

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY LOCAL FOODS POLICY COUNCIL

Minutes

JANUARY 22, 2014, 6:00 P.M.

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FARM BUREAU BUILDING

801 N. COUNTRY FAIR DR.

CHAMPAIGN, IL

Present: Cathe Capel; Tod Satterthwaite; Becky Roach; Chris Henning; Mel Farrell; Brad Uken

Guests: Focus Group—Rick Weinzerl; Lacey Rains Lowe [city of Champaign]; Cynthia Haskings [Farm Bureau]; Bill Bagby [as rep. for Central Illinois Produce]; Mary Davis [Food Service-Champaign Schools]; Todd Rusk [Smart Energy Design Assistance Ctr. Univ. of Illinois]; Wes Jarrell [Co-Owner of Prairie Fruits Farm]; Bruce Branham [Uofl Crop Sciences]

Pattsi Petrie; Leslie Cooperband [Co-Owner of Prairie Fruits Farm]; Marcia Powell [owner of Lockie's Farm "Food Forest"]; Bob Lawerson [Permaculture Designer];

1. Call to Order—6pm

2. Focus Group

- a. Introductions (10 minutes)—people introduced themselves
- b. Background (10 minutes)—Tod gave a summation of the LFPC formation and activities. Mission: get small business/farmers started; education; encouragement of institutions to commit to buying local food; bringing stakeholders together
 - i. How we got started—PP resolution to CC Board
 - ii. Policy proposals—LESA proposals to ZBA, however not receptive to our suggestions. Jonathan Hall's proposal for zoning ordinance classifications [to encompass smaller parcel farms]. This is still in discussion. [See list of Activities & Outcomes]
 - iii. Accomplishments—website grant and creation of space for LFPC. [See list of Activities & Outcomes]. Chris H. mentioned the Uofl participation in Zero Percent as a result of the public participation of its software developer at our meetings.;
- c. Discussion
 - i. What is the future of local foods in Champaign County?—Q) There are many barriers to success. How can we overcome these challenges. R) need commitments from buyers before the farmers can grow. Food Hub idea at Tiny Greens is not financially sustainable, so space is rented out to 4 small

businesses at this time. Discussion about “Stewards of the Land”, an aggregate of farms selling to high-end restaurants in Chicago. No processing, grading, or packaging; just a list of produce available each week and they are delivering. Really a misnomer—more like a cooperative. Mention of “Hoosier Harvest Food Hub”—a virtual aggregation. Q) how far along has LFPC gotten with the concept of local food/economic development? Do we know some hard facts about money and production in the county. LFPC needs to pursue this. We need ballpark figures about what is going on and what the potential could be. The US economic census might have this data. USDA might also have this information. USDA has 3 successful hubs so far: 1) New Mexico; 2) Iowa; 3) East Detroit. Take a look at these. We heard about the City of Champaign support for the Prosperity Garden/Ready School. Council is also studying zoning issues for small urban farms. Perhaps look at revision of codes and policies to allow encourage this. How can communities collaborate on a wider basis. Brad mentions the 1.66 multiplier that UofI uses for all agricultural sales. Could be as high as 3-7 as it is in other areas. Perhaps we should invite a rep from the EDC to a meeting. What are next steps: look at land; processing; extending growing season. How do the parameters of larger institutional bodies get changed. Who is able to do things with public schools in the US. What are the models?

- ii. What are the biggest challenges?—CC Board is mainly urban. Tough to convince them of the importance of farming as economic development. Do we need more education to teach conventional farmers that there are alternatives, i.e., growing more food for people rather than agribusiness. Discussion about “Chicago Local Foods”, the group that approached Bill B. to become a food hub. Standards of size, grade and packaging are a challenge. There has to be a financial incentive for the farmer to make a food hub concept work—need endusers. We need to get producers and buyers together on a regular basis. Rantoul Project is getting close to a grading process by April 1.
- iii. What do you see as the most practical way for the CCLFPC to support a robust local food system in Champaign County?—To advocate ourselves to CC Board, explain assets: inexpensive and productive land; abundant water; newfound ability to extend seasons; needy kids who need food/people with money—distribute the wealth; quality of life; we are promoting farmers [of all types]. What could be our role in the process to connect the buyer/farmer? More of these events need to happen—perhaps more one-on-one. Fast Facts; advocate in EDC; should we work more with cities [as opposed to pitching ourselves to the CC Board]. Sero-Sun project near Chicago—an integrated agricultural development of land and homes. Perhaps we need to concentrate more on the needs of the farmers. Figure

out creative ways to keep peripheral lands near cities in agricultural use. Ordinances need to be developed and/or reworked [Champaign]. We can be a resource to them. Work with them to communicate—i.e., fast facts. Consumers need to know “where to go” to get local foods. More discussion amongst all involved.

3. Adjourn (8 p.m.)