

DC Food Policy Council Meeting Notes

I. Welcome & Introductions – by Director Cidlowski

- a. **DCFPC Members in Attendance:** Alex Ashbrook, Alex Moore, Paula Reichel, Tamra Stevenson, Spike Mendelsohn, Joelle Robinson, Chris Bradshaw, Eric Kessler, Caesar Layton
- b. **DCFPC Ex Officio Members in Attendance:** Jeff Jennings, DGS; Pia Brown, DMPED; Lauren Adkins DSLBD; Rob Jaber, DCPS; Dan Guilbeault DOEE

II. Background on the Food Policy Council, Legislative Updates Director Cidlowski

- a. Meeting dates changes due to the holidays for Working Group meetings –
 - i. Sustainable Procurement moved from January 4th to January 18th;
 - ii. Business & Labor group has shifted from the 3rd to the 17th;
 - iii. Urban Agriculture moved from January 10th to the 19th
- b. Starting a new working Group to focus creating a white paper for grocery store access – They will meet on December 20th 3-4pm – sign up by the door, passing around sheet now
- c. Starting a new working group for focusing on equity in our decision making. Sign up for special equity meeting– sign-up sheet by the door and being passed around now
- d. The Comprehensive Plan process has moved through some of its first set of public meetings. Find out more (<http://plandc.dc.gov/>) Additional public meetings in February, with an open call for amendments in March 2017.
- e. The next round of working group meetings in January will focus on developing an implementation strategy for the strategic plan. There will be no formal presentations we as focused more on developing a plan for action and thinking through who/how we want to participate in shaping this work.
- f. The DCFPC Director applied for two grants since the last meeting. One is from a foundation to provide operational support to the DCFPC and to assist with network and coalition building, the second from USDA to hold a conference on a central kitchen facility for DC schools and to create more commercial kitchen space.
- g. The Director is working on a scope of work for the Food Economy study; she hopes to have it out for applications in January.
- h. There will be a presentation on content for the Food system Assessment at next full meeting.

III. Keynote Speaker Presentation from The Reinvestment Fund's Director on Healthy Food Access, Donna Leuchten Nuccio

- a. The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) runs a network of 19 CDFIs, and has funded 88 grocery store projects in the state of Pennsylvania and manages and funds \$950 million dollars of projects. They work to improve food access through financing, research and analysis, capacity building, and public policy.
- b. Challenges for food retail in urban settings include very small food retail margins, high startup costs in urban areas, operating costs are higher in urban areas and typically shoppers come to stores more often and purchase less in each transaction.

- c. The Pennsylvania Free Food Financing Initiative is a partnership to increase access to fresh foods in underserved communities in PA. Priority programs of PAFFFI include healthy food lending in lower income communities and/or communities that have low access to grocery stores. They support small local businesses, both those that are already operating or now and underwrite loans for grocery stores and cooperatives. TRF funds programs to incentivize people to become food entrepreneurs; lower transaction and maintenance costs; shift purchasing habits; assist with feasibility analysis for stores to determine good locations and market viability; introduce new market tax-credit programs (used for projects over 5 million); or work with a development team to try and bring their rental costs down for grocery tenants.
- d. *What do you all do about labor costs?* The Reinvestment Fund, the Food Trust, and another small food organization in Philadelphia used creative financing to close the gap of issues facing labor costs. These organizations created a pool of grants and loans given to them by private investors and the government to market tax credits in order to incentivize projects. The Reinvestment Fund then uses this money to create/produce loans that are below current market rates for healthy food access projects.
- e. *What have the results of the lending been?* 88 new projects were created across the state of Pennsylvania; the grants supported job training; provided in-store dietitians through an Aldi; decreased the amount that stores would have to borrow provided that the loans were stayed below market rates; and set new market tax credits to help offset the costs of development.
- f. *How do you help existing stores?* The Reinvestment Fund often provides existing store (that are often on the verge of closing) with equipment financing. Essentially, helping them to get more energy efficient equipment because it will help to lower the utility costs and have a higher margin for profits.

IV. Food Policy Council Members Present on Working Group:

- a. *Nutrition Education and research:* Tambra provided a report on the last meeting in November and proposed new questions to examine at future meetings: How can we incorporate in-store education How can we define nutritional education? What are existing programs that are offered in DC about nutrition education? A signup sheet was sent around for people to participate in a project to collect local information about nutrition education.
- b. *Urban Agriculture:* The focus from the last meeting was on the analysis of community, health, equity, environment, and education and how it impacts urban agriculture. The meeting had a presentation from UDC and UpTop Acres. The chairs also held forums on the regulations of the Cottage Food Act which closed on November 14, 2016. The Cottage Food Act allows you to produce non-hazardous food items in your home up to \$25,000 in sales. The Act helps to lower the barrier of entering the food economy for the low-income communities. The working group recommends some changes to the Cottage Food Act; expanding the threshold of sales from \$25,000 to \$50,000. They also reviewed at California's laws which allow for cottage food products to be sold to third

parties outside the DC's current structure which allows farmers markets and special events and are interested in tweaking our law in the same way.

- c. *Sustainable and Local Food Procurement*: The last meeting focused on the Healthy Tots Act and examining local procurement practices. The group is addressing the gap of perception versus reality about what kind of food is being served in schools and where it is coming from. Often we find that the type and quality we want to provide is not met with a budget sufficient for that type of food. The group looked at where is the money going and is there enough for Early Childhood Care to provide local food options. The working group found there is not enough funding, funding is difficult to get, and only a small percentage of childhood care providers have access to information about healthy foods or local foods.

V. Strategic Plan Review – Potential Vote

- a. Director Cidlowski presented on the draft strategic plan. Input came from members of the FPC and community members to add language about nutrition education, definitions of key terms, language about health and equity. The plan will be revised and up for a vote at the next meeting.

VI. Announcements & Next Steps

- a. Next DCFPC Public Meeting – February 1st (*Good Food Procurement topic*)
- b. Working Group Meetings – January Dates now live
 - i. Food Equity, Access, and Health & Nutrition Education – January 11th
 - ii. Local Food Business & Labor Development – January 17th
 - iii. Sustainable Food Procurement – January 18th
 - iv. Urban Agriculture & Food System Education – January 19th