



Bridgeport Food Policy Council – July 19, 2017
Bridgeport Public Library Main Branch, 925 Broad Street
Third Floor Community Room

Members in attendance: Margot Gotterer, Christine Strafstrom, Jacob Robison (OPED), and Jessica Zielinski Meffert (BDHSS)

Guests in attendance: Erin Harkrader (LifeBridge), Raquel Rivera Pablo (A Pinch of Salt), Cristina Sandolo (GVI), Breanna Natale (BFMC), Landon Horan (FEED Center - CCGB), Michelle McCabe (CCGB), Maria Ramos (Urban Roots - GVI), Ronnesha Addison (BDHSS), Helen Malcolm (BDHSS), Anna Greer (SHU), Chelsea Gazillo (CCGB VISTA), Clinton J. Gee, Sr. (Kings Pantry), and Susan Tom (CCGB)

Staff in attendance: Jessica Zielinski Meffert (BFPC Coordinator)

The meeting began at 6:04 pm. Maggie stated that the sign-in sheet for this meeting is voluntary for guests and mandatory for council members.

Attendees introduced themselves.

Council Vote

The council held a vote to approve the meeting minutes from June 2017.

Jacob made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Christine seconded the motion. All members voted in approval of the June 2017 meeting minutes.

Old Business

EPA Grant

Maggie explained that the steering committee for this grant had its second (of three total) conference call with their consultants in order to plan the September 7th and 8th workshops. These workshops will deal with the topic of local food and local places, focusing on Bridgeport's farmers markets. The September 7th workshop will be an evening session with the goal of setting the overall vision, and the September 8th workshop will be a day-long session with the goal of creating a specific action plan. An invitation to these workshops will be shared on the listserv in the coming weeks.

Food Policy Council Vacancies

Angel (not present) sent an update by email that he is investigating the application of Ana Nilsa Diaz, which he came across in his work on the appointments. The three currently pending appointments (Anna, Raquel, Mary) and renewal appointment (Christine) have no updates at this time. Clinton brought his

application to the meeting and is ready to provide it to Angel. Maggie will follow up to connect Angel and Clinton directly.

Council Rules

Christine explained that the next step with the council rules is to open up the draft for comment. The draft will be shared next week with council members for their review and comments. After a 2-week review period, the draft should be ready to share on the listserv for further review.

Maggie shared that after the last meeting, Angel mentioned the City plans to host a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) training for all council/commission members.

AmeriCorps VISTA Position

Maggie reported that 4 August is Chelsea's last day for her VISTA position. On 28 August, Juniper Blakeman will be starting their VISTA position. Juniper's position will be split between the FPC and the BFMC.

Present FPC Report to City Council

Maggie relayed that she reached out to Jeanette about briefing City Council on the FPC report. Janette suggested they plan tentatively to present the report to the committee she sits on (Committee of Economic Development).

Sub-group Updates

Urban Agriculture

Cristina explained that there is a strong draft document for the zoning ordinance, however when they met with the zoning office to go over the draft, there was discussion that an Urban Agriculture Master Plan may be a better first step. This plan could be stand-alone or a companion to the City's Master Plan. The plan will be community-driven through incorporation of community needs, recommendations, and considerations. There is a tentative timeline of having a draft of this plan ready by the end of 2017.

Maria asked if garden captains will be recruited to provide input into the plan, and Cristina answered affirmatively.

Chelsea explained that there is likely a lot of overlap between the proposed Urban Agriculture Master Plan and the work of other FPC sub-groups. There was agreement among the sub-groups; Erin pointed out that economic development often overlaps with any portion of a City's master planning, and Anna pointed out that an urban agriculture master plan would be very important to school gardens. Chelsea also explained that CT-CORE and the Nature Conservancy were a part of the master plan conversation and indicated interest in collaborating on it as well as finding grant funding for a potential consultant.

School Wellness

Raquel and Anna shared that there is a meeting on 25 July to connect with Sharlene Wong. The allergy plan has passed the stage of public comment and now is in the stage of having a second reading before being accepted as a plan for the district. After being accepted, the plan will be reviewed annually in May for adjustments and changes.

Food-Based Economic Development

Michelle reported that she is seeking a meeting with Kim Staley to discuss commercial kitchen permits among other topics. Angel is helping to set up this meeting.

Community Outreach

Bree explained that this committee would like to invite community members to attend sub-group meetings as a good way of becoming introduced to the FPC in a less intimidating setting. Community members attending the sub-group meetings could gain an understanding of the monthly FPC meeting format, and attend feeling more comfortable to share / ask questions during the meeting.

Chelsea shared that Juniper may be able to apply for grant funds from the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund to supply the community outreach committee with flyers and other outreach supplies. Additionally, as a way to involve more youths in food policy, the FPC could coordinate with GVI's youth program to set up a youth FPC that could investigate and discuss their own topics and projects to share with the FPC at monthly meetings.

New Business

SFMNP Vouchers and AARP Grant

Maggie discussed the impacts of the State budget's failure to pass on the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) vouchers program. The vouchers cannot be distributed until the budget passes, and without them there will likely be approximately \$27,000 less in produce being bought and sold from Bridgeport's farmers' markets this year. Chelsea and Maggie submitted an AARP grant on behalf of the Bridgeport Farmers Market Collaborative requesting \$32,000 to fund the distribution of Bridgeport Bucks in the place of the vouchers. A limited number of seniors had already received their vouchers, and the BFMC is reimbursing farmers for these in lieu of State funding.

VISTA Going-away Event

Chelsea informed the group that on 27 July there will be a going-away event for the VISTAs. GVI will host the event at Reservoir Community Farm and Chef Raquel Rivera-Pablo will offer a cooking demonstration with GVI produce at 4:30. The event will last from 4:30 to 6:30, all are welcome.

LifeBridge

Erin shared that the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Commission has merged with LifeBridge and these two organizations are working together to contact Connecticut legislators about the impacts of the budgetary failure.

Erin also promoted that on 9 August, Chef Raquel Rivera-Pablo will be teaching a Community Leadership class at LifeBridge. The class will cover such topics as sanitation and table set-up and presentation with the aim of empowering community leaders to impart their knowledge and passion about food, cooking, and nutrition topics onto others. In addition, there will also be a large community dinner in September hosted in the Burroughs Community Center. Participants who have completed Raquel's 3-hour course will be applying their skills in cooking for this event.

Erin also reported that her replacement has been hired and Erin will bring her to the next FPC meeting. Additionally, there is a new Fresh Connections site being launched at the Bridgeport Public Library Downtown Branch (925 Broad Street). The launch will be from 12:30-2:00 on 28 July, and the first produce boxes can be picked up on 11 August and every 2nd and 4th Friday thereafter.

Community Thanks

Maria shared her gratitude to GVI and Cristina for the support that has been and is being directed toward community gardening in Bridgeport.

CT Food Justice Network Toolkit

Maggie asked that if anyone has food policy best practices or informative lessons to share, please contribute these to the CT Food Justice Network Toolkit. The link to submit materials will be shared on the listserv.

CT Food Alliance Meeting

Anna shared that this Saturday is the CT Food System Alliance meeting in Hartford. Those who would like to attend the meeting (even if registration appears full) should be in touch with Meg Hourigan.

The next meeting will be held on 16 August at the Burroughs Community Center (2470 Fairfield Avenue) in the Learning Center (the first room on the left after entering the building).

The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 pm.