



**RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL**  
**Meeting Minutes – November 28, 2016**

**Members Present:**

Linda Blair	Orange County Representative
Michelle Edwards	Chair and RRRC Liaison Member
Clyde Firman	Consumption Sector Technical Advisory Member
Kenner Love	Rappahannock County Representative
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County Representative
Rebecca Sheffield	Culpeper County Representative
Ken Smith	Production Sector Technical Advisory Member
Susan Vidal	Madison County Representative

**Members Absent:**

Kirsten Dueck	Health Sector Technical Advisory Member
Jessica Palmer	Farmland Preservation & Conservation Technical Adv. Member
Taylor Richardson	Education Sector Technical Advisory Member

**Vacant:**

Processing and Distribution Technical Advisory Member

**Guests:**

Khalil Hassan	Rural Madison and Madison County farmer
Brad Jarvis	Virginia Cooperative Extension, Madison County
Catherine Lyons	Madison Farmers Market

**Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Michelle Edwards, Chair, and introductions were made. Ms. Edwards noted that a quorum was present. Due to technical difficulties, Kirsten Dueck was unable to participate via conference call.

**Processing and Distribution Member Nominations**

During the previous meeting, Council members were asked to consider potential nominees for the Processing and Distribution Technical Advisory Member vacancy, and bring suggestions for discussion at the next meeting. Ms. Edwards reminded members that the seat became vacant

when Jill Jefferson left the team of the George Washington Carver Food Enterprise Center. Rebecca Sheffield, Culpeper County Representative, is on the Center's team and can temporarily fill this role until the vacancy is filled.

After discussion, Council members present voted to nominate the following candidates in order of preference:

1. Alan or Kim Clark, Thornton River Orchard
2. Tom or Tina Weaver, Papa Weaver Pork
3. Clair or Neville Turner, Virginia Chutney
4. Molly or Mike Peterson, Heritage Hollow Farms
5. Wally or Amy Hudson, Moving Meadows Farm and Bakery

Ms. Edwards will contact the Council's top choice of candidates and offer them the seat. If both of the Clarks decline, she will proceed to the next candidate on the list until the vacancy is filled.

### **Local Food Marketing Update**

#### ***Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)***

Ms. Edwards provided an update on the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant (FMPP), which RRRC was awarded on September 21, 2016. RRRC sent a press release regarding the award to newspapers in the region and the Charlottesville television stations on September 30. Copies of the release were distributed to attendees (see attached). On October 19, a kick-off meeting was held with grant partners, which included representatives of Piedmont Environmental Council, Culpeper Renaissance Inc. and Madison Farmers Market. As the grant project manager, Ms. Edwards provided the partners with information such as reporting requirements, reimbursement procedures, and outcome tracking. Partners also shared summaries of project plans and discussed opportunities for collaboration.

RRRC is currently advertising for a college intern to assist with several aspects of the grant, including conducting and compiling data for the consumer surveys, photographing Tween Rivers Trail Sites and maintaining social media sites. The intern will be funded by the grant and will be employed during the 2017 spring semester. RRRC will also hire another intern during the third year of the grant to assist with follow-up surveys in order to track any changes in consumer awareness or shopping behavior.

Following up on members' request at the previous meeting, Ms. Edwards distributed copies of the overall project budget spreadsheet both by partner and budget category (see attached). Approximately \$95,000 of the \$250,000 grant is dedicated to the regional local foods marketing campaign, which the Council will oversee. Ms. Edwards pointed out that the "Other" category includes promotional materials, advertising, workshop materials and room rental for events. Categories were dictated by the grant requirements.

Ken Smith asked what the Fringe Category includes. Ms. Edwards replied that this category includes staff benefits, such as health insurance and retirement plans, while Personnel only includes the base salary. Mr. Smith inquired how overhead is accounted for, to which Ms. Edwards answered that RRRC's overhead is included as "Indirect" at a rate set by an independent auditor and approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. Several members asked

why the travel mileage budget for the Tween Rivers project is so high. Ms. Edwards explained that this is a three-year budget covering the entire grant period. Over that time, RRRC staff will be traveling to trail sites every other week to take photographs and conduct interviews for marketing purposes. Staff will also travel around the region to conduct workshops, and participate in meetings and other grant-related events.

Catherine Lyons suggested that Tween Rivers Trail newsletter sign-up be available at farmers markets in the region and partner events. Ms. Edwards agreed to share the suggestion with Jenny Biché, the RRRC who heads the Trail project. Brad Jarvis stated that Sarah Sharp, Virginia Cooperative Extension, is planning a regional Farm-to-Table Conference in Greene County for 2017. Mr. Smith recommended collecting sign-ups for the Trail at the conference.

The Outcome Indicator Tracking Form was also distributed to attendees (see attached). Ms. Edwards explained that this form was provided to grant partners and was modified from the FMPP Grant's Annual Report Form. The Pledged column includes the combined totals of all grant partners, which was included in the grant application. Kenner Love and Ray Pickering suggested that the Culpeper and Madison Farmers Markets include an anecdotal question about why sales increased or decreased. Ms. Edwards agreed to forward the suggestion to the markets.

### **Regional Branding Discussion**

Ms. Edwards next provided an update on RRRC's Make It Happen grant application to the Path Foundation, which the Council had voted to support. RRRC submitted the application to fund a local food branding effort for the region over six-months. The request for \$20,000 with a \$5000 in-kind match was denied on the grounds that it did not match the intent of the grant program, which seeks more tangible results.

Instead, the Path Foundation suggested a possible alternative route to funding. As proposed, the Center for Non-profit Excellence would receive funding from the Path Foundation to provide technical assistance to RRRC via their existing agreement. The Center would then subcontract the Spark Mill to do the work on the branding effort. The Spark Mill provided a proposed Scope of Work with three options, which was distributed to attendees (see attached). Ms. Edwards noted that any option chosen would need final approval by the Path Foundation.

Members raised the following questions and concerns regarding the proposed Scope of Work:

- One of the main goals of this branding effort is to ensure buy-in from the region's agricultural community and related businesses. Therefore, members would like to see an opportunity for broader community input via a public meeting(s), instead of or in addition to a meeting geared toward stakeholder organizations.
  - A 4-hour meeting seems far too long, given the stakeholders concerned, and may discourage participation. Can the 4-hr branding session be reduced, or can this session be split into 2 or 3 sessions around the region in order to allow for public involvement without significantly impacting the budget?
  - If an additional cost is involved to include public input sessions, how much per session?

- More details are needed concerning the proposed stakeholder interviews and community surveys to ensure they are not a duplication of RRRC’s past efforts and those required to be completed via the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant. For example:
  - Who do they intend to interview and survey?
  - What is the survey mechanism?
  - What information is hoped to be gained?

After discussion, Mr. Smith brought a motion for Ms. Edwards to pursue the project further, with Proposal 3 being the Council’s first choice and Proposal 2 being the second, contingent on funding and satisfactory resolution to the Council’s concerns. Ray Pickering seconded the motion. The council unanimously voted in favor of the motion.

Ms. Edwards distributed a handout outlining potential key messages for the local food campaign, based on her research (see attached). These messages can be fine-tuned as more information is gathered through the branding effort. Upon review, council members recommended the following additions:

- Buying local food ensures you know where your food comes from
- Buying local food provides local jobs (as a subset of “Supports your neighbors”)

### **Future Meeting Scheduling and Agenda Development**

After discussion, Ms. Edwards stated that the next meeting will be held on Monday, January 23, 2017, at 6:30 pm in the RRRC Conference Room. Food Policy Council meeting materials will be available on RRRC’s food system webpage at [www.rregion.org/foodsystem.html](http://www.rregion.org/foodsystem.html).