

NW MI Food and Farming Network

Business Meeting Minutes

10/18/17

1. Welcome / Introductions

- a. Heather Ratliff *Chair FFN, Cherry Capital Foods*
- b. Brian Bourdages *Tamarack Holdings*
- c. Kelly Lively *Cherry Capital Foods*
- d. Paula Martin *Taste the Local Difference*
- e. Josh Stoltz *Grow Benzie*
- f. Tricia Phelps *Taste the Local Difference*
- g. Brandon Fewins *Office of Senator Stabenow*
- h. Evan Smith *Alden Services*
- i. Elise Crafts *Networks Northwest*
- j. Rick Gleason *Northwest Regional Representative Michigan Farm Bureau*
- k. Lady Palmer *Northwest Michigan Health Services Inc.*
- l. Lizzy Freed *Grand Traverse Conservation District*
- m. Jen Harris *Crosshatch*
- n. Chris Oleson *Grand Traverse Conservation District*
- o. Don Coe *Blackstar Farms*
- p. Valarie Handy *USDA,*
- q. Vic Lane *Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy*
- r. Sharron May *Vice-Chair FFN, May Farms*
- s. Wendy Wieland *Vice-Chair FFN, MSU Extension*
- t. Connor Drexler *AmeriCorps VISTA- FFN*

2. Grant Updates

- a. MAEAP received cost share grants for farm certification.
- b. Crosshatch recently received RMA Grant.
- c. MDARD Food safety Training and Education- Due November 9th.
- d. MDARD Value added producer grant- Due November 7th.
- e. USDA Value-Added and regional food systems grant- Due January 31st.
- f. USDA rural development rural economic development. Focuses on job creation and multi-jurisdictional impact- Due annually on February 28th.
- g. USDA, REAP grant 25 % grant small business matching loan. Focuses on focus on renewable energy and/or energy efficiency projects- Due Biannually October 31st, March 31st.

3. Policy Updates

- a. Farm Bill Update - Brandon Fewins
 - i. Nominations for the committee is a very slow process. Paperwork takes a great deal of time to move through the hands of the senate, and to nominate members it takes five different hearings. Debbie Stabenow is a ranking member of the last farm bill committee, and helped usher in the last farm bill.
 - ii. Unique characteristic of farm bill disagreements: The disagreements are often between region, not political divides. The current commodity prices are down 15% from the last bill, and lots of tweaks and changes are likely to happen. Lots of pressure is on the agricultural programs to be combined or cut. The last Farm Bill absorbed as many cuts as reasonable to the agricultural programs, so we are looking preserve current levels of funding. This isn't a year for innovation, but preservation.

- iii. Issues specific to Northwestern Michigan: Mitigated sediment loading into great lakes.
 - iv. FSMA currently is starved by staff and dollars. Agricultural issues are not a current priority with current administration, not enough people are in place to carry out traditional roles. Administration doesn't have an understanding of current environmental issues. Specialty crops has always been a big thing Senator Stabenow was interested in.
 - v. NW Michigan region is on the leading edge of agricultural advancement and conservation. While this is a great honor, this is also a great responsibility.
 - vi. The current environment regarding the farm bill is focusing on keeping exists programs and funding. It's not the current environment for starting innovative things.
 - vii. **Action item:** Look at policy updates for FFN to lend support. Collect policies and support, send our own letter to respective leadership.
 - viii. **Action item:** Before next business meeting, determine what is FFN mechanisms for dealing with policy updates.
- b. Farm Bureau Update - Rick Gleason
- i. Farm Bureau was started as a grassroots operation to help protect agricultural interest at the federal and state level of policy formation. Directives are developed at county level and move to state level. The 98th statewide convention for this will happen November 28-30th.
 - ii. The current topics of resolutions to be discussed at the state convention include Industrial Hemp, Elections, Heath, Recycling agricultural plastics, Wildlife management, and Immigration.
 - iii. All previous approved policies are available for review on [farm bureau website](#). Federal representatives work off of this policy for much decision making, so what the Farm Bureau approves is very important for the agricultural community.
4. Task Force Updates
- a. Local Food Sales - Tricia Phelps
 - i. September study session update: We hosted a Local Food Challenge at area grocery stores which accumulated a total of 89 signatures at four different locations across 4 counties. We also asked for suggestions for what would encourage participants to buy more locally. Responses included increased availability and signage.
 - ii. Task force currently trying to develop a consumer focus group which could help bring consumer's perspective to the group. We collect about 9 email address as potential members from customers who signed the Local Food Challenge and indicated interest in further participation in food system change
 - b. Farm to Institution - Kelly Lively
 - i. One Sheet metric updates: decide which data points to keep in this years reprints, which points of data to look to add for reprints.
 - ii. Farm to Institution task force to host March study session. Currently looking to a pilot project at Munson's cancer center as a possible topic.
 - c. Agribusiness Generation - Evan Smith
 - i. November 9th Study session agenda:
 - 1. H-2A temporary housing summary and analysis
 - 2. Elise Crafts present and summarize possible applications for home sharing application.

3. Scott Smith Local housing summit update
 4. Affordable seasonal housing for restaurant workers by Jeff Wiltse
 - d. Farmland Resources - Brian Bourdages
 - i. One sheet metric updates underway
 - ii. Farmer to Farmer narrative and data - Seth Plotkin leaving the area, keep your ears open for a good qualified replacement, in the meantime Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy will pick up the slack.
 - e. Food Access - Meghan McDermott
 - i. Facilitated a collaboration of network partners to apply for the MSU CRFS Local Food Policy Network rural food access survey granted by MSU extension.
5. Regional Updates
- a. Grand Traverse / Leelanau - Paula Martin
 - i. Culinary medicine conference Update: 48 health care providers 30 practitioners participated. 58-58 would recommend for a training education. It was a certified local food event. This conference was a way of demonstrating chronic disease management through food systems. Food access guide developed by Food Access Task force was a huge hit. This conference could be a bigger thing than we know, as a coalition of people who want to continue and expand this had explained their interest for continuing events like this in the future.
 - b. Antrim / Kalkaska - Jen Harris
 - i. Crosshatch was recently awarded RMA grant in September which funds network partners to host various farmer training programs including Crosshatch Field School, Grow Benzie, the Local Food Alliance / NCMC's workshop series, the Food and Farming Network Summit, etc.
 - ii. Crosshatch Field School Spring, Summer, and Fall (Different workshop format from years past. Growers want advanced level education, more hands on work, and opportunities to network. These day long, on farm site, mini-conferences will hope to meet those needs.)
 - iii. Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference 1/26-1/27. It will be similar format to years past: Friday: farm and then evening keynote. Saturday: conference (only change will be a two day trade show, which is exciting for our vendors.)
 - c. Emmet / Charlevoix - Wendy Wieland
 - i. Around the table, good food for all, November 8th, 4-8pm at North Central Michigan College. Great way to expand dialogue on making healthy food accessible for all people, some LFA action has come out of organic conversations at previous years events. Like us facebook! Vote with local food hero!
 - d. Wexford / Missaukee - Elise Crafts
 - i. Networks Northwest is working with city of McBain on developing a master plan which includes a section on agriculture and could potential become a source data of food access within that community.
 - e. Benzie / Manistee - Sharron May and Josh Stolz:
 - i. Good momentum for Grow Benzie has come from partnering with a local television program. Currently working on a video montage project called my neighbor, focusing for local folks and farmers around Michigan.
 - ii. Grow Benzie held a seed saving potluck which experienced much success and offered a great dialogue for this topic.

- iii. Sharron, Valarie, Tricia, and Wendy currently are collaborating on Funding Local Food and Farms conference.

6. Calendar

- a. November 9 — Local Housing Solutions for Food Workers Study Session (Agribusiness generation)
- b. December 20 — Business meeting
- c. January 17 — Study session (Food Access)
- d. February 23— Farm Route to Prosperity Summit
- e. March 21 — Study session (Farm to Institution)
- f. April 18 — Business meeting
- g. May 16 — Study session (Farmland Resources)
- h. June 20 — End of the year celebration

7. General Updates

- a. Michigan Local Food Council Network In-Person meeting.
- b. Funding Local Food and Farms Conference, February 20th- Grow Benzie, March 6th- Charlevoix Public Library.
- c. Volunteers for February Summit Committee: Elise Crafts.
- d. Apple Crunch October 25th - Groundwork Farm to School Celebration at Glen Lake School
- e. Partnership on Dolores Film Screening March 8th- Dennon Museum Center, Northwestern Michigan College. **Action Item:** Send suggestions for panelists regarding labor and migrant worker community to Connor at foodandfarmingnetwork@gmail.com