

Regional Food Network

Meeting Minutes

April 6, 2010

In Attendance

Weston Miller, OSU Extension
Jennifer Hackett, Multnomah County
Anita Yap, City of Damascus
Elizabeth Weigand, City of Damascus
Will Newman II, OSALT
Lisa Turpel, Portland Parks & Rec
Jean Fike, East Multnomah Soil & Water District
Andy Fisher, Community Food Security Coalition
Deb Lippoldt, Growing Gardens
Dustin Kohls, Clackamas County
Patrick Proden, OSU Extension
Ron Paul, James Beard Public Market
Tammy VanderWoude, Oregon Food Bank
Beth Cohen, Metro Office of Carlotta Collette

Major Meeting Decisions:

- See what happens at Multnomah Food Summit and move forward from there
- Next meeting: **May 17th** from **3:00-5:00** at the **Multnomah Building (room TBA)**

Next Steps:

- Members are encouraged to invite people from the summit to attend meeting on May 17th
- Lezak Institute is interested in getting involved in this discussion
 - Jennifer will contact them and invite them to next meeting on May 17th

Updates:

- Dustin mentioned that there are opportunities to apply for USDA grants to create regional food system network
 - Will warned that the USDA often defines "regional" differently than we typically do
- Anita mentioned that the City of Damascus is a partner in a SARE grant received by Portland State University and Oregon State University

Notes:

- Weston opened the meeting with a description of how this group came to be and how we got here
 - This group is an offshoot of the Oregon Solutions Community Gardens workgroup, who came together to more broadly define growing food in the city/county/region and discuss the possibility of forming a regional food system network
- Presentations on the agenda:

- Andy Fisher of Community Food Security Coalition provided a regional and national perspective on food system networks and observations/reflections on our local food system network
- Jennifer Hackett of Multnomah County's MFI project presented three examples of food system network coalitions and talked about the framework that will be presented at the Multnomah Food Summit on May 1st

Discussion led by Andy Fisher, Community Food Security

Notable growth in food policy and coalitions in the past ten years

- The number and capacity of groups working on food system issues has increased
- There are around 100 FPCs nationally, whereas ten years ago there were +/- 10
- Most FPCs are focused at the city, county or state level, very few at the regional level

One example of a regional network: Puget Sound Regional Council

- King County and the City of Seattle began a Puget Sound Regional Council to make connections between urban and rural (King County is no longer able to partner in this effort)
 - The council serves in an advisory (vs. regulatory) capacity
 - No money right now, but are hoping that cities will contribute some funds

Andy's observations and reflections on our local food system

- There is a lot of enthusiasm and interest in food system issues right now
- City and county are willing to contribute to the local food movement & take leadership role
- Community advocates start the movement, but local governments have better capacity to accomplish systemic goals and institutionalize practices
- There is a significant urban/rural divide: the Willamette Valley and rest of state
- Challenges of starting an FPC at the state level in Oregon is that there is a lack of support for conventional agriculture
 - Cultural as well as physical boundaries
- There is huge support (more than elsewhere) for local food, but no clear leader
- Andy has observed/heard a lot of frustration around direction and purpose of the FPC
- Part of the problem is that the community has not articulated what's the ask/vision
 - Are we asking for incremental change to a food system that's already pretty good?
 - How do we make connections across the food system so that our efforts are mutually beneficial and synergistic?
 - Don't have the correct allies yet, which leaves us powerless

Group Discussion of Above Points

- Deb referred to the 2003 FPC recommendations are a good place to re-start and focus our work moving forward
- Anita, who is connected to other local governments, said that there is a fair amount of interest from other jurisdictions
 - Good coalitions have already been built-but there is a lot going on, people are busy
 - People working in public health, land use, emergency preparedness, are all interested

- o in food issues
 - o There is potential for forming a regional network of people
 - Consortiums bring people together, get them talking, then make policies
- Will pointed out that the urban/rural divide limits the voices that are heard at these types of meetings
 - o There are lots of people and organizations working on important food system issues that aren't located in Portland
 - These voices are not being represented/heard
 - o By not holding/attending meetings in other parts of the state, we inadvertently block input from people who's voices need to be heard
 - o Need real ways for people living in rural parts of the state/region to get to meetings
 - Phone, email, video conference are not an adequate substitute for face-to-face connections
 - o In thinking about forming a regional network, how would we plan to bridge this gap and address this issue?
- Tammy addressed the role/position of the FPC to convene a regional system
 - o The FPC may not be the right vehicle for establishing a regional system
 - o Currently redefining/clarifying the goals and purpose of the group
 - o Acknowledges tension/disconnect between the city and county

Discussion led by Jennifer Hackett, Multnomah Food Initiative

Jennifer presented three examples of food system network coalitions

Spade to Spoon – Brighton & Hove, UK (2006)

- **MODEL:** Implementation of an action plan through a non-profit organization
- Community-wide planning process
- Action plan was built around the vision of Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (BHFP)
- Members are drawn from food, health, environmental, economic, and non-profit sectors
 - o They work to encourage a more sustainable food system throughout the city
- The BHFP began in 2003 when a group of city officials identified the need for a group to independently address food issues and to bring together diverse sectors of the food system
- The main goal of the partnership is to raise awareness of food issues, promote local food, and create better access to good food for all residents
- Partners not only commit to the implementation of the action plan as a whole, but have designated roles and are responsible for working on specific goals and objectives
- Greatest achievement – establishing Food Matters, a non-profit that supports others in achieving the aims and objectives laid out in the plan
 - o Currently has 15 employees and yearly budget of 1M pounds sterling

Atlanta Local Food Initiative (ALFI) – Atlanta, GA (2008)

- **MODEL:** Action plan goals are enacted through a loose coalition of organizational partners
- Action plan was formed after a food summit was held in 2005
- ALFI is currently led by a Steering Committee of organizations that represent the diversity and complexity of food system issues
- Members are committed to the process and accomplishment of goals and feel that their participation in ALFI creates synergy through collective action
- Members feel that are able to accomplish more together than they can alone by leveraging efforts that mutually benefit ALFI and individual organizations
- ALFI partners make a commitment to carrying out goals and objectives, but they have a limited capacity for implementation.
- ALFI is an “instigator” that supports organizations and galvanizes buy-in and support for their shared vision and goals, but does not designate roles and responsibilities to specific organizations or government offices.

Homegrown Minneapolis: Minneapolis, MN (2009)

- **MODEL:** City takes responsibility for implementing policy recommendations
- City of Minneapolis began by engaging people in workgroups that developed recommendations
- Stakeholder Group: 100+ partners representing the City of Minneapolis, schools, parks, local businesses, neighborhood organizations, non-profits, community residents, and other organizations. The purpose of the Stakeholder Group was to bring together key partners to share ideas and facilitate connections between those involved in the local food system.
 - Subcommittees: Each subcommittee was co-chaired by a City staff member and a community expert. Stakeholders self-selected into workgroups focused on four issues:
 - Farmers markets
 - Community, school, backyard gardens
 - Small enterprise urban agriculture
 - Commercial use of locally grown foods
- Steering Committee: 17 members including three tri-chairs from the community, the co-chairs of each of the four subcommittees, and additional City staff.
 - The purpose of the Steering Committee was to gather input from the Stakeholder Group and the broader community, guide the subcommittees in developing specific recommendations, compile and synthesize the final report and recommendations.
- The City of Minneapolis has taken responsibility for implementing recommended policies and related projects.

Jennifer also talked about the framework that will be presented at the Multnomah Food Summit. It consists of four action areas and 16 objective themes and will be used to focus the discussion.

- Local Food
 1. Maintain the Agricultural Land Base
 2. Support Small- and Mid-Scale Farming Ventures

3. Increase Urban Food Production
4. Encourage Environmental Resource Stewardship
- Healthy Eating
 5. Apply Systemic Solutions to Create Food Environments that Support Health and Optimal Quality of Life
 6. Increase Equitable Access to Healthy, Affordable, Safe, and Culturally Appropriate Food in Underserved Neighborhoods
 7. Promote Individual and Community Health by Encouraging Healthy Food Choices
 8. Provide Education and Increase Access to Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs
- Social Equity
 9. Address the Systemic Roots of Hunger, Food Insecurity, and Injustice
 10. Increase Self-Sufficiency and Community Resilience
 11. Facilitate Equitable Community Participation and Decision-Making
 12. Create Opportunity and Justice for Farmers and Food System Workers
- Economic Vitality
 13. Develop the Regional Food Economy and Infrastructure
 14. Promote Regional Food Products and Producers
 15. Encourage Farm-to-School and institutional Purchasing that Support the Regional Food System
 16. Increase Local Supply Chain Capacity (locally owned and operated processing, distribution, storage, and waste recycling facilities)

Discussion by group – our goals, priorities, and interests in this group

Weston pointed out that at the last two meetings, two possible paths have been presented: 1) focus on increasing the amount of food grown in and around Portland, and 2) create a regional food system network. The group was asked to discuss some difficult questions and make some tough decisions:

- What role/function does this group want to play?
- Who wants to do it? Who should do it? Who's not here today who should be?
- How do we avoid duplication of purpose?
 - How would this group be different from, and yet related to other food-focused groups? (FPC, MFI, Community Gardens ...) Is there potential to unify and divide work?
- Where do we go from here? Or not go from here?

Each person was asked to share their goals, priorities, and interests in this group, as well as what they would hope to gain through their participation.

Mutual benefit and synergy

- Mutually supportive and synergistic efforts
- Desire to move forward in a networked fashion
- Food is at the center of the plate right now

- Momentum can be used to sling shot forward
- There is a lot of effort, but little coordination
- Lots of energy and resources available to grow this idea (of creating a regional food network)
 - FPC, OR Solutions Community Gardens, MFI, Clackamas Economic Development plan, City of Damascus work on urban/rural boundary, etc.
- Help build synergy with organizations getting involved in food system issues to maximize these efforts in a mutually supportive way
- Could Metro act as the convener of regional food system stakeholders?
 - Food is not their main area of focus
- OSU Extension is engaged in many conversations about the food system – i.e. food assistance programs, urban ag, youth gardening programs, etc.
 - What can extension offer to the process?
 - Goal is to contribute to conversations that are collaborative, synergistic, lead to action
- A regional food network could create opportunities to make connections between urban/rural
- Fine tune what's happening in PDX, create a model that can be used to reach out to others
- Take the pulse of our community food system:
 - We have a relatively stable food system
 - We have been successful in our gardening endeavors
 - We have begun a regional conversation
 - Local government very excited about this idea, but is clumsy in their approach
 - We need a CONVENER – who will step up?

Growing food in and around the city

- Individuals increasing their self-reliance and ability to grow food
- Increase food grown in community gardens as an economic opportunity
- Need to address issues dealing with growing food in/out of urban core
- Sustainable agriculture – create a better definition/vision
- Emergency preparedness – not enough attention focused here
- Disappointment with Oregon Solutions CG process
 - Didn't form a solid coalition around growing food in community gardens

Questions/doubts

- With so much happening, how do we create a more sustainable and cooperative system?
 - Is this the group to do take this on? Is the FPC?
 - How do we avoid parallel and duplicative efforts?
- Question of scope – Portland, state, regional?
- One way to gauge and guide our direction is by asking two questions:
 - What will happen if we succeed that wouldn't have otherwise?
 - What if anything will people miss if we don't succeed or try?

Economic Development Opportunities

- Untapped economic potential
- This is a market issue – economic benefit could be more fully captured
 - Help farmers maintain their viability
- Strategic collaboration among producers
 - Create an ag investment plan or strategy for farmers/producers
 - Who grows what, when
 - Producers see mutual benefit of a strong local food system
- Economic development opportunities
 - Develop a regional identity and brand
 - Increase supply chain capacity and production of local food
 - Create economic durability through regional production and consumption
- Regional Economy concept
 - Ag economy is “weighted”
 - Oregon has deep roots in exports
 - Shifting to focus on regional is going to require significant effort
 - Only 3% of produce sales are captured by farmers’ markets – 97% of market share still remains
 - Regional farmers and producers depend on sales outside region and income generated through exports
 - We should not abandon marketing regional products on a national scale

Scale, scope, and addressing the rural/urban divide

- Solve nested issues/problems
- Make small to large scale interconnections
- Bridge urban/rural divide
- Make connections between rural producers and urban consumers
- Connect those working on fringe to those in the core
- Land use for agriculture is regional in scope
- Portland “bubble” phenomenon (“News flash” – Portland is not the center of the universe ☺)
- Expressed desire to focus on smaller geographic scale/scope

New generation of farmers/food system thinkers

- Need a new generation of farmers interested in both conversations (conventional/organic) and scales (urban/rural, large/small)
- Try to make practices that are sustainable and continued generationally
- New generation of farmers is emerging
 - There is a move toward food production and sustainable practices, infusion of new energies and knowledge
- Farmer incubator program - interest from young people but not a lot of expertise/ guidance