



AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP

Meeting Minutes – July 29, 2014

Attendees:

Janet Bearden	Virginia Food Enterprise Centers
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Kit Johnston	Rural Madison
Kenner Love	VA Cooperative Extension – Rappahannock County
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County
Carl Sachs	Culpeper County
Michael Sands	Rappahannock County farmer

Food System Grant Update and Results of June Brainstorming Session – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

Michelle Edwards provided an update on the Regional Food Systems Grant. Culpeper County received the Regional Planning Grant contract from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and sent the signed copy back to DHCD on July 18, 2014. The County is acting as the applicant on behalf of the region, while the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional (RRRC) Commission will be responsible for completing deliverables and grant administration. \$3,000 of the \$40,000 awarded has been designated to reimburse RRRC for the pre-award activities required by DHCD. The grant period is July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2015.

During the workgroup's June meeting, Ramona Chapman, DHCD, conducted a brainstorming session with attendees. Ms. Chapman's summary of the session was distributed to the workgroup for review and discussed. Attendees determined that most of the items were activities to be pursued by the workgroup as a whole rather than any one individual. Several items were given deadlines of "on-going," while others were tabled until later phases of the grant project.

Kit Johnston suggested adding a task to map out an individual farm operation and its potential new trajectories. Ms. Johnston volunteered to map the Farm at Sunnyside, while Mike Sands volunteered to do the same for a beef operation with Kit's guidance. Additionally, Ray Pickering and Kenner Love suggested reviewing past studies of beginning farming education and

volunteered to research the topic. Mr. Love agreed to contact Dr. Kim Niewolny at Virginia Tech for information.

Michelle Edwards will revise the list of activities according to the group's suggestions and provide the revised version to the workgroup during the next meeting.

Fauquier County Impact of Agriculture Study Results – Ray Pickering, Fauquier County

The final report of Fauquier County's economic impact study entitled, "Agriculture in Fauquier County: Characteristics, Trends, and Economic Impacts," was distributed to workgroup members prior to the meeting. Ray Pickering provided an overview of the study and report completed by Dr. Terance Rephann of the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

The purpose of the study was to quantify anecdotal evidence concerning the County's agriculture economy, in order to inform future policy decisions. Dr. Rephann used IMPLAN software to conduct an input-output analysis to measure both direct and indirect impacts of agriculture on the County's economy. In 2013, the County conducted a survey of the agricultural sector in-house prior to the Weldon Cooper study, and the results were incorporated into Weldon Cooper's work. The report was released in May 2014.

Mr. Pickering stated the impact of wineries, agri-tourism and the equine industry was even greater than anticipated. As a result, the County may need to revisit its zoning ordinance and other policies as they relate to agri-tourism. Ray agreed to provide the County's summary of the 2013 survey results to the workgroup.

Food System Economic Analysis RFP – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

The November draft of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Regional Food System Economic Analysis was distributed and reviewed (see attached). DHCD is now requiring Culpeper County to issue the RFP rather than RRRC. Ms. Edwards will work with the Carl Sachs to do so.

Minor wording changes were suggested by attendees. Adding "cost estimate/budget" within the Proposal category of the evaluation factors was also suggested. Michelle will revise the RFP and send it to Carl Sachs, who will work with County staff to ensure it meets County procurement policy.

Food System Asset Assessment Group Discussion – Attendees

Due to time constraints this item was tabled until the next meeting, at which the group will develop the categories for the asset assessment and discuss how the information within each category may be found. Kenner Love agreed to reach out to the region's cooperative extension agents to encourage them to attend the next meeting, since they likely already have a sizeable portion of the needed information.

Day to Serve Event – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

The news release for RRRC's 2013 Day to Serve Event was distributed for the workgroup's reference (see attached). The governor's of Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and the mayor of D.C. have put out a call to action to "feed the hungry and heal the planet" as part of the third

annual Day to Serve. Last year, the workgroup participated in the Day to Serve by hosting an event at the Fauquier Education Farm. Commission staff, workgroup members, community volunteers, and local school children harvested sweet potatoes at the farm and learned about the sustainable agriculture techniques implemented there. Vegetables picked were then donated to the Fauquier Food Bank.

Upon discussion, the workgroup determined this year's event is best located again at the Fauquier Education Farm. Michelle will contact Jim Hankins at the farm to schedule the event, ideally on a Friday afternoon in late-September.

Next Meeting

The next Steering Committee will be held on August 19th, 2014, at 1:30-3:30pm in the RRRC Conference Room.