meat Producers [Kerry]
 - (5) Bow Hill Blueberries – all kinds of value-added products [Cheryl]
 - (6) Other speaker Ideas: Lummi Fish market (and someone from Lummi fishing industry to talk about how fish are caught and sold – they are re-engaging the fish market); Tierra y Libertad (reach out to these folks if any of previous 4-5 say no).
- xiii) Presentation format: 10 slides on a timer for 5 minutes followed by panel. [Gavin will facilitate]
- xiv) Additional future forum topic ideas:
 - (1) How do we eat for climate? How do we grow food for climate?
 - (2) Packaging for food – what are the trends and how can we mitigate all the packaging waste
 - (3) Impacts of the trends on local producers and climate change
 - (4) Ag census
- c) **Work harder to bring in presenters that are women and POC.**
 - (1) Addie Candib – just got hired as Pacific NW regional director of the American Farmland Trust.
- d) **Expand networking to be a cross-sector activity including prompts related to food trends.**
- e) Ways to include labor sector:
 - i) Ask Shelly from Hartman Group – how are market trends affecting labor?
 - ii) Tierra y Libertad – blueberry producing cooperative is working with Mallard and Co-op. Invite them to present on panel if one of the current 5 backs out. (4-5 panelists is max for the time and format.)
- 6) Networking events
 - a) First one is March 12 from 5-7 pm at Marine Park businesses.
 - i) Featuring: Acme, Bham Pasta Co, Herb Cider, Lummi Island Wild;

- ii) Event will start with casual networking over food and drink, with a tour of each stop including facilitated networking.
- b) Second one will be in September – date TBD.
 - i) Planning on hosting it outside at farm and/or production facility and promoting as part of Eat Local Month.
 - ii) Whatcom Red could be a possible location.
- c) Steering Committee members are highly encouraged to attend the networking events to help strengthen our connection to members, as well as our cross-sector awareness. [Everyone]

7) Sector updates:

- a) SC meeting room options:
 - i) CMFC Ed Room - Cheryl
 - ii) Central Bellingham District kitchen has a meeting room (Mardi)
 - iii) WSE Extension office has meeting rooms (Amber)
 - iv) Lost Giants Cider (Amber)
 - v) Health Dept (Ali)
 - vi) NW and Smith – Whatcom County (Becky)
- b) Sara – Farm-to-Table conference coming up on Feb 25th; expanding ELF region wide with Tilt Alliance - ELF.org and Food Atlas will be regional portal for local food sourcing; recommends *The Fate of Food* – topic is mixing small farm with large-farm tech innovation to feed the world in a different climate etc.
- c) Naomi – ABOD (Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents) is changing = Whatcom County was previously exempt from having to comply, so they are rolling out navigators to help people make the shift, large population of people will have to participate in job placement programs to qualify going forward.
- d) Cheryl – CMFC opened the nursery on a flood day and it was still busy; getting incubator farmers are geared up to get started on their plots (4 this year); working on building the food lab at the northwest fair grounds – education component at the fair, taking whole committee down to Bread Lab for a tour – it could happen in a year or so.
- e) Ali – Food System Committee Update: in the midst of updating the Community Food Assessment, which used to be a function of WFN but is now done by the Food System Committee – should be done in spring; action food groups have formed in Birchwood and east Whatcom as follow up from food summits that focused on the issue of food access.
- f) Kether – there are some trends among breweries and distilleries to move toward mid-scale ag for sourcing their grain and malt, same with mills – regionalizing grain economies makes sense for us locally; movements toward local grain that is for place, more research being done to make transitions back to those varieties of grain.
- g) Amber – Same update as Naomi; SNAP Ed budget was signed and finalized so we have funding now; Amber and her husband own Lost Giants Cider (and can host events or SC meetings).
- h) Ander – legislative session happening now and a lot related to water and climate going on; water lobby day Feb 25; City CATFA is active and County has climate action advisory Committee; new Climate Energy Manager Seth Verdana; Climate resilience is the focus for RE Sources (i.e., stormwater infrastructure, droughts, how we manage our water sources and how can we

prepare and bounce back from those climate related events in the future) and they are working to engage local agencies in this planning and preparedness process.

- i) Gavin – Darigold cooperative changed rules around how their farmers ship milk and compensation rates, local farms saw that as an opp to sell off their farms and retire; the impetus behind change was to prevent over-production and make sure local farmers aren't going to lose money.
- j) Becky – Ag advisory committee going thru ag code to see if there are any changes that can be made to help ag community; purchase of development rights program – rebranding and outreach efforts, changing name to focus on large-scale ag: 'The Whatcom County Conservation Easement Program'; just did a GIS evaluation of the current ag land in Whatcom County.
- k) Mardi – continues to work with Bham public schools on their major shift – all meals this year are coming out of the central kitchen, more meals are scratch made, more meal ingredients are locally sourced, and participation in school lunches is up in all of the schools; Bham schools just started participating in Sustainable Connections' Food Recovery program, which gets 500 lbs+ of prepared foods in a day and distributes it to local organizations to feed people in need in our community.
- l) Adjourn