



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

November 9, 2023, 1:00 PM- 3:00 PM via WebEx

Members Present: Patrick Doyle, Commissioner Hurlburt, Lynn Peccerillo-Hills, Monica Pacheco, Mailyn Lonczak, Priscilla Cotto, Dan Giacomi, Molly Devanney, Martha Page

Members Absent: Tida Infahseng

Public Present Kimberley Parsons-Whitaker, Heather Perrachio, Kim Boulette, Jenna Nicol, Marva Ledbetter, Eliza Paterson, Peggy Zamore,

DoAg staff Present: Erin Windham

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by Commissioner Hurlburt
2. **Review and approval of meeting minutes from May 11, 2023-** A motion was made by Patrick Doyle to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Monica Pacheco. All in favor, motion passed.
3. **Public Comment:** Kimberly Whitaker-Parsons, DECD, introduced herself to the council. Noted that she had met with DoAg staff to discuss DECD project regarding incentivizing grocery stores in areas experiencing food insecurity. Marva Ledbetter, Bible Way Temple Nation, Hartford, gave an update on their program expansion and an update on their Food System Capacity Building Grant.
4. **DoAg Report:** Erin Windham gave an update on the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, the Local Food Purchasing Agreement and the CT Aggregator Group comprised of the NW Food Hub, Brass City, Click, Northeast PlanEats, and Keney Park Sustainability Project and the CT BIPOC Food Network. Next quarterly meeting at Click. For LFPA, the latest reporting numbers came in and just between July-Sept 2023 **\$1,309,806.37** in almost all CT Grown products (2 farms from MA, 1 from RI) was purchased across the 8 awardees and distributed to people in need.
5. **Old Business**
 - A. **Updates from Connecticut Food System Alliance and NE Feeding NE Project:** modified agenda to move Old Business to later in the meeting to accommodate Martha Page's late arrival.
6. **New Business**
 - A. Food System Capacity Building Grant – 2023 updates and planning for 2024: An update on the current grantees was sent to council members, and discussion ensued regarding the release of the 2024 grant and any desired changes. Monica suggested omitting community gardens and retailers. Dan Agreed. Marilyn agreed and asked if it made sense to prioritize any categories over others. Patrick recommended increasing the awards to larger grants to less awardees and saw potential need in food policy councils and producers but thought there might be an

opportunity to prop up one place where people are getting food now. (Producers, food pantries, and farmers markets as distribution points. Marilyn thought they could be combined.

Erin will look at examples and see if there is a way to combine those. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Hurlburt shared that on the first round we went broad, but with community gardens we have other grants available. For retail and grocery, we didn't get much interest. For producers we have money in farm to school. Food Policy Councils were something that we wanted to support, and farmers markets need supports as well. I also heard from food pantry where there is a need, but they can't always do the match. Transition and Ag Enhancement Grants were also brought up.

Peggy suggested adding groups of farmers include with markets to together. Commissioner asked about collaboration and coordination between markets. Peggy agreed that would be helpful. Mentioned narrowing down projects to be more specific. Priscilla thought increasing the amount would be beneficial and likes the idea of removing the grocery category.

Lynn also agreed and said that being more descriptive on the categories would help. Commissioner recap- 1. Reduce number of eligible applicants, 2. Be more specific in the descriptions, and increase the maximum award. Council members agreed to remove community gardens, retail, and grocery from the list of eligible applicants.

B. Planning for 2024: Erin reviewed outstanding items from the strategic plan below.

- i. Review membership, and identify any vacancies or gaps with a goal of 30% representation by people of color (November and December)
- ii. Initiate the planning process for the Annual Organization Meeting to plan activities and meetings for as much of the year as possible and to assess the Council's performance in the preceding year. The council agreed that the January meeting of 2024 would be used for this.
- iii. Convening of local groups- Erin asked members to share partners to reach out to or ideas for presentations. Commissioner Hurlburt asked if people enjoyed the outings and thought they were worthwhile. Overall, the response was a yes. Monica noted that if we continue outings, they should be scheduled on alternate months from our meetings so that we can continue to keep business moving at regular meetings. Dan and Molly agreed.
- iv. DEI workshop- Shared [Uprooting Racism Training \(URFS\) – SOUL FIRE FARM](#) suggested by Cyrena.

C. Annual Report to the Legislature: Erin noted that a report to the Legislature is statutorily required and that it was agreed upon to submit in January of 2024. Erin suggested items to include in the annual report and asked if there were anything specific that people wanted to include, offering the topics below as a starting point.

- a. Overview, including FPC History
- b. FY23 Strategic Plan
- c. FY23 Grant
- d. FY 23 Grantee Descriptions and Awards
- e. FY 23 Budget Summary
- f. Program Evaluation



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g. Program Success Stories/ Grantee Highlights

Monica suggested a “State of the State” post-pandemic. Speak to some of the trends of increased needs and what people are experiencing. Heather noted that things are always changing, and it would be nice to highlight those things. Shared some information regarding the Aging Summit. Suggested pulling some information from Foodshare to include in the report.

Marilyn asked if it were possible to include some connection to lactation support for new babies and have that advocacy. She has seen presentations on emergency food and how to add support to that.

- D. **2024 Meeting Dates:** Erin reviewed the dates, and Commissioner Hurlburt noted the opportunity to adjust if that was of interest.

Monica suggested that if the council only met every other month, field trips should be a separate time frame, which would be fine with her. Dan and Molly agreed. Will report to Secretary of the State.

- E. **Board Member Updates:**

Dan Giacomi- Last three plus years we have had a waiver for ABODS. Beginning Dec. 1, we will no longer be able to do that statewide. We will reduce towns down to 137 towns. Approximately 22,000 recipients may no longer qualify. The towns will be alerted and made aware of other exemptions.

Monica Pacheco- We’ve closed CT Grown for CT Kids Week and National Farm to School Month with support from DoAg and UCONN. The first month of Local Foods for Schools had almost \$80,000.00 in sales over 26 school districts, supporting about 40 farms. Free breakfast for all and reduced lunch waivers are in effect. The Farm to School Grant now added a shipping container category.

Molly Devanney- The Connecticut Food Association is working to educate legislators on items that affect the industry. They are working on a strategic plan that includes task forces for membership and recruiting younger members.

Lynn Peccerillo-Hills- We are experiencing issues with products. Monica noted milk in single-serve cartons and single-serve orange juice in schools.

Martha Page- Gave an update on New England Feeding New England, noting that she had just given a presentation to Maryland. (<https://nefoodsystemplanners.org/wp-content/uploads/NEFNE-CONNECTICUT-State-Brief.pdf>) There is lots of progress and she would like to share the presentation at the January meeting. They are looking at who needs to be at the table. They applied for an RFSP grant that wasn’t accepted.

Priscilla- SOT has released the CT Pass Accept Program to support workforce development. This offers a 10% discount on 30-day passes.

(<http://www.ct.gov/dot/CTpass>)

Heather Peracchio- UCONN Extension has two new educators in New Haven and Fairfield County Both are bilingual. Discussion followed regarding pop-up farmers markets at DPH WIC Offices and senior sites.

Marilyn Lonczak- Provided overview of current WIC funding situation- not only shutdown, but also budget cut and implications- added italicized information below in the chat from NWA Monday Morning Report.

Urge Congress to Fully Fund WIC

We're at a pivotal moment to protect WIC. Congress must act this month to prevent funding issues next year, which could impact eligible women and children. Our message is simple: to prevent a WIC emergency, Congress must include additional program investment in the November Continuing Resolution and fully fund WIC in FY 2024.

House and Senate bills fall short of necessary funds for WIC in FY 2024. The current Continuing Resolution expires on November 17, offering the last opportunity to secure WIC funds before potential waitlists and benefit reductions. With an 18.3% increase in child participation since 2020, WIC's role is more vital than ever, serving up to 7 million individuals in fiscal year 2024. Rising food costs and growing participation make it essential to support WIC, providing crucial nutrition assistance to pregnant individuals, new mothers, and toddlers. Take action today.

Also provided update about SPAN (CT-DPH CDC cooperative agreement) being approved, but not funded for the next 5-years.

Mentioned that like SNAP, WIC will have some funds to keep program open, but it will be limited. Provided WIC Shopper link re: Pop-up Farmers' Markets based on question from Marsha.

7. **Adjournment:** Martha made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Patrick seconded. All in favor, motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 2:31 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Erin Windham, AMIR 2, November 13, 2023