

## NWMI Food and Farming Network Business Meeting Minutes

### 11/16

#### **\*In attendance**

*Rod Robinson* as Agri-business Task Force leader, *Kelly Lively* of Cherry Capital Foods, *Meghan McDermott* of Groundwork Center, *Brian Bourdages* of Tamarack Holdings, *Elise Crafts* of Networks Northwest, *Bill Palladino* of Taste the Local Difference, *Emma Beauchamp* of Taste the Local Difference, *Scott Smith* of the Local Food Alliance, *Sharron May* of The May Farm, *Tasha Lapinski* of Baker College, *Rachel Salinas* of Baker College, *Maddy Baroli* of NWMI Food and Farming Network.

#### **\*Grant Updates**

- Brian just submitted two Value Added Producer Grants through Food for Thought
  - \$ for equipment and training for planned expansion of holdings under Tamarack
- Bill applied for the same Value Added Producer Grant
  - \$ to transform a suite space in the food hub from storage into a 'local food media kitchen' to create innovative marketing materials that compete w/ the big wigs!
- Munson Hospital has applied for a large grant through the Michigan Health Endowment Fund. The grant has several components that will be managed by key partners. Sarah, through MSU E is part of this well as Groundwork, Taste the Local Difference, and TBA ISD.
- Groundwork, Maddy and Bill are applying for the Local Food Council Network Seed Grant through MSU Regional Food Systems
  - Focusing on a feasibility study related to potential models for affordable housing that meets a diversity of needs in our region

#### **\*Policy Updates**

- Consensus is that our policy radar has to be on *high* alert starting now
- Farm Bill tours start this spring
- Pot of USDA money channeled through Rural Development State Director
  - Oversees 5 regional representatives that distribute the money for projects
  - They tend to be very open and cool- let's reach out!
- Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization approaching

#### **\*Reflections on the Good Food Summit**

- Brian, Sam Plotkin and Julie Stoneman did a panel on farmland preservation
  - Introduced mechanisms for protecting farmland, and future farmland investment firm and farmer to farmer database
  - High interest, also introduced the importance of networks such as ours to the audience and distributed info
- Meghan was on summit planning board, she asked our group: how was the Northern MI presence compared to years past?
  - Consensus was that it was greater than usual, yay!

- Brian Bates on main panel, U.P. highlight video and farmland preservation panel all contributed to greater exposure

### **\*Task Forces**

- **Local Food Sales- TF Leader= Tricia**
  - Compiling a bigger pool to draw purchasing data from (to give a more accurate picture of direct and indirect sales in our region)
  - Working on an infographic aimed at the general public
    - Looking at capital and energy flows associated with a locally produced apple, explains terms associated with a regionally focused food system
- **Farm to Institution- TF Leader= Kelly**
  - Last year's task force goal was to do more work with hospitals
    - We are seeing much more commitment to local food at Munson
      - Kelly is working closely with the cancer institute
  - Looking for data and resources to make a strong case for local foods to institutions that are not on board yet
    - Specifically want to observe link between health and learning in the classroom
- **Agribusiness Generation- TF Leader= Rod**
  - Evan Smith is making progress with NMC on Food Safety Education curriculum
  - Capital resources database is fairly robust and will be added to FFN website
  - Stronger Economies Together, USDA Rural Development Project in Benzie County, Grand Traverse County, Kalkaska County, Manistee County.
    - Sharron May has been attending meetings, "TC participation=TC buy in"
    - Last meeting has happened, report to be released soon
- **Farmland Resources- TF Leader= Brian**
  - Creating a list of resources and mechanisms for farmland protection in our region
  - Timeline for the Farmland Investment program looking good
    - Will be getting feedback from major stakeholders in the coming months, looking to fundraise over the course of the next year
  - Farmer to Farmer web database project is getting a designer and aims to be running by growing season
- **Food Access- TF Leader= Meghan**
  - Mini-grant project moving along very well
    - Developing a 16 page food access and food use resource packet (each page developed by a different organization/pantry)
  - A coalition of pantries has formed to engage in collective purchasing practices

### **\*Forming Network Food Summit Planning Committee**

- Getting a team together to plan logistics and activities for the February 2017 Food Summit
  - Emma, Kelly and Elise are on board to help plan
  - Let Maddy know if you want to get involved or have any input

### **\*General Updates**

- Michigan Farm Bureau Annual Conference happening in Grand Rapids on 11/29
- Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference happening 1/27 and 1/28
- Powerful new data from Heart of the Lakes conservancy collective on farmland loss and preservation trends will be available in a soon to be released report
- Manistee and Kalkaska LiveWell coalitions are making great progress in their local food movements with money from the MI Health Endowment Fund
  - Both groups are collaborating with FFN to plan their own food summits for this spring
- Maddy proposed idea of getting cooperative housing for food and farming workers
  - Many people had input and experience to offer in this pursuit
    - Elise Crafts- currently working with University of Michigan group to research feasibility of 'homesharing' in our ten county region
    - Meghan has looking into starting a cooperative here before, suggested getting in touch with Rotary. Groundwork is making moves in housing.
    - Sharron mentioned that she has property in Crystal Mountain

### **Next Meeting Date:**

- Suggestions for our next FFN Study session are being accepted. December 21st is our planned meeting. Please stay tuned.