

CT Food Policy Council
September 11, 2008

Members in Attendance: Rick Macsuga, Lucy Nolan, Dennis King, Linda Drake, Michael Keilty, Mary Parizo, Gloria McAdam

Others in Attendance: Jean King, Jana Engle, Stan Sorkin, Ellen Sloan, Mario Garcia

- I. The minutes of the last meeting were approved with corrections.
- II. Additions to agenda: None
- III. Jean King worked on an annual report, a draft will be sent via email for comments.

New Business:

Mary Parizo and Jana Engle provided information on changes to SNAP and the FSET programs. These changes included an increase in the minimum food stamp benefits, an increase in dependent care deduction, nutrition education, reimbursements to the employment and training program. DSS is looking to work closely with the Community Colleges and Non-Profits and the Workforce Boards.

Mike Keilty updated the Council on the Northeast SARE Professional Development Program state implementation three year grants with the University of Connecticut, University of Massachusetts and the University of Rhode Island involving the project: Producing Natural Local Meats for Consumers Project. This collaborative effort has three major objectives:

- 1) Production
- 2) Marketing
- 3) Infrastructure design and lack there of

In addition, there will be a Connecticut survey that should provide much needed input on grass based agriculture.

A detailed conversation about upcoming legislation surfaced with the agreement that a “White Paper” would be submitted to members of the legislature with the intent of generating discussion concerning issues as seen by the Food Policy Council. The position paper should be ready for dissemination to the legislature by the opening of the next session.

Gloria led a general discussion involving surplus produce donations to area Food Banks by local gardeners. Concerns have surfaced, by local governments, as to whether or not the surplus donations must go through an inspection process. After much discussion, it was decided that Gloria was going to inquire of the Food Banks in the Southington area as to how the concerns were addressed and get back to Rick.

Mary gave an overview of the Food Stamp program and the automatic increase in Heating Oil benefits for recipients of the program. Food Stamp Program (FSP) recipients are categorically eligible for EAP, and if they receive EAP funds in any amount, they are then eligible for the full Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). DSS has proposed to allocate federal EAP money to pay one dollar to FSP households. By doing this, these households will get the full Standard Utility Allowance, which will result in an average increase of \$75.00 a month in the household's FSP benefit. This process will increase benefits to families, and benefit the state's economy at minimal cost to the state. It was also agreed that the council would send a letter to the Governor along with House and Senate leadership, thanking them for the increase in Fuel Assistance.

Council members expressed concern over farmland preservation and responsible development. An article in the Hartford Courant heightened the awareness of the problem in Cromwell.

Ellen Sloan addressed questions around the Farmers Market guide and the disparity in enforcement by local health departments.

Mario Garcia of the Department of Public Health attended the meeting and spoke to the various issues and forums addressing children and healthcare. He distributed a "Save the Date!" reminder concerning a November 7, 2008 Childhood Obesity conference, featuring Dr. Kelly Brownell, Director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University. The event will take place at the Legislative Office Building focusing on the problem of childhood obesity epidemic.

Lucy Nolan gave a brief overview of legislative priorities for the next session. She also discussed two conferences addressing the issues of hunger. The September 22 and 23 conference will be at the Rocky Hill Marriott and will focus on "Prospering Communities and Thriving Families". The conference will have a featured speaker from Cal-Berkeley speaking to the issue of poverty and hunger, green technologies and how fresh local produce is being distributed nationally in urban centers. The October 27 USDA regional conference will review what can be done regionally to end hunger in the Northeast.

Gloria McAdam advised of the name change nationally from America's Second Harvest to Feeding America. The change was made now because the month of September is being recognized as National Hunger Action Month. Locally the month is being recognized on Tuesday September 16th during the Convoy of Caring where 20 trucks of donations from 20 different companies will be delivering the donations. At least 30 companies have donated. It was noted that Stan Sorkin would be one of the speakers at the event. For the first time ever YTD Food Share did not grow, there was no shrinkage, there just was no growth. It may be as a result of the tomato scare. Many of the fiscal donations have gone to the increase cost of diesel fuel because of the cost of transporting foods across the state.

The next meeting of the Council will take place on Thursday November 9, 2008 at Foodshare in Bloomfield. It was agreed that in terms of meetings for 2009, for the first half of the year, all meetings will be held in Hartford and the second half of the year in Bloomfield at Foodshare.