



## **Community Gardens Regional Food Network Workgroup**

Meeting Notes – February 1, 2010

Attendees: Weston Miller (Chair), Beth Cohen, Lisa Turpel, Kat West, Keith Falkenberg, Lora Price, Deb Lippoldt, Kathy Dang, Ron Paul, Will Newman II, Tammy VanderWoude, Mary Bedard, Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, Alix Eastman, Nancy Stevens, Nancy Bond, Steve Cohen, Amber Baker

Guests: Tricia Mortell, Clark County and Eleanore Hunter, Oak Lodge Community Council

Facilitator: Stephanie Hallock, Oregon Solutions

The meeting convened shortly after 3 pm at Metro. It was scheduled by the Organizational Structure workgroup of the community gardens Oregon Solutions project to discuss how the group wants to proceed with establishing a regional food network after completion of the Oregon Solutions project.

The group began by reviewing the charge to the community solutions team and Commissioner Fish's original vision for the Oregon Solutions project, and several organizational models that have been discussed during the Oregon Solutions process. The Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) was discussed at length, and a few other models were mentioned – Neighborspace in Chicago; Sustain; Council on the Environment of New York City.

Kat West mentioned that the Multnomah Food Initiative (MFI) has done research on many food networks across the country. Kat also shared the draft framework for an action plan for the MFI and said that there will be five workgroups, one of which will address establishing a regional network and that this Oregon Solutions workgroup might want to consider "morphing" into the MFI workgroup.

The group then brainstormed a list of goals/needs of a regional food network:

- One-stop clearinghouse for information (both virtual and physical)
- Easy access for everyone and support for current organizations
- Recognized vehicle for consistent funding
- Unified, effective and powerful constituency

- Everyone understands their role in the system
- Shared vision and shared goals
- Coalesce the parallel paths
- State-of-the-art demonstration center
- Ability to facilitate joint activities
- Shared decision-making; meaningful contribution by all
- Replicable model for other cities/counties
- Unite several initiatives; increase awareness of existing efforts, policies, etc.
- Increase capacity for growing our own food
- Minimize competition for funding
- Sustainable network for the food system

Deb summarized the list into four key goals/purposes:

- Enhance funding
- Central information clearinghouse
- Advocacy
- Sharing resources

Deb also said that the concept of “equity” needed to be kept visible.

Kat said that she hopes to “hand” the MFI website to whatever regional food network entity is created in perpetuity.

The group then discussed how to move forward. Weston suggested that Commissioner Fish play a leadership role in inviting the Mayor, the County, and Metro to make a commitment to a regional food network; potentially use this workgroup as a vehicle to rally others. The time is right for a high-level conversation about regionalizing food systems. Beth said that Metro has talked about a “Regional Foodshed.” Alix mentioned the Puget Sound “Foodcycle” concept.

How the Greenspace concept developed over time was discussed; definition of Greenspace was reframed and a coalition was built. Rallying people around food could be a similar strategy – reframe food, build a coalition. Ron mentioned historic preservation as another model; that effort is around saving the built environment; part of a regional food network could be trying to save unbuilt land - piggyback off existing efforts around open space and trails.

Kat stressed the importance of building a community partnership (govt., business, community groups) v. just being a government clearinghouse. The group decided it wants to affiliate with the MFI as a workgroup to develop the regional food network concept. Oregon Solutions will assist with that transition through the end of March. Representatives of Washington, Clackamas and Clark counties will be invited to join.

**Next Meeting:** Monday, March 1, 3 to 5 pm TBA at Metro or Multnomah County. Weston volunteered to chair.