



Food System Committee

Wednesday June 24th, 2020

3:30-5 PM

Zoom Meeting

Minutes

Members Present:

Name	Sector	Present
	Export Sales Farming	
Margaret Gerard	Local Sales Farming	X
Kendall Whitney	Fishing	X
	Processing/Distribution	
Riley Sweeney	Food Access	X
Amber Noskoff	Nutrition/ Public Health	X
Maureen Darras	Labor	X
Krista Rome	Natural Resources	X
Mardi Solomon	Whatcom Food Network	X

Staff: Ali Jensen, Whatcom County Health Department; Chris Elder, Whatcom County Public Works, Laura Ridenour, Whatcom Food Network

Call to order: Riley started the meeting at 3:37 pm

Determination of Quorum

Quorum

Approval of minutes

Kendall moved to approve February minutes; Krista seconded. Group approved.

Public Comment

None

Check In: What is Role of Food System Committee

Discussion of things the Food System Committee can do as needs in the food system becomes apparent:

- Make recommendations to County Council through motions and formal language.
- Hold public hearings.
- Work on policy documents.
- Gather information and research food system needs.

Members agreed they want to send food system recommendations to the County Council as soon as possible.

The group briefly brainstormed ideas, including non-emergency food access, land allocation, and workers.

How COVID is Impacting the Food System from Laura Ridenour

The Whatcom Food Network had a Spring Forum on May 15th which was attended by 65 people. Laura was a facilitator. They discussed gaps, innovations, and silver linings in the food system due to COVID in Zoom breakout rooms. Common topics that arose included:

- Systemic challenges- COVID has exacerbated some of the breaks in the food system.
- Food access concerns.
- Information lag behind realities on the ground.
- How to identify who needs support.
- Urban vs rural access to resources.
- How to get involved and volunteer.
- Sustaining support for local food.
- Concern about winter food storages.
- Restaurants need business support.
- Food production and processing- bulk items are going to waste.
- worker shortage- lack of workers and safe housing for workers.
- Revelation of inequities in the labor industry.
- Increased need for packaging for food safety.
- The need for more places to grow their own food.
- Justice, equity, and diversity needs in the food system.
- Looking to California and Mexico to see issues they are already seeing as a predictor of what we will see.

More information about the WFN Meet up can be found [here](#).

How COVID is impacting the Food System from FSC Reps

The group echoed some of the issues above and highlighted the need for immediate recommendations for workers and food security.

Review of State Food Policy Forum Recommendations

June 25th, the State Food Policy Forum will vote on an Implementation document, which outlines immediate recommendations for the State Legislature. The FPF is consensus based. If any member disagrees with a measure and doesn't stand aside, it won't go forward.

The group will assess State Food Policy Forum recommendations for consideration.

Next Steps

The group agreed to make a list (2-3 pages) of recommendations for the Whatcom County Council. The group will meet next week to discuss potential recommendations.

Committee staff will receive policy ideas by Friday. Staff will separate budget vs non-budget ideas and send survey to the group.

Some organizations to glean data from include Sustainable Connections, Whatcom Unified Command's Food Security Task Force, and the Port's economic development workgroup.

Next Food System Committee Meeting will be Wednesday, July 1st from 3:30-5pm on Zoom.

Meeting adjourned 4:55 pm.