



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 Bureau of Ag Development & Resource Conservation



Bryan P. Hurlburt
 Commissioner

860-713-2501
 CTGrown.gov

Connecticut Food Policy Council

MEETING MINUTES

May 11, 2023

1:00 PM- 2:30 PM

Members in attendance: Marilyn Lonczak, Molly Devanney, Monica Pacheco, Patrick Doyle, Commissioner Hurlburt, Dan Giacomi, Martha Page
 Members Absent: Lynn Peccerillo- Hills, Priscilla Cotto
 DoAg staff: Erin Windham, Cyrena Thibodeau
 Public: Heather Peracchio

1. Call to Order
 - A. Meeting called to order 1:03 PM by Commissioner Hurlburt
2. Review and approval of meeting minutes from March 9, 2023.
 - A. Monica requested change to her board member update, edit to funds not farms.
 - B. Marilyn requested the addition that WIC submitted comments on revised food package rule. Change to CT breastfeeding received funds, not DPH.
 - C. Board approved minutes with requested changes.
3. Public Comment: No public comment
4. Old Business
 - A. Updates from Connecticut Food System Alliance and NE Feeding NE Project
 - Baseline research reports will be released imminently. Lot of information to share out. Group just submitted an implementation grant to USDA RFSP grant program and we are in talks about what happens next to move this down the road.
5. New Business
 - A. DEI Discussion: How to increase participation in the food policy council?
 - Martha suggests making rotation of meeting times. Monica seconds and maybe setting aside some time in a future meeting to do the work outlined at the retreat. Patrick recommends instead first focusing on more intentional outreach and then asking them about meeting time and what they would need to participate. Marilyn, do we instead focus on one part of the state at a time? Heather recommends that if each member personally invites one person, then that would make a difference to expand the group. Molly agrees with a lot of what has been said and recommends engaging with the grantees from FPC grant and organize a trip/meeting there and inviting people to attend and engage with the council.
 - B. DoAg Update, Commissioner Hurlburt
 - Local Food Purchasing Agreement: USDA awarded additional funding to states through the LFPA+ program, DoAg distributed it to the existing eight sub awardees to extend and expand their programs. A total of \$6.7 million through 2025 purchasing local product to distribute largely to hunger relief, community health centers,

community distributions, etc.

- Farmers Market Nutrition Program update: This season we are moving to E benefits, DoAg is still in the process of doing certifications. The program will begin July 1st and we are partnering with UConn.
 - Commissioner: USDA announced the regional food business centers, NASDA applied on behalf of the NE states. Awarded \$38 Million and housed at Cornell. Focus on technical assistance and capacity building. Specific outreach and inclusion to BIPOC communities. 6 NE states, Delaware, PA, NY, Maryland. Additionally, they announced the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure grant program- each state dept of ag will receive a block grant of funding. Commissioner is going to be on a call later this afternoon with USDA to learn more. \$420 Million total allotment.
- C. Local Food Counts: Martha- there's a lot of data around NE Feeding NE but if anyone wanted to understand how much food is produced in NE, VT is the only place where you could get some sense of that. All partners are trying to connect with researchers to use existing research methods from VT to gather this data for each state. Talking with the UConn Zwick center and specifically Dr. Connolly about conducting this work. Meg met with Kendall earlier and they are interested in helping to contribute to funding for this work in other states.
- Martha asked the council: is this something that the council sees as something that would be important to CT? any thoughts on how to close the funding gap between what Zwick needs and what Kendall foundation is able to give? Monica does see this as something that is valuable. Erin asked if VT has their data public so that we could see. Martha- the biggest challenge is getting this data from retailers. Allows you to get a multiyear view and to show the value of local procurement. Bring awareness at the highest level and how much does CT consume of what it produces. If we take a regional view, how much of what we eat, can we produce in the region?

6. Board Member Updates

- Dan: legislative session in full effect. Tracking legislation currently on which days DSS would distribute SNAP benefits. The reasoning behind this it allows for consumers to not overwhelm grocery stores and allow them to restock. Also helps with staffing and questions received at DSS. Additionally, watching legislation which would establish an office of the food advocate. On the federal side paying close attention to the conversation on the debt ceiling and what that would do for the WIC program, SNAP (work requirements), and health insurance. Also paying attention to the farm bill and its implications for how the SNAP program is run. Working through plan to distribute P-EBT benefits through this summer. This would be the last time that would be able to distribute because public health emergency ends today. Working with partners at CSDE for who is eligible and who will be receiving. Planning for changes through the spending bill to replace SNAP benefits that were stolen through scamming through October 2022- september 2024, initiating a pilot program. Summer P-EBT made a permanent piece of legislation next summer- a pilot since 2011.
- Heather: SNAP-ED in person meeting on May 17 for all SNAP-ED educators and WIC directors.
- Monica: public health emergency ends today and some of our waivers will now expire in the next 30 days. Providing technical assistance to school food directors though they are still allowed to provide free school meals through the end of the year. LFSIP will be rolled out at the end of the month, total funding is just short of 2 million. Child nutrition program authorization is underway, and they are looking at how they define geographic preference. Many here were at the FINE summit and that was great, many CT folks in attendance.
- Patrick- busy time here at Knox. Had opportunity to celebrate earth day with lots of volunteer events and work connecting to local food and gardens. Do tree planting and a group around Hartford are looking at existing fruit trees and having publicly accessible orchards.
- Molly- consumer price index remained flat from April but still dealing everyday with price increases. Average shopping trip was \$148 and now have gone up on average about \$16. Still have shortage of truck drivers, conflict in Ukraine and impacts for energy supply. Seeing smarter shoppers and they are spending the time shopping from place to place. Working on figuring out new minimum wage. CT food and CT restaurant association working together.
- Marilyn- Update from the Food Protection Program:
Effective 2/17/23, local health departments are enforcing the 2022 FDA Food Code; this replaces the

former Regulations of CT State Agencies §19-13-B40, B42, B48 and B49. We are providing training to the ~350 certified food inspectors since then and will continue to do so. Implementation of the FDA Food Code means the inspectors are using a new inspection form and are enforcing many new requirements for food establishments. Working with SHIP and their healthy food and housing action team, a lot has been emphasized on expanding farmers market where it's needed and promoting benefits, as well as farm to school. WIC has 90 days post end of public health emergency to go back to pre-pandemic operations, there is some ability to extend virtual visits for clients but are encourage more to come in person at least for the initial visit. A lot of the waivers expiring especially those related to our non-contract products after the formula shortage. HUSKY and SNAP are first line for medically needed formula and WIC is safety net. Getting ready to roll out FMNP benefit cards electronically.

- Dan is taking on additional responsibilities and is now program manager for Medicare eligibility among other duties.

7. Adjournment: Commissioner Hurlburt adjourned the meeting at 2:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Cyrena Thibodeau, AMIR Monday May 15, 2023.

