



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

860-713-2507
www.CTGrown.gov

Connecticut Food Policy Council

MEETING MINUTES
September 10, 2020
MS Teams Meeting

Members Present: Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt (DoAg) Bill Seedman (DSS), Monica Pacheco (State Department of Education), Flavia Pereira (DOT), Marcia Pessolano (DPH), Robin LaMott Sparks (End Hunger CT!), Patrick Doyle (KNOX), Molly Devanney (Highland Park Market), Jiff Martin (UCONN), Lynn Peccerillo- Hills (DAS)

Members Absent: Susan Pronovost (Brass City Harvest),

DoAg Staff: Erin Windham, Cyrena Thibodeau, Amanda King, Haley Rowland

Guests in attendance: Peggy Zamore (Danbury Farmers' Market), Jennie Hirsch (Foodshare), Latha Swamy (New Haven Food Policy Council), Martha Page (Hartford Food Systems), Chelsea Gazillo, (Working Lands Alliance)

Commissioner Hurlburt called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM

Introductions: Cyrena Thibodeau, Amanda King, and Haley Rowland were introduced during public comments

Review and approval of Regular Meeting minutes: With the change of language as submitted by Bill Seedman, Bill made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Molly Devanney. All in favor. Motion passed.

Old Business- NONE

New Business-

- **COVID-19 Updates- Challenges and needs:**

Commissioner Hurlburt spoke about the automated messaging that was expected to go out from the Department of Labor for WIC/ SNAP eligibility. The messaging is expected to go out next week and will be sent consistently to ensure that those filing for unemployment are aware of the resources available. He hopes to see an increase in utilization.

Robin Lamott Sparks shared some of the ALICE numbers. 43% in Waterbury, 37% in Danbury and noted that they are also looking at the unemployment numbers.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

860-713-2507
www.CTGrown.gov

Commissioner Hurlburt gave an update on food boxes at COVID testing sites, noting that OPM was not willing to do a broad based initiative due to several concerns. However, there is a plan to limit box distribution to FQHC's and CHC's. They are also looking at current hot spots such as Danbury and New Haven. He then mentioned USDA waivers for schools and Monica gave an update.

Monica Pacheco shared that they are starting to put systems in place to work with the waivers. CSDE is setting up for two programs so that when schools need to pivot as funding for summer meals runs out they are ready. In response to a question about area eligibility Monica shared that it will allow for other household members to receive food at school sites, but it may only be one site in a district. They are still working on that.

Commissioner Hurlburt shared that he was at the NASDA meeting and during the NEASDA session there was an item to support these efforts, which was removed due to the press release. He asked for them to reintroduce because we don't know how this will move forward and the 12/31 deadline doesn't help the school districts given all the issues. NASDA will be engaging USDA on that.

Jiff Martin- Wanted to make sure that there is recognition to SFA's for the work they have done during the pandemic and noted that there is an opportunity to promote Farm-to-School for those choosing to use the Summer Meals program She then shared information on the Apple Crunch. Details to follow.

Robin asked if there were any specific questions for USDA regarding the school meals as she will be on a call with them. Monica said that she would check with Shannon Yearwood and let her know.

Peggy Zamore shared that they are working on several programs in Danbury. Agewell and the Danbury Sr. Center are working together to have food boxes delivered to the center or picked up at the farmers' market. The boxes also include nutrition education materials and SNAP information. They are also doing another pick up at a nearby location that was intended to be used with FMNP vouchers with the remainder supplemented by the market. However, the Savings Bank of Danbury covered the cost.

Bill asked about the delivery and Peggy shared that they work with 2 organizations. Hillside Pantry and Good Samaritan. Commissioner Hurlburt also reported that the United Way/ Doordash/ Salvation Army Food boxes will be going to Danbury soon.

Bill Seedman reported that in September DSS would be issuing emergency supplemental benefits. To date there has been a total of \$117 million dollars in benefits distributed. The



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

860-713-2507
www.CTGrown.gov

program is running month to month as a request has to be made to USDA for funds. October 1st will start the new fiscal year and Income limits, deductions will be evaluated and we will see an increase in benefits. One person household will go from \$194 max to \$204 max. A two person household will increase from \$355 to \$374. He also shared that DSS had given mass replacements for Hurricane Isais at a reimbursement of 20%. Anyone requesting replacement greater than 20% would need to apply individually. The DSS website is updated almost daily and more information is available there.

Molly asked from an application submission, how long does it take for a client to receive the benefits. Bill reported that it is a 30 day turnaround, unless they qualify for expedited processing, in which case it takes 7 days for a client to receive their cards.

Cyrena asked if Peggy had worked with her local hospital to help cover expenses. Peggy reported that they have been a member of the FM Collaborative for some time and the topic has come up, but as of yet they have not funded any programs.

- **4CT Project – Robin LaMott Sparks:** Reported that they will be presenting their proposal to the board of 4CT either this week or next. It's not a yes, but it is moving forward.

She is also working with Patrick Dowling and Chris Meskers to move bulk purchasing for 4 Fairfield County pantries forward. They have been in discussions with Baldor and DeCarlos. Baldor already has a dedicated pantry team as they are working with pantries in New York.

Molly shared that she works with pantries as well, buying at wholesale pricing and repacking for their needs. She suggests that some of the larger stores like Aldi's or Shop Rite might be good resources and offered to reach out to C&S or Bozzutto's if that would be helpful.

- **Update- Hartford Food Systems/ CT Food System Alliance: Martha Page-** Reported that the planning has not gone according to plan given the pandemic, but they are working to change their approach. The all-day in-person summit has been cancelled and they are doing virtual multi-day sessions to take its place. They started with Supply Chain and will follow with 3 more- Assets, Policy & Funding, and Actionable Steps.

They held two listening sessions – one with cooperatives and another with beginning farmers, and will be moving to in-depth interviews going forward. On the farmers' market grant they are looking into Farmers' Market Collaboratives and hope to push that in the fall as markets slow down.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

860-713-2507
www.CTGrown.gov

Finally, they are working with the CT Food System Alliance and the 5 other New England States to determine the intersection of food access, food insecurity, and climate change. This is funded through a grant from the John Merck Fund, and they have applied for funding from the USDA as well. Jiff asked if input would still be accepted if you were unable to attend and Martha confirmed that all input is welcome and it is an ongoing process. Jiff also asked whether there is a consultant on board or if authors for the final plan had been determined, and Martha indicated that they had not.

Public Comment:

Cyrena Thibodeau shared that there is a Climate and Equity Working Group sponsored talk on intersection of race and environmental justice on Thursdays if anyone is interested in attending.

Latha Swamy shared that the City of New Haven Division of Food and Policy had secured grant funding for 2 projects. 1) To scale up a city-wide composting program, and 2) To develop a New Haven Urban Ag Master Plan. The plan will address land access, equity, and the economic viability of ag businesses among other topics. They were one of 3 applicants who was awarded this new funding for a planning grant.

Next steps/ Actions: Share information on the CFSA sessions, Climate/ Equity Working Group. Adjournment. When Latha is ready we will add her to our agenda for regular updates.

Jiff asked if we could add presenters to discuss food system workers. Commissioner Hurlburt suggested Dr. Gould at UCONN or a representative from the New England Farmworkers. Another suggestion was made for Mark Furla with the union representing food service workers. We will follow up.

Chelsea asked if the Department of Agriculture's legislative proposals will be made available to the council and Commissioner replied that we are not able to share until after they have gone through the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). She then asked if next year the council would be able to vet the proposals. Commissioner suggested that they can bring their initiatives to the council, but again, the policy is that all proposals are approved by OPM before they are shared with the public.

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Hurlburt at 3:00.

Respectfully submitted by Erin Windham, AMIR I, September 11, 2020