

DRAFT  
Minutes of the Food Policy Council Meeting  
Thursday, October 9, 2008

Members in attendance: Teri Dandeneau, Linda Drake, John Frassinelli, Gloria McAdam, Mary Parizo, Suzette Strickland (for Lucy Nolan), Dennis King, and David Yandow

Others in attendance: Sarah Desjardin, Jessica Dizazzo, Jana Engle and Ellen Sloane

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 p.m.

1. The minutes of the last meeting were approved with corrections.
2. **Additions to agenda:** none
3. **Old Business & Updates:**

Update on Connecticut Meat & Poultry Producers Association:

Linda provided an update about the Connecticut Meat & Poultry Producers Association. The group now has official bylaws that were submitted to the State. They are now officially a group in their own right and are no longer a subcommittee of the Council. Michael Keilty and Rick Macsuga, members of the both groups, will keep the Council informed of the group's progress.

The Association is applying for a grant for to study the impact of the association on Connecticut agriculture. UCONN, UMASS and URI have a grant from SARE to look at the issues around local meat production and marketing. They have hired Jean King to do some survey work.

**Other Business:**

Update on SNAP:

Mary Parizo gave an update on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly called the Food Stamp Program, and discussed some of the changes occurring over the past year, which included a large increase in the number of households applying for SNAP and receiving SNAP benefits.

The Council decided to write a letter to the Governor to thank her for supporting an initiative in the state Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to expand eligibility for LIHEAP to more households whose heat is included in their rent. Participation in LIHEAP allows households to receive the maximum deduction for utilities in the calculation of the SNAP benefit amount, which in turn would make those households eligible for more SNAP benefits. In that letter, the Council would again encourage the Governor to allow DSS to hire more eligibility staff to keep up with the

increasing caseload. More than 8000 new households are receiving SNAP benefits than were receiving them a year ago.

End Hunger CT! meeting with Kevin Loveland, Director of the DSS Bureau of Assistance Programs:

Suzette Strickland informed the group that the meeting with Mr. Loveland went very well and that Mr. Loveland was very receptive and planned to implement some of EHC!'s proposals to increase participation in SNAP, most notably expanding categorical eligibility to effectively raise the gross income limits for eligibility and eliminating the asset test so that more households would be eligible for SNAP, especially working families.

Produce to Soup Kitchens in Southington:

Gloria informed the group that in accordance with state law, it was up to the Town Health Director to establish rules about from what sources food pantries and soup kitchens could accept donations. Local gardeners wanted to donate their excess crops but the Health Director had prohibited the soup kitchen from accepting them for safety reasons. Since the state law gives that decision making authority to the towns, there is little that can be done to change the town health director's decision. Linda said that the University of Connecticut would be willing to provide gardeners with information about food safety.

Food Cost Issues:

The group discussed the rising cost of food and possible actions to help people cope. It was decided that the most we could do would be to work to increase participation in food assistance programs. Linda told us about a study that showed most Americans don't want people to be hungry. Foodshare is going to conduct a survey to test the public's awareness of the existence of hunger and to ask them what they would do to resolve the problem of hunger.

David Yandow shared with the group a remark he had heard someone make about farmers markets and expressed his concern about the public's perception of farmers' markets. The markets are good for the farmers and provide fresh produce, but not always at low cost.

The group discussed doing more to get local grocery stores to sell more locally grown produce since that would be good for the farmers and help control the cost of food.

**Agency program Sharing:**

Teri shared the list of 34 schools that were selected to participate in the Fresh Food & Vegetable program. Many of the schools are "high need".

The Governor proclaimed the week of Oct 6, 2008 "CT Grown, CT Kids" week.

John updated the group about some changes to WIC:

CT WIC will start using its new package July 1, 2009.

The new package will include cash value vouchers that can be used like Food Stamps, in addition to the usual coupons that are used at farmers' markets. The vouchers will only be accepted in stores for the first year they are distributed, but will also be accepted at farmers' markets starting the second year of distribution.

While there is no cost neutrality rule per se in developing the new package, the fact that the program has not received additional funds means that the new package will effectively have to be cost neutral.

Linda informed the group that the College of Agriculture at UConn has a new Dean, Gregory Weidemann. He may attend a future Council meeting.

**Legislative Agenda:**

Possible legislation proposed in the future may include requesting more staff for DSS, supporting the SNAP policy initiatives EHC! discussed with Kevin Loveland and promoting use of locally grown produce in grocery stores, etc.

Gloria reported that the donations to Foodshare were up by 4%. The previously reported decrease in donations was most likely due to the problem with tomatoes this summer.

<b>Next meetings:</b>	<b>November 13, 2008 at Foodshare</b>
	<b>December 11, 2008 at Foodshare</b>
	<b>January 8, 2009 at LOB or State Dept of Agriculture</b>
	<b>February 12, 2009</b> “ “ “ “
	<b>March 12, 2009</b> “ “ “ “
	<b>April 9, 2009</b> “ “ “ “
	<b>May 14, 2009</b> “ “ “ “
	<b>June 11, 2009</b> “ “ “ “
	<b>July 9, 2009</b> “ “ “ “

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.