



RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes – September 26, 2016

Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

Jessica Palmer	Farmland Preservation & Conservation Technical Adv. Member
Rebecca Sheffield	Culpeper County Representative
Taylor Richardson	Education Sector Technical Advisory Member

Vacant:

Processing and Distribution Technical Advisory Member

Guests:

Jenny Biché	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Khalil Hassan	Rural Madison and Madison County farmer
Thunder Lane	Culpeper County farmer

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 and welcomed the Food Policy Council's newest member, Susan Vidal of Brightwood Vineyard and Farms. Ms. Vidal will be serving as Madison County's appointed representative.

Processing and Distribution Member Vacancy

Ms. Edwards informed the Council that Jill Jefferson is no longer working with the George Washington Carver Food Enterprise Center, nor has the organization yet found a replacement.

Therefore, the Processing and Distribution Technical Advisory Member seat on the Council is vacant. Rebecca Sheffield, Culpeper County Representative, is on the Center's team and can temporarily fill this role until the Council fills the vacancy. Ms. Edwards asked Council members to consider potential nominees and bring suggestions for discussion at the next meeting.

Local Food Marketing Update

Michelle Edwards, RRRC

Ms. Edwards provided an update on the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant application submitted by RRRC in May 2016, which the Council voted to support during its April meeting. On September 21, RRRC received a Notice of Award from USDA stating the proposal would be funded at the full amount requested. Approximately \$95,000 of the \$250,000 grant is dedicated to the regional local foods marketing campaign, which the Council will oversee (see attached summary handout). The grant period is three years, with the first year devoted primarily to development of the logo, messaging and marketing materials, year two focused on marketing within the region and year three expanding marketing to nearby metro areas.

The grant will also fund further development of the Tween Rivers Trail by RRRC, as well as Piedmont Environmental Council's Buy Fresh-Buy Local guide and Farmer-Chef Express program. Additionally, Culpeper Renaissance and Madison Farmers Market will receive funds to support promotion of their respective local farmers markets. Ken Smith asked how much of the grant funds each partner will be receiving. Ms. Edwards responded that each of RRRC's three grant partners would receive the full amount they requested in the grant proposal, which is approximately \$40,000 each. Ms. Edwards agreed to provide more details on the budget at the next meeting.

Ms. Edwards next provided an update on RRRC's Make It Happen grant application to the Path Foundation (previously Fauquier Health Foundation). Handouts containing the proposal summary were provided to attendees (see attached). Following the last meeting, Council members voted via email to support the application to fund a local food branding effort for the region, and RRRC's Executive Committee also approved. RRRC decided to delay application until it received notification from USDA on the Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant, however, in order to strengthen the application. RRRC plans to submit the application for this six-month project within the next two weeks. The request will be \$20,000 with a \$5000 in-kind match.

Kirsten Dueck stated that the proposed timing would be optimal, because the Make It Happen grant program will be starting a new funding cycle on October 1. The Path Foundation accepts applications for this program on a rolling basis until funds are exhausted.

During the Council's July meeting, Ms. Dueck had agreed to put together a list of the Council's preferred regional marketing campaigns and contact the advertising agencies involved to request a scope of work for the regional brand development. While the scopes of work would have provided further detail on potential costs, timeline, and process, Ms. Dueck stated that providing this assistance would pose a possible conflict of interest given RRRC's grant application to the

Foundation. Ms. Dueck had previously provided basic information on cost, timeline and process based on her experience. Ms. Edward stated that she believes this is sufficient information for the grant proposal, when combined with her own research, to finalize the grant proposal and put the project out to bid.

Tween Rivers Agri-tourism Trail

Jenny Biché, RRRC

Jenny Biché provided an overview of the Tween River Trail mission and status. Patterned after the Virginia Artisan Trail, the Tween Rivers Trail is a virtual trail of agri-tourism sites and complimentary local food businesses that RRRC launched in spring-2015. Complimentary businesses must use local agricultural or forestry products and/or procure them to be included (e.g. farm-to-fork restaurants).

Currently, there are fifty-seven trail sites. Ms. Biché stated that RRRC's Regional Tourism Committee, which oversees the Trail, was happy to keep the number relatively small while building the program and working through initial difficulties. However, they now hope to grow the number of sites. Ms. Biche will be working with the Committee's tourism directors to identify possible new participants and sending invitations.

The Trail's website had 2011 users over the last year, with an even split between men and women and the majority participating in sports and biking. 86% were from the United States, with the next most popular country Brazil and then India. Users searched for "Virginia trail" or were referred by the Virginia Tourism Commission.

The Regional Tourism Committee will hold its next agritourism workshop in January 2017 on social media. It will be open to the public and free to attend. The Committee intends to hold the workshops quarterly on various agritourism-related topics.

Ms. Biché stated that RRRC plans to use the USDA grant to update the website, maintain social media sites, start a newsletter, and build trail membership. If evidence of return on investment can be provided, RRRC can continue to operate the trail by instituting a nominal fee to members and/or with modest funding from local governments or non-profit organizations.

Ken Smith and Kenner Love agreed that showing increased visitation is all that is needed to please vendors. Mr. Smith also mentioned his ice cream business gives \$5-off coupons to Christmas tree farms and pumpkin patches in order to link businesses. Ms. Biché replied that they tried a raffle with little participation, but she likes the coupon idea and will pass it on to the Tourism Committee.

Mr. Love asked whether a list of sites is available and searchable by type, to which Ms. Biche responded yes. Mr. Smith asked if vendors can sign up online. Ms. Biche answered yes, and offered to mail him the forms.

For additional information on the Tween Rivers Trail or to suggest potential new trail members, contact Jenny Biché at jkbiche@rrregion.org or (540)829-7450.

Future Meeting Scheduling and Agenda Development

After discussion, Ms. Edwards stated that the next meeting will be held on Monday, November 28, 2016, 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.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html.