



REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – November 18, 2013

Attendees:

Janet Bearden	VA Food Enterprise
Jenny Biche'	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
David Durr	CFC Farm and Home
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Ernie Hoch	Madison County
Kit Johnston	Rural Madison
Don Looch	Piedmont Environmental Council
Kenner Love	VA Cooperative Extension – Rappahannock County
John McCarthy	Rappahannock County
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County
Carl Stafford	VA Cooperative Extension – Culpeper County

Outcome of Public Meetings

The two Public Meetings were well attended with a good variety of participants ranging from local farmers and citizens, to representatives of institutions, non-profit organizations, businesses, government agencies, aggregators, and food bloggers. A total of 15 participants attended the Warrenton Public Meeting on November 13th and 18 participants attended the Culpeper Public Meeting on November 14th. The Steering Committee reviewed the Public Meeting Comments (see attached). It was requested that the comment documented on the Culpeper Public Meeting Comment listing regarding Institutions add language addressing the need for changes in contract processes (ie. schools).

Discussion of Food System Analysis Draft Scope

Draft Request for Proposals (RFP) language for the Regional Food System Assessment was distributed and reviewed (see attached). The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has awarded RRRC initial grant funds to conduct several activities that are to be completed by November 22, 2013. The last activity to be completed is the Draft RFP for the Regional Food System Assessment. Once all action items have been submitted to

DHCD, they will arrange to meet with the Steering Committee to negotiate the terms of the grant, including the award amount.

The Steering Committee emphasized the need to utilize existing contact lists through Steering Committee members and through those participants who attended the Public Meetings. It was also recommended that contact lists of those who attended PEC's Buy Fresh/Buy Local events be utilized. Farm Bureau, who attended the Culpeper Public Meeting, offered to host future public forums and/or meetings and provide refreshments.

An inquiry was made as to whether or not the region had the supply to meet consumer demand, or even the potential supply. The Economic Analysis should address that and some data may already exist (Blue Ridge Produce); although perhaps not with the same scope that the Regional Food System approach is looking for.

The Regional Food System Analysis will be comprised of three phases:

1. An Economic Analysis will be completed on the Food Shed
2. An Assessment of all current Food System Resources
3. Identification of data gaps to be addressed through surveys and interviews

After completion of the three phases, a Strategic Plan for PD9 listing prioritized projects and recommended policy changes will be developed and shared with stakeholders.

After discussing the Draft RFP, the Steering Committee decided to include the following localities in the study area for the Economic Analysis: Prince William and Fairfax Counties, and the cities of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park. Originally, it was suggested that the study area be comprised of the counties and cities that make up Planning District 9 and those that fall under Piedmont Environmental Council's (PEC) Buy Fresh Buy Local Program. However, it was noted that many producers sell to consumers in Prince William and Fairfax Counties and that a true assessment of the Food Shed should include those localities.

Michelle Edwards had contacted both Weldon Cooper and Crossroads Resource Center and requested estimated costs for the Economic Analysis. While Weldon Cooper's estimate was quadruple that of Crossroads', Weldon Cooper's report would be triple the length (60-80 page) interpretation of the data collected and include more interpretation. Several committee members emphasized the benefits of using a consultant who is in-state and who has a well known, respected reputation, such as is the case with Weldon Cooper. It was also stated that a detailed (60-80 page) interpretation was not necessary.

Michelle Edwards also distributed the work plan for Fauquier County's agricultural impact analysis, for the committee's consideration (see attached). The County work plan includes use of IMPLAN software, which is an input-output model, to measure the ripple effect of agriculture on the County's overall economy. Including such an impact analysis in the regional Food System Assessment would estimate indirect and induced impacts; however, it would increase the cost of the analysis significantly. David Sours, of Page County Grown, was satisfied with the results of the foods system assessment conducted by Crossroads Resource Center in the Shenandoah

Valley, which did not include use of IMPLAN. Michelle Edwards stated that while Fauquier County had robust agriculture data that could be used for an Impact Analysis, many of the other counties in the region do not, which would affect the overall outcome of the analysis. John McCarthy stated that an Impact Analysis would have political value, allowing local government and other stakeholders to get non-farming taxpayers to support pro-agricultural decision, although it may not be worth the quadruple cost increase of the initial estimates.

The Steering Committee recommended that Michelle Edwards include in the Draft RFP:

- Addition of Prince William and Fairfax Counties and Cities to the Study Area for the Economic Analysis
- Two estimates be provided—one with the Impact Analysis and one without

Next Meeting

The next Steering Committee is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, January 14, 2014 at 1:30pm at the RRRC Board Room pending DHCD's availability to attend.