



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## Governor's Council for Agricultural Development



Phone: 860-713-2501  
Fax: 860-713-2514

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD JANUARY 5, 2012

#### I. CONVENE MEETING

Agriculture Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, council chair, called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. In addition to Chairman Reviczky, the following council members were present: Erica Andrews, Allyn Brown, III, Winter Caplanson, James Guida, George Hindinger, Jason Hoagland, Herb Holden, Jr., Jamie Jones, Michael Keilty, Shelly Oechsler, Kevin Sullivan, Jr., Henry Talmage, and Dr. Greg Weidemann.

#### II. REMARKS BY CHAIR / CHARGE OF THE COUNCIL

Chairman Reviczky introduced himself, explained the meeting was being televised by CT-N, and thanked members for accepting their appointments. He said he believes these are tremendously exciting times for agriculture and that the reshaping of the council will bear great fruit. He expressed thanks to Governor Malloy and to the legislature for allowing the council to move forward and address issues that are far reaching. The chair also offered his thanks to Henry Talmage and Dr. Weidemann for agreeing to serve as vice chairmen.

Chairman Reviczky presented a brief slide show illustrating examples from the states of Rhode Island, Vermont, North Carolina, Illinois, and Iowa, all of which have developed or are in the process of developing state-level plans for food and agriculture.

He said many of these planning efforts have common themes, including agricultural and food-related legislation, focus groups and listening session, and extensive stakeholder input. Many of the resulting state plans also have common components, such as establishment of a food czar or coordinator, creation of food policy councils, training of producers, and development of goals to increase consumption of locally grown foods over a specific time period.

Chairman Reviczky went through some of the details of each of the five states' plans. He announced that the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and UCONN's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources will be hosting Ellen Kahler of Vermont's Farm-to-Plate program on Thursday, February 2, 2012, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Ms. Kahler will discuss Vermont's planning process.

Chairman Reviczky reviewed the status of Connecticut's food system and some major milestones in its development. These include establishment of the Connecticut Food Policy Council in 1997, the first of its kind in the country, the agricultural economic impact study released by UCONN in 2010, and the 2011 reshaping of the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development through Public Act 11-189, which gives the council the following specific charges:

- *The council shall make recommendations to the Department of Agriculture on ways to increase the percentage of consumer dollars spent on Connecticut Grown fresh produce and farm products, including, but not limited to, ways to increase the amount of money spent by residents of the state on locally-grown farm products, by 2020, to not less than five per cent of all money spent by such residents on food.*
- *The council shall also make recommendations concerning the development, diversification, and promotion of agricultural products, programs, and enterprises in this state and shall provide for an interchange of ideas from the various commodity groups and organizations represented.*



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Chairman Reviczky introduced the members of his senior staff from the Department of Agriculture who were in attendance, including Dr. Bruce Sherman, director of the Bureau of Inspection and Regulation, David Carey, director of the Bureau of Aquaculture and Laboratory, Joseph Dippel, director of Farmland Preservation, Bob Pellegrino, director of the Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation, and George Krivda, legislative program manager.

### III. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS

Chairman Reviczky asked council members to introduce themselves, provide a little background about what they do, and explain what brings them to the council. Member bios are available on the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's website, [www.CTGrown.gov](http://www.CTGrown.gov) (click on "Boards, Councils, and Commissions").

### IV. PRESENTATION: "A Proposal for Growing Connecticut Farms, Food, and Jobs"

Chairman Reviczky introduced Jiff Martin from UConn Cooperative Extension and Melissa Spear from Common Ground, and explained that they were part of a working group that met in the summer and fall of 2011 to discuss some of the state's important agricultural issues and to come up with recommendations to this council.

Ms. Spear explained that Common Ground serves as a center for urban agriculture and helps get food onto the plates of urban residents. In 2011, she and other food activists formed a working group to try to come up with a consensus on how to overcome some of the challenges in the state's food system.

The working group diagrammed the major food system components, including production, processing, distribution, consumers, and food waste management, each of which is an economic driver. It concluded that key factors in a well-functioning food system include efficient use of resources; access to adequate, affordable, and nutritious food; and food security. The group also reviewed UConn's agricultural economic impact study, which determined Connecticut's agricultural sector contributes 3.5 billion dollars annually to the state's economy and creates 20,000 jobs.

Ms. Spear showed a pie chart illustrating the make-up of agricultural sales in Connecticut, including \$270 million in nursery products and \$132 million in forest products, and pointed out that while those two sectors were touched upon only minimally in their proposal, they are nonetheless very important to the state's agricultural industry.

She said opportunities for growth include rising demand for locally grown food, new federal nutrition guidelines that recommend making half your plate fruits and vegetables, national attention to the impact food has on public health, room for food retailers to meet demand for local food, the ability to use SNAP at farmers' markets, ample suitable land and greenhouse space for food production, an underutilized regional market in Hartford and other neglected processing and distribution facilities in the state, and a passionate and vibrant community of food activists and advocates.

Ms. Martin described the challenges identified by the working group. These include state procurement policies; lack of coordination among state agencies with food authority; lack of baseline data for food consumption; aggregation, distribution, and processing infrastructure that is inadequate or not designed for a local food system; a complex and burdensome regulatory environment; and a lack of training and education for food entrepreneurs and in nutrition education.



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The working group's recommended actions include improving state leadership, planning, and coordination with regard to the food system; strengthening the path from farm to institution; developing a key foods growth strategy; and strengthening food system training and education.

George Hindinger asked if these recommendations can work for all of the state's agricultural commodities, including dairy and other products. Ms. Spear explained dairy was very important among the working group's considerations. Vice Chair Talmage added that he was member of the working group that produced the proposal, and that the approach of its recommendations was broad but that the issues are complex.

Chairman Reviczky thanked Ms. Spear, Ms. Martin, and all members of the working group for their contribution to the overall effort and said he feels they have presented a model for the council to use going forward.

He then outlined his vision for the council's structure as it moves forward with the charges given it in Public Act 11-189. Referring council members to an organizational chart included in their meeting package, he explained the council can be broken into two broad subcommittees:

- One subcommittee to deal with demand, education, and research, and to address major issues such as farm to institution, training and education, research, food waste management, and marketing.
- A second subcommittee to focus on production, investment, and infrastructure, and to address major issues such as the state's agricultural business environment, planning and coordination, agricultural resources and investments, agriculture/food infrastructure, and education and training.

Each of the two subcommittees would form working groups to address each of these major issues, tapping into the expertise and talent of people from outside the council. He pointed out that there would be some overlapping and intersecting areas among the two subcommittees and their working groups.

Chairman Reviczky suggested that the council meet before the next quarterly meeting required by law. He suggested a facilitated session to establish priorities; to conduct an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and to determine working groups for each major issue. The working groups could then recruit stakeholders to provide input and even help lead the groups when appropriate. He emphasized that this structure would provide the council with opportunities to think outside box and to make meaningful changes.

There was consensus that the council should meet before the next quarter. Chairman Reviczky said he would send an email to members the next day to ask for each member's specific areas of interest and for other issues he or she feels should be included but were on the diagram. He said he would use that information to make assignments to subcommittees.

Michael Keilty said although he had not looked at the organizational chart carefully, he thought the four challenge areas mentioned in the presentation by Ms. Spear and Ms. Martin should be used to form four council subcommittees. Chairman Reviczky pointed out that the charge of the council is much broader than the area studied by that particular working group, and that the council as a whole must focus on more than just food and must address the totality of agriculture in the state.

Shelly Oechsler asked if municipalities and/or county regulatory agencies had been asked for input. Chairman Reviczky assured the council that local input should and would be part of the planning process, emphasizing that outreach and consensus is essential to the council's success.



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Vice Chairs Weidemann and Talmage explained that some working groups in the two subcommittees would have to work in parallel to accomplish their goals, and pointed out that working groups require engagement and ownership from each member, as well as recruitment of expertise from beyond the council.

Kevin Sullivan asked about the timeframe for establishment of the council subcommittees and working groups. Chairman Reviczky said he would ask members for their meeting availability in the email to be sent the following day, and would use that information to schedule both the facilitated session and the next quarterly council meetings.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Oechsler about guidelines to address overlapping areas of working groups, Chairman Reviczky explained that the areas of overlap and intersection would be addressed when the individual groups reported back to the whole council.

### V. REMARKS BY GOVERNOR DANIEL P. MALLOY

Chairman Reviczky welcomed Governor Malloy and expressed his gratitude for the laser-like focus and leadership the governor has shown on important issues related to agriculture in the state.

Governor Malloy remarked on how important the work of the council is going to be to the overall efforts of the administration, explaining that the state's unemployment rate had come down from a high of 9.1 percent to 8.4 percent, and that work to decrease this number had spanned all sectors. He said he believes that agriculture is an important part of the state's economy and he has made efforts to visit as many farms, meet with as many agricultural people, and learn as much about the industry as possible.

He recounted that he had a great meeting with agricultural business leaders during his recent jobs tour and that last fall's special legislative session on jobs had addressed important agricultural issues through legislation such as the \$5 million set aside to return farmland back to production. He emphasized that agricultural employment is important to the state's economy and that he has heard from farm owners who have had a difficult time finding workers with the skills they need. Governor Malloy said he can incentivize agribusinesses to hire people and then can subsidize the training of these individuals so they become qualified to work in the industry.

He said his broad vision is far more supportive of the agricultural industry in Connecticut and would lead to far more numerous products grown, processed, and brought to market in the state, including increased meat production. These efforts could help marginal agricultural properties come back on line.

Governor Malloy commended Commissioner Reviczky, saying he had comported himself extraordinarily well in first year of service heading the agency, executing upon some of the ideas that Governor Malloy has given him, and bringing the governor many ideas to act upon. They agree that agriculture was an important part of Connecticut's past, believe it is an equally important part of Connecticut's future, and are looking for ways to be supportive of it. He pointed out that the state spends some money to set aside certain land for preservation purposes and he believes they need to take a broader view of how those lands could be used in the future to include agricultural uses.

Governor Malloy welcomed comments and questions. Vice Chair Weidemann expressed his appreciation for Governor Malloy's willingness to look broadly at and address the issues and challenges in agriculture within the state. Governor Malloy said poultry and meat production is an area that needs another serious look. He said he is also very serious about getting agricultural land back into production, and invited the council to come up with ideas to that end. He said he is also supportive of purchasing development rights to preserve farmland.



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Erica Andrews said meat producers are challenged by a lack of USDA inspected processing facilities here in the state, which prevents them from selling to institutions. Governor Malloy acknowledged the issue and pointed out that the legislation passed last year improved Connecticut poultry producers' ability to sell to restaurants. He said he is aware of the multifaceted difficulties that need to be confronted, and that they should be confronted.

Herb Holden asked if the state had any leverage over towns regarding agricultural regulations. Governor Malloy reiterated his support of agricultural businesses, but said he is also sensitive to the fact that people typically do not want to live next to slaughterhouses, and that it is a balancing act. He pointed out that Hartford Mayor Segarra said he would welcome a slaughtering facility in Hartford. To some extent, he will help where he can.

There were no further questions or comments for the governor from council members.

### VI. COMMENTS

Chairman Reviczky recapped his plan to send an email asking for each member's top three interest areas, suggestions for other areas, and best dates for facilitated session and next quarterly meetings.

Mr. Keilty asked if the facilitated session should be scheduled around Ms. Kahler's presentation about the Vermont Farm-to-Plate Program on February 2, 2012. Chairman Reviczky said he would ask council members in his email whether they preferred the facilitated session to be scheduled before or after the February 2<sup>nd</sup> presentation.

### VII. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business and Chairman Reviczky adjourned meeting at 2:51 p.m.