



**RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL**  
**Meeting Minutes – May 23, 2019**

**Members Present:**

Amanda Butler	Education Sector Technical Advisory Member
Kirsten Dueck	Health Sector Technical Advisory Member
Michelle Edwards	RRRC Liaison Member
Rebecca Sheffield Gartner	Chair and Culpeper County Representative

**Members Absent:**

Linda Blair	Orange County Representative
Clyde Firman	Consumption Sector Technical Advisory Member
Brad Jarvis	Madison County Representative
Kenner Love	Rappahannock County Representative
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County Representative
Ken Smith	Production Sector Technical Advisory Member
Tom Weaver	Processing and Distribution Technical Advisory Member
Vacant	Farmland Preservation & Conservation Tech. Advisory Member

**Guests:**

Mike Sands	Rappahannock County Farmer
Thunder Lane	Black Farmers of America

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chairperson Rebecca Gartner called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

**Purely Piedmont Commercial**

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

Michelle Edwards stated that two commercials were filmed for the Purely Piedmont campaign, promoting the region's locally-grown food and beverages. One commercial focuses on supporting local family farms and local communities, while the other focuses on taste and quality. These are the two main reasons consumers purchase the region's local foods, as found in the branding study conducted by the Council in early-2017.

Attendees viewed both commercials, which are available on Youtube at:

- Buy Local: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=albxj0zQO5s>
- Taste & Quality: <https://youtu.be/yxMXG8mi514>

The commercials will be broadcast from June through September on various Comcast television cable channels and Comcast's streaming service. Commercials will air within the region and in the Prince William and Albemarle County areas. RRRC will also promote the commercials via Facebook, email and in ads at Culpeper's movie theater.

Additionally, three Purely Piedmont billboards are running from May through June, and promotional items are being distributed at local festivals. Ms. Edwards shared a photo of children in the Purely Piedmont cow hats at the Warrenton Spring Festival.

For additional information regarding the Purely Piedmont program, please visit [www.purelypiedmont.com](http://www.purelypiedmont.com), or contact Michelle Edwards at [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450.

### **Connecting with Buyers Workshop and Flavor of the Piedmont Event Plans** ***Michelle Edwards, RRRC, and Rebecca Gartner, Virginia Cooperative Extension***

Ms. Edwards and Ms. Gartner updated the Committee on the Flavor of the Piedmont, a family-friendly regional food expo planned as part of RRRC's Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant project funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Farm to Table tasting event is scheduled for Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, for commercial buyers only 3:00-4:00pm, and for the public 4:00-6:00pm. The Battle of the Chefs is scheduled for Thursday, September 5, 6:00-8:00pm. Both events will be held at The Barn at Lord Fairfax Community College in Warrenton.

Sponsors and volunteers to assist in planning the Battle of the Chefs are being sought. Registration for vendors and the general public is open on PEC's events webpage at [www.pecva.org/events](http://www.pecva.org/events). Save the date cards were distributed to attendees and will be mailed to potential vendors, chefs and other buyers.

Ms. Gartner noted that Frank Maragos, the owner/chef of Foti's restaurant in Culpeper, signed up to compete in the Battle of the Chefs. She is working to find three additional competitors. Mr. Maragos also provided advice on planning the event, including suggested chefs, judges and restaurant vendors to contact. Ms. Gartner noted that she is looking for auction items for the event and additional planning committee volunteers. Ms. Edwards suggested contacting the local Tourism Directors for auction items.

Ms. Edwards stated that a free pre-event workshop, Connecting with Commercial Buyers, is scheduled as part of the Tween Rivers Trail's agri-tourism workshop series. However, attendees do not need to be Trail members or register for the Flavor of the Piedmont. Led by Virginia Cooperative Extension specialists, the workshop will inform participants how to prepare for buyer-seller networking events, such as food expos and trade shows, build relationships with commercial buyers, and also share resources for finding a market for local products. The workshop will be Wednesday, August 7<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-3:00pm at the Market at Grelen.

For additional information regarding the Flavor of the Piedmont, please contact Michelle Edwards at [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450. For questions or to volunteer in planning the Battle of the Chefs portion of the event, please contact Rebecca Gartner at [rebes13@vt.edu](mailto:rebes13@vt.edu) or (540) 727-3435. To register for either event, visit PEC's events webpage at [www.pecva.org/events](http://www.pecva.org/events).

### **Regional Farm-to-School Meeting**

***Michelle Edwards, RRRC and Kirsten Dueck, PATH Foundation***

Ms. Edwards stated that she attended the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Farm to School meeting for the Northern Virginia region on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Amanda Butler and several staff of Fauquier FRESH also attended. The meeting was held at Frederick Douglass Elementary School in Leesburg, within the school's exemplary garden. The school has a waiting list of families wanting to help maintain the garden.

Stakeholders developed three goals during the meeting: 1) Help distributors understand schools' procurement values including supporting local farmers and communities, 2) bring additional stakeholders to the table including administrators, educators, parents, and students via a regional workshop, and 3) foster the excitement about nutrition education through child-led healthy ambassadors and advocacy for nutrition education inclusion in the statewide Standards of Quality and Standards of Learning. Ms. Edwards will update the Council on future progress as available.

Ms. Edwards stated that she and Ms. Dueck are planning a farm-to-school meeting at the PATH Foundation office in Warrenton for the public schools in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region. The purpose of the meeting is to better learn what the current roadblocks are from the schools' perspective and then discuss what it would take in dollars and capacity building to overcome those obstacles. Trista Grigsby, VDOE, will facilitate the meeting, and she and Tom McDougall, 4P Foods, will deliver presentations.

Ms. Dueck noted that the meeting was originally scheduled for June 20<sup>th</sup>, but needs to be rescheduled due to scheduling conflicts. She sent out a meeting poll to school staff and will be choosing a new date shortly. [Edited to add: the new meeting date is July 10, 10:00am-12:00noon at the PATH Foundation (see attached agenda).]

Ms. Edwards distributed hard copies of the online survey schools were asked to fill out prior to the meeting. Ms. Edwards will then compile and present the data during the meeting to aid in the discussion. Amanda Butler suggested asking about the student enrollment, not only number of meals. She also recommended discussing how schools market farm to school during the meeting. Mike Sands suggested that the schools should consider awarding points during the bid process for locally sold, locally processed and locally grown foods, with more points going to locally processed and the most points going to locally grown.

For additional information or suggestions regarding the farm to school meeting, please contact Ms. Edwards at [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450.

## **USDA Census of Agriculture- Regional Totals**

*Michelle Edwards, RRRC*

Ms. Edwards distributed copies of USDA's 2017 Census of Agriculture County Highlights data, which she compiled for the region. Due to the many vineyards in the region, she added data for grape production to the County Highlights data set. The highlighted portions denote entries where USDA withheld the data. This is done in cases with too few farm operations, to protect the identity and financial information of individual farms.

USDA surveys farmers every five years, and there is lag time between the time the survey is conducted and the release of the data in order to compile and analyze the responses. The County Highlights are just one data set. The full data set is available at [www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus). Ms. Edwards stated she would email an Excel workbook with both the regional totals and the data for each county in the region with the meeting minutes (see attached).

## **Vice-Chair Nominations**

*Rebecca Gartner, Council Chair*

Ms. Gartner stated that Council members would be voting on a new Council Vice-chair due to Jessica Palmer leaving the Council. Kirsten Dueck has been nominated. The Vice-chair's primary duty is filling in for the Chair when absent by facilitating Council meetings. The Vice-chair becomes the Council Chair when the Chair's term ends January 1, 2020.

Ms. Edwards stated that Council members Linda Blair, Ken Smith and Clyde Firman sent their votes for Ms. Dueck via email, therefore there are enough votes to reach a quorum. Ms. Edwards made a motion to elect Kirsten Dueck as the Vice-chair, and Ms. Butler seconded the motion. Ms. Gartner called for a vote, and all present voted unanimously in favor. Ms. Dueck will serve as the Vice-Chair until January 1, 2020 when she automatically becomes Chair.

## **Member Roundtable**

- **Amanda Butler, Rappahannock County Schools** – Together with Fauquier County Schools, they will be issuing Pop Bucks again this year, which are redeemable at the new Rappahannock Farmers Market located at Penn Druid in Sperryville, Archwood at the Green Barns, and Warrenton Farmers Market. Pop Bucks will be distributed to areas where food insecure people tend to be, but not only such individuals will receive them in order to remove the stigma associated with food stamps. Distribution locations include the Counties' schools, food pantries, libraries, Rap at Home, and various Warrenton community events. The Department of Social Services is also distributing them.

The Bucks follow SNAP guidelines, and therefore they cannot be redeemed for prepared foods. Their face value is \$2.00. Farmers are reimbursed on a weekly basis for those redeemed at their market stall.

After discussion, Ms. Edwards agreed to include the Rappahannock Farmers Market with the other public markets on Purely Piedmont digital marketing, and any new print marketing.

- **Michael Sands, Bean Hollow Grassfed** – The American Farmland Trust hired a new on-site staff person based in Rappahannock County, who starts next week. They also hired a new mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinator. The organization deals mainly with farmland conservation and enhancing the lot of farmers. They have begun conducting on-the-ground projects around the country to help them link with farmers. The Trust is beginning an initial 3-year grant project in Rappahannock County, which grew out of the Rappahannock County farming discussion held last year. The project has two focuses: market development for the County’s grass-fed livestock, and improvement of grazing management for grass-fed livestock.
- **Rebecca Gartner, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Culpeper** – Food as a Business workshop will be held at the Carver Center on August 21<sup>st</sup>, and a Retail HACCP Class will be held in Madison on August 27-29.

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

After discussion, Ms. Edwards stated that the next Food Policy Council meeting will be held on Thursday, July 25, 2019, at 5:30 pm at the Carver Center. The Master Gardeners will give a tour of their expanded gardens, and the Black Farmers of American, Virginia State University and George Washington Carver Agricultural Research Center will provide tours of the grounds and updates on their activities. Council meeting materials will be available on RRRC’s food system webpage at [www.rregion.org/foodsystem.html](http://www.rregion.org/foodsystem.html).