

Minutes of the First Meeting of the

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DATE: June 29, 2021

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

PLACE: Virtual via Video and Telephone Conference

Members Present

Danielle Nabak, ChairHealthy Communities Coordinator for Milwaukee County, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension
Adam LaschLasch Livestock and Land Solutions
Amy MacemonHealthy Communities Coordinator and FoodWise Educator in Racine and Kenosha Counties, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension
Andy HolschbachDirector, Ozaukee County Land & Water Management Department
Carly HegartyDirector of Consumer Environmental Health, City of Milwaukee Health Department
Kate MadisonSenior Planner, City of Milwaukee Department of City Development
Chris GutschenritterLand Protection Manager, Tall Pines Conservancy
Donale RichardsFood Systems Program Manager, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Erick ShambargerDirector of Environmental Sustainability, City of Milwaukee Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO)
Jason CulottaPresident, Midwest Food Products Association
Jennifer CaseyExecutive Director, Fondy Food Center
Kristin KrokowskiCommercial Horticulture Educator for Waukesha County, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension
Margaret MittelstadtDirector of Community Relations, Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative
Maryann ZimmermanGeneral Manager, Walworth County Food Pantry & Diaper Bank
Mike Maki (alternate for Tony Geliche).....Community Development Specialist-Home Program, City of Kenosha Department of City Development
Nina TaylorDirector, Kenosha County Division of Workforce Development
Randal KohlManager – Long Term Care, Walworth County Health and Human Services Department
Richard DiazWalnut Way Conservation Corp.
Robin GramsAssociate Planner, City of Waukesha Department of Community Development
Rosamaria MartinezVice President of Community Health Initiative, Sixteenth Street Community Health Center
Sherrie TusslerExecutive Director, Hunger Task Force

Guests and Staff Present

Ben McKayDeputy Director, SEWRPC

Montre MoorePublic Involvement/Outreach Specialist, SEWRPC
Kevin Muhs.....Executive Director, SEWRPC
Miranda PagePlanning Fellow, SEWRPC
Nikki Payne.....Public Involvement/Outreach Manager, SEWRPC

CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Nabak called the meeting of the Regional Food System Plan Advisory Committee to order at 11:05 a.m., welcoming those in attendance. Roll call was accomplished through individual introductions by each of the Committee members and SEWRPC staff.

OVERVIEW OF SEWRPC & THE ROLE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Muhs provided background information on SEWRPC and the role of the Advisory Committee in the planning process. Mr. Muhs noted that SEWRPC is the official areawide advisory planning agency for land use and infrastructure for Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha Counties and the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Region.

Mr. Muhs noted that the Advisory Committee will be reviewing and providing input on each chapter of the Regional Food System Plan, as they are prepared. Ms. Nabak asked if there were any questions or comments on the agenda item. There were none.

DISCUSSION OF PLANNING PROCESS & KICK-OFF PUBLIC OUTREACH EVENT

Ms. Nabak indicated that the next agenda item was a discussion of the planning process and kick-off public outreach event. Mr. McKay explained that three rounds of public meetings will be conducted, at key points in the planning process, the first of which will be kick-off meetings to take place in late summer of 2021. Mr. McKay also noted that the kick-off meetings will include an introduction to the regional food system and community input activities to share potential plan topics, obtain input on the importance of those topics, and identify topics that may be missing from the plan. He then noted that Ms. Page would be reviewing the public outreach plan that is presented in Chapter 1 of the Regional Food System Plan. Ms. Nabak then asked if there were any questions or comments on the planning process and kick-off public outreach event. Ms. Madison commented that the City of Milwaukee is updating some of its area plans, which may create an opportunity for public outreach on the regional food system plan.

CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY DRAFT CHAPTER 1, *INTRODUCTION*, OF THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PLAN

Ms. Nabak indicated that the next agenda item was a review by Ms. Page of draft Chapter 1, *Introduction*, of the Regional Food System Plan. She also noted that the draft Chapter 1 was distributed to members prior to the meeting. She then asked Ms. Page to review the chapter.

The following comments and discussion points were made during the review:

1. Ms. Krokowski noted that it is important to separate agricultural production and food being produced for the local food system. She emphasized the need to identify commodities intended for export out of the Region. Mr. Lasch noted that processing capacity is an important consideration.

2. Ms. Nabak noted that, in addition to paid newspaper advertisements, paid social media advertisements can be an effective way to reach community members.
3. Ms. Casey noted that long-term farmland preservation is a key issue to address. Ms. Mittelstadt commented that ensuring local farmers are able to continue to farm the land is a critical component of the regional food system. Mr. Lasch noted that the demographics of current landowners, particularly those nearing retirement age, may influence future land use. Ms. Krokowski noted that, in Waukesha County, agricultural land has been selling for \$20,000 per acre. Mr. Gutschenritter noted that tenure of agricultural land is an important topic to be included in the plan.
4. Mr. Holschbach noted that the plan will address soil health and suggested adding a reference to soil health to Chapter 1. Ms. Macemon suggested adding a reference to health equity as a bullet in the outline at the end of Chapter 1. Ms. Krokowski commented on the importance of ensuring local farming is financially sustainable in the Region and Ms. Macemon commented on the importance of access to food retailers. Ms. Nabak commented on the importance of the relationship between the regional food system and other regional systems such as transportation, the economy, and land use and housing.
5. Ms. Zimmerman noted that she would like to see some other grocers, such as Piggly Wiggly, on the Advisory Committee. She also noted that Gordon Food Service would be another good addition to the Committee. Ms. Gutschenritter noted that Sendiks has recently been including more local producers on their shelves. Ms. Krokowski noted that Festival Foods sponsors a number of farmers markets in their parking lots around the State. Ms. Nabak noted that Ms. Mittelstadt represents Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative and Mr. Culotta represents the Midwest Food Products Association. Mr. McKay noted that another Committee member representing food retailers could be added if there is interest.
6. Ms. Mittelstadt noted that revitalizing accessible regional meat and poultry processing is an important consideration.
7. Mr. Shambarger commented that “food waste” is one of the topics that will be addressed in the plan and suggested referring to it as “food recovery.” He then referenced the EPA food recovery hierarchy. Ms. Tussler then noted that while we don’t want to waste food, the EPA model of feeding hungry people “extra food” places them in the position of eating poor quality food and creates public health problems including diabetes, hypertension, and morbid obesity.
8. Mr. Richards emphasized the need for infrastructure for both transportation and commercial-grade processing facilities. Mr. Gutschenritter noted that mobile processing facilities are a common point of discussion and that he was not aware of any research into the economic viability or permitting issues specific to Southeastern Wisconsin.
9. Ms. Madison asked if the plan would include a discussion of land use and zoning to preserve agricultural land in future chapters. Mr. Muhs responded that one of the cornerstones of the regional land use plan is the recommendation to preserve prime agricultural land in the Region and noted that this plan will seek to build upon that recommendation.

10. Mr. Diaz noted that a better term than food deserts is food apartheid because the term food deserts implies that this is a naturally occurring phenomenon rather than the result of policies that have created the conditions of food insecurity in these areas. Ms. Mittelstadt agreed with this comment.
11. Mr. Richards commented on income disparities among farm workers and the need for long-term education and common community spaces. Ms. Martinez noted the need to focus on the virtual access gap for virtual public events, because some residents may be unable to access the technology needed to attend. Mr. Muhs responded that Commission staff will make arrangements to accommodate anyone who wants to participate, even if they do not have access to the needed technology. Ms. Martinez then asked if the Commission's community partners represent a wide socio-economic range of the Region's population. Mr. Muhs responded that the community partners have been very helpful in outreach efforts to people of color, low-income residents, and people with disabilities.

Ms. Nabak asked if there were any further questions or comments on the agenda item. There were none. Mr. McKay thanked the Advisory Committee for the discussion and comments. Mr. McKay then noted that many of the comments would likely be addressed in greater detail in future chapters of the report. Ms. Nabak then asked for a motion to approve Chapter 1, *Introduction*, of the report, noting that comments from the Advisory Committee may be incorporated in future report chapters as appropriate. Mr. Richards moved for approval and Ms. Krokowski seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Nabak asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Nabak asked if there were any announcements or correspondence. Mr. Richards shared information about the Wisconsin Women in Conservation Workshop series hosted by MFAI & collaborative partners. Mr. Gutschenritter noted that he is involved in a Farm Legacy Committee and there may be opportunities for Advisory Committee members to get involved. Ms. Macemon noted that she could share information about the regional food system plan through the newsletter of the Southeast Gateway Group of the Sierra Club. Ms. Nabak asked if there were any further announcements or correspondence. There were none.

DISCUSSION OF MEETING PREFERENCES (VIRTUAL/IN-PERSON) & NEXT MEETING

Mr. Muhs noted that depending the COVID-19 situation, the next meeting may be virtual, in-person, or a hybrid. Mr. McKay noted that staff we will be focusing on preparing for the public kick-off outreach event that will be held later in the summer and noted that the next Committee meeting will likely be in early fall to review Chapter 2, *The Food System*. Mr. McKay concluded by stating that we would be sending an email regarding meeting preferences and scheduling. Ms. Nabak asked if there were any questions or comments on the agenda item. Ms. Krokowski and Ms. Martinez both noted that getting the next meeting on the calendar as soon as possible would be helpful.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Nabak thanked everyone for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Holschbach and seconded by Ms. Taylor. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

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BRM/MP