

# Cumberland County Food Security Council Meeting Notes

Thursday, August 13, 2015, UMaine Extension, Cumberland County, Falmouth, ME

Attending: Clara Whitney, Kathy Savoie, Tom Merrow (Coop Ext. Intern), Mary Zwolinski, Richard Rudolph, Sarah Murphy, (New OA representative), Kathy Poulin (New ME DHHS Representative), Joanna Moore, Nadeen Daniels, Jim Hanna

Our meeting goals included:

- Introducing ourselves and welcoming new members
- Affirming initial plans for Cumberland County Food System Summit

GFC will be organizing a

- Convening meetings of Advocacy Work Groups
- Reporting work group progress to Council and scheduling next Advocacy Work Group meetings
- Networking and sharing food security activities and potential collaborations
- Confirming the Council's next meeting dates

## Introductions

We welcomed new Council members including Kathy Poulin, Community Programs Manager of ME DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services. She replaces David Collins on the Council. Sarah Murphy is the new Healthy Lakes Nutrition Education Coordinator at Opportunity Alliance. She joins Zoe Miller representing OA on the Council and the Growing Food Connections steering committee.

Also present was Tom Merrow, an intern with Cooperative Extension attending UMO.

## Growing Food Connections: Cumberland County Food System Summit

The Growing Food Connections steering committee has decided to host a Cumberland County Food System Summit. The goal of the meeting will be to educate town officials about the opportunities to build food security and to use food for economic development at the municipal level. It will be modeled after similar summits organized by Nadeen Daniels for Cumberland County Government. In addition to municipal officials the audience will include CCFSC members and participants in the ME Network of Community Food Councils. The Council affirmed the GFC steering committee's plans as shared at this meeting. (Since this meeting, the GFC steering committee has sent a tentative time frame for the summit of late winter or early spring 2016.

## Education/Advocacy Work Groups

We decided to stay together and discuss the work group progress rather than break into individual committees.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization-(Clara, just back from maternity leave, led this conversation.) Marker bills are including improvements to summer feeding including non-congregate options (food transported to children) and summer SNAP benefit increases for families. A request to reach out to our Senate offices was emailed to list serve prior to meeting.

It is looking likely that Congress will extend current programs until after the election. If that happens, then we will work with a new Congress on program improvements in 2017.

Minimum wage-(Richard led discussion)

Proposals to date: Portland has passed an increase to \$10.10 an hour, which will be implemented in January 2016. The tipped wage is still to be determined. At the September 9 meeting the Council will consider various amendments to the Minimum Wage Ordinance, including amendments to the tipped employee wage credit, removal of the Consumer Price Index escalator, and amendments addressing minor workers.

ME Peoples Alliance-Have gathered signatures to put a statewide referendum on ballot in 2016. It would increase minimum wage to \$12 an hour.

Portland Ballot Initiative-Led by Maine Greens will be voted on in November to create \$15 living wage in Portland.

CCFSC members present were generally supportive of all proposals. It is still under consideration how to publicly express our support. Leadership team is considering options.

Senior nutrition (Kathy Poulin led discussion.)

Medicaid waiver included Meals on wheels covered as service (for people under 60 disabled). Budget increase recommended by DHHS. Our advocacy can be around where resources are spent. We have the highest percent of elders in country with least percent spent on meals. It has been an ongoing case of flat funding with increasing need. Some states have 40% funding for Senior meals. We have a flat \$275,000.

We rank #1 in New England in senior food insecurity and #17 in country.

Joanna Moore discussed how Crosswalk's Food Pantry Manager database provides reports on senior hunger. Every pantry that collects that information is eligible for additional resources to serve the hungry seniors in their community.

It was agreed that the Work Groups would next convene at our CCFSC meeting on October 8 unless events require meeting sooner.

- **Networked and shared food security activities and potential collaborations**

Joanna Moore discussed the **Second Annual Hunger Action Month** (Lake Region) Empty Bowl Dinner 9/17/15 features 7 or 8 speakers that are Council members or are with organizations represented on Council. There are many exciting events. Info will be circulated through the listserv.

**Summer Food and Education** A number of Council members discussed their involvement with feeding children in the summer. Cooperative Extension has been providing the 4H Summer of Science program. There has been a lot of promotion with signs out, radio ads and flyers. We served about 17.5% of eligible children statewide last year. We still need better and localized data. We are seeing progress. Jim reminded the Council about the ad hoc meeting we hosted in April 2013, bringing a diverse group providers together. It was the beginning of much collaboration including across sectors so there is much more education happening at summer meal sites in Cumberland county now

**SNAP/WIC at Farmers Markets** Cultivating Community, Opportunity Alliance are involved and will be collecting data. Senior Farmshare outreach went from DHHS to local agencies, like SMAAA. The paperwork for that program is a burden on the farmers and participants. On a related note, Good Shepherd Food Bank has increased from 5% to over 30% of their food being produce. (Last year GSFB purchased 1 million pounds and distributed another million

pounds of donated local produce.) This has resulted in increased food costs. Some Rotary clubs support local food into pantries. They are developing a new cold storage hub (Kathy Helming is a resource on food processing/safety).

**National Commission on Hunger** held a hearing on July 30 in Portland. Most of the testimony was from Maine people though there was representation from VT, NH and MA. Jim provided a summary of testifiers including many representatives of or connected to our Council. On behalf of the Council he encouraged the Commission to:

- Recommend maintaining the nutrition standards for meals established in the last CNR.
- Articulate the role of the economy in causing hunger in our communities and advocate for a fairer economy.
- Establish shared measures at the national level so we can measure our progress and be accountable for the resources we invest in solving hunger.

In the brief time allotted, Jim chose these points because they were not covered by other advocates and because he thought these were appropriate for being addressed at the national level.

**UNESCO Application** Jim has been part of a committee preparing an application to the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization. The proposal is for the City of Portland to be considered an international creative city in the area of Gastronomy (Food). Jim was involved to make sure the voices of all the people working to build food security in Portland/ Cumberland County were represented. The application was submitted mid-July and we should know the result in December.

• **Evaluated meeting**

General comments were that it was a good meeting

• **Confirmed the Council's next meeting dates**

2015 Remaining Meeting Schedule:

Council, 10/8/15, 12/10/15

Leadership Team, 9/10/15, 11/12/15 (Potential reschedule)

Growing Food Connections, 8/18/15, 8/25/15, 9/??/15

Advocacy work group meetings: 10/8 Council meeting or as needed