

Food Policy Councils: Practice and Possibility

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Practice: Food Policy Council Basics

Introduction

Most local food policies, to the extent that they exist, do not occur in a coordinated fashion in municipal governments. Health departments cover nutrition and food safety; planning addresses land use. Issues such as food access and hunger may be addressed by transportation departments or outside the government through non-profit food banks and other anti-hunger organizations. The growing community food security movement, which links anti-hunger, sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and other groups, encourages examining these issues together. Food policy councils are the embodiment of that vision in local and state governments. In 1987, the city of Knoxville developed the first municipal food policy council to focus explicitly on issues related to food. Since then, other cities, counties, and even a few states have created food policy councils to address food issues holistically. These councils have developed projects and policies to improve their communities' access to food and overall nutrition as well as support local farmers and sustainable farming practices. Overall, food policy members "translate" the sometimes disconnected areas of community food security into common terms, and they transform win-lose situations into win-win opportunities to improve a community's health, economy, and environment (McRae 2002). This report describes how food policy councils uniquely make these translations from barriers to opportunities that result in more food-secure communities.

Members of a Food Policy Council

Food policy councils typically have diverse members, representing the many different sectors involved in food. Members include farmers, food processors, wholesalers and distributors, grocers, restaurateurs, anti-hunger advocates, school system representatives, community and religious leaders, scholars, and concerned citizens. Government representatives have been involved through voluntary and appointed positions as well as staff support. Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Health, Economic Development and city and county councils have all been represented on food policy councils. If a food policy council advises a specific department, a representative often sits on the council. The Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council, for instance, reports directly to the Sustainable Development Commission¹; two of its members serve on the food policy council. Sometimes the sponsoring government is represented through donated staff time, a valuable asset both in the staff person's activities and the status it gives the food policy council (Dahlberg 1994).

The unique perspectives of all council members can yield creative solutions, ones that might not have happened but for their collaboration. The more diverse the group is, the more opportunities exist. A study of some of the first food policy councils revealed that those that focused narrowly on hunger did not succeed as well as those that took a broader food system approach (Dahlberg 1994). The food systems approach allows for discourse on opportunity,

¹ The Sustainable Development Commission is a citizen panel that advises the Portland City Council and Multnomah Board of County Commissioners on strategies to conserve resources. It is part of the Portland Office of Sustainable Development ("Office of Sustainable Development").

while a focus on hunger tends towards discourse on need. Diversity is important from the beginning, as the original participants often set the direction for the council (Dahlberg 1994).

With a diverse council comes many challenges, however. Members may know little about each other's areas of expertise and also vary on their ideas of what constitutes food security. If some members have been assigned to the council, without necessarily joining out of interest, the need to establish good communication is even greater (This can happen, for instance, when it is required that someone be appointed from different government departments). The initial meetings of a food policy council must thus include time to develop common ground both in knowledge and in vision. A neutral, outside facilitator can be ideal for this process (Winne 2002). It can also be valuable to develop common definitions for terms such as "food security" and "local food," as the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council is doing in its first year. The common definitions will then allow for clearer policies and educational tools.

It is important that members, regardless of background, have a vision for what the food policy council can accomplish so they will bring their expertise to bear in a meaningful way (McRae 2002). The selection process can be designed to identify those with vision. Thorough job descriptions were developed for Toronto Food Policy Council members to make their roles clearer. Though the members are not paid, the job description outlined other opportunities, such as developing political and community connections and obtaining good information about the local food system (McRae 2002).

Structure of a Food Policy Council

Food policy councils exist as advisory boards to state and local governments, subsections of government departments, non-profits, and other entities. Most food policy councils in this report have some official sanction from a state or local government. Being associated with the government has many advantages. As an official part of the government, the council will be more likely to receive resources from it, such as staff, funding, or use of conference rooms, though these are not guaranteed. If the council is particularly tied to an agency, it is more difficult to cut (Winne 2002). Tying the council's work to a specific important issue, such as public health or community development, can give it more stability within the system as well (McRae 2002).

Some food policy councils incorporate as non-profits rather than become part of local government. These councils are freer to be critical of government actions and to set their agendas apart from government priorities (Dahlberg 1994). Non-profit food policy councils are, however, less likely to receive support from the government (Prehm 2003). These councils also must shoulder the responsibility of fund-raising. Rod McRae, of the Toronto Food Policy Council, advises food policy councils to avoid the task of fundraising as much as possible, but notes that governmentally-approved food policy councils must compete for limited available funds, which can be just as frustrating and time-consuming (2002).

Regardless of its placement within or outside of government, it is important for food policy council members to network with politicians and administrators. Being able to build on an existing relationship makes gaining support for a project easier (Winne 2002). Part or full-time staff from a government office is extremely useful in this respect. Such staff provides "continuity, access, and assistance in promoting and implementing recommendations" (Dahlberg 1994).

It is also important to build flexibility into the structure of a food policy council. A review process can be built into the formation of the council, so that it is modified from time to time as necessary (McRae 2002). The food policy council may need to adjust the stakeholders it seeks. The Toronto Food Policy Council, for instance, initially recruited a businessman from the retail industry, but they later realized that someone who knew the distribution and wholesaling infrastructure would more effective (McRae 2002). Some councils have needed to form advisory committees on a particular topic or include people who provide support but do not become official council members.

The development of state food policy councils presents new possibilities. Already, statewide food policy councils exist in Iowa, Connecticut, Utah, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. The USDA Risk Management Agency has funded some of these councils through the Drake Agricultural Law Center in Iowa (Pardee 2003). The support these first councils have had will help them be models to other interested states. As more statewide food policy councils form, local councils may stay very much the same, but develop networks with the statewide councils to share ideas, maximize resources, and coordinate regional efforts. Local food systems do not often follow clear political boundaries; regional programs such as organizing a distribution service to facilitate institutional purchasing of local foods thus might be better facilitated at a state level or by two local food policy councils in conjunction with each other. State and local food policy councils can also work together to generate state policy that is more informed of local situations.

Tasks of a Food Policy Council

Local governments often decide to form food policy councils in response to a pressing need. *Access Denied* (1995), for instance, revealed that residents of low-income neighborhoods in Austin, Texas, had fewer, smaller, and more expensive food outlets than other parts of the city. Residents of those neighborhoods had above average rates of diet-related illness, such as Type II diabetes. The Austin/Travis Food Policy Council, formed in response to this report, worked to develop low-cost community gardens in this neighborhood. These gardens provided a local source of cheap, nutritious food for low-income community members. Both the Austin/Travis Food Policy Council and the City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy, which faced a similar problem, developed bus routes to connect low-income neighborhoods with better quality grocery stores. In Hartford, the bus line reduced residents' travel time to a grocery store by approximately an hour round-trip (City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy 2001).

Food policy councils often gather unknown information about their food systems, which is useful in formulating policy and developing projects, like the ones described above. The City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy, for example, monitors grocery store prices. It uses this information to ensure equitable pricing for low-income residents within grocery chains. The Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council has been given the task of researching six areas of the food system—such as institutional purchasing of regionally-produced food--and recommending projects and policies within each area. Many food policy councils write annual reports to document agriculture, hunger, and nutrition in their communities. These reports also cover the food policy councils' activities, so the reports serve the dual purpose of educating communities about food issues and the food policy council itself. Even general reports, such as a description of the food system and what basic terms mean, garner support through education. As

people understand their food system and what tangible changes can be made in it, they are more likely to support other projects and policies the council generates.

Food policy councils develop projects of all sorts. These projects are particularly special for the unique constituencies they bring together. The Toronto Food Policy Council worked with a roofers' association to promote rooftop gardens in the city. These gardens insulate buildings, reducing heating and cooling costs, and absorb carbon dioxide, reducing the city's contribution to the greenhouse effect. Not to mention, the gardens also provide a source of fresh, nutritious food (Roberts 2003). In Connecticut, the Departments of Agriculture and Transportation collaborated on a state road map of direct farm markets. The map contains the location and a short description of each place, so it is easy for consumers to find (*Connecticut Farm Map*).²

Along with collaborations, food policy councils provide support to other organizations. The Toronto Food Policy Council completed a "pre-feasibility study" on composting greenhouses for the Toronto Atmospheric Fund (Toronto Food Policy Council). Many food policy councils have worked with school districts to improve school lunches and expand school breakfast and summer lunch programs. In these cases, the council serves in a facilitating role to make other groups stronger.

Food policy councils also serve as advisory bodies to local governments. They may make recommendations on a case-by-case basis. In other instances, such as the Portland/Multnomah and Iowa Food Policy Councils, local governments request a formal set of recommendations for food policy. The City of Berkeley even passed one of the nation's first municipal food policies in October 2001 (Berkeley Food Policy Council).

Advocacy is a related task of a food policy council. Though a council may operate at the city or county level, it might take a position on state and national legislation or issues. The Toronto Food Policy Council, for example, produced fifteen discussion papers on topics ranging from incorporating food security in urban planning to the impact of international trade agreements on Canadian food security (Toronto Food Policy Council). The Berkeley Food Policy Council wrote a policy, accepted by the City, supporting a federal ban on genetically modified foods (Berkeley Food Policy Council).

Finally, in all their activities, food policy councils educate themselves, policymakers, and the public about food-related issues. Council members often spend their first meetings educating each other about the pieces of the food system they represent. Annual reports and other documents, as well as publicity surrounding projects, all get the word out about strengthening farming and nutrition and reducing hunger in communities.

Food policy councils can find it challenging to balance these different tasks. Reaching a balance between running projects and writing policy often leads to a more effective council than focusing on one or the other. Successful projects and assessments can give the council good "political coin" with which to mobilize policymakers to their cause (McRae 2002). The projects often spur ideas for policy. In turn, it is useful to have supporting policy when implementing a project (Winne 2002). The council can identify projects or needs that different parts of the government might appropriately address; a strong food policy would encourage those departments to complete the projects or address the need. Strong relationships with these departments help move projects forward as well.

² More examples of unique collaborations can be found in "Food Policy Council Profiles."

Challenges of a Food Policy Council

Food policy councils are still a new concept in many areas, so they must prove their usefulness to the government and the public. Also, given the budget constraints facing many municipalities and states, a new food policy council is more likely to receive cuts than other departments or programs. The need to prove themselves puts the onus on food policy councils to achieve success early on. However, as mentioned before, the diverse nature of the group requires significant start-up time to reach common ground. Starting with a small project or research initiative that will bring quick but noteworthy results might be the best first step a food policy council can take to gain early support. Such support should help establish the food policy council as a strong entity and also help garner resources for larger endeavors in the future.

Limited resources is a problem cited over and over again by food policy councils, and limitations can in many forms. Food policy councils often operate with a minimal or non-existent budget and few if any staff. The members themselves face limited time given their other commitments, as noted by a Berkeley Food Policy Council member. Food policy councils have addressed these limitations in different ways. For some, unfortunately, it causes lapses in activity (Biehler, et al. 1999). Others look for project-by-project funding from a variety of sources or seek commitment for funding and staff to get started.

In the face of limited funds, personnel become very important to food policy councils. Even part-time staff can provide support, continuity, and, if the staff is from the government, a key connection to that person's governmental department. The Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council has a quarter-time staff member from the Portland Office of Sustainable Development who advises the council on technical matters and also supervises a full-time Americorps volunteer (Cordello 2002). This creative use of the part-time staff person's time provides much more overall staff time for the council. A local non-profit, Community Food Matters, supervises three other Americorps volunteers who work part-time with specific council committees. This collection of staff, along with two one-fifth time county employees, is providing the food policy council with quite a bit of support in its initial year, with no direct transfer of funds.

Other food policy councils, such as the City of Hartford Advisory Committee on Food Policy and the Austin Food Policy Council, have partnered with food-related non-profits for support. The non-profits have provided staff time, website space, and other resources to facilitate food policy council projects. Often, a member of the supporting non-profit sits on the food policy council.

Another challenge to food policy councils is to have consistent leadership, particularly in the face of fluctuating resources (Biehler 1999). Depending too much on one person or organization's energy can translate to council collapse with the loss of that entity (Prehm 2003). On the other hand, having strong leadership means having the initiative to look for other resources and develop a strong agenda that is likely to earn support. Leadership can be shared through having co-chairs and distributing other responsibilities in committees.

Possibility: Developing a Food Policy Council in Lane County, Oregon

Lane County Background

Lane County's food bank, FOOD for Lane County (FFLC), in conjunction with the Lane County Food Coalition, the University of Oregon Community Planning Workshop, and other groups, received a USDA Community Food Projects grant to develop local action groups in seven Lane County communities. These local action groups will meet to discuss their local food systems and investigate ways to make their communities more food secure. With these grassroots groups in place, FFLC will facilitate the development of a county-wide food policy council.

Lane County is a large county, nearly the size of Connecticut, spanning from the Pacific coast east to the Cascades. Though ninety percent of Lane County's land is forested, the Eugene-Springfield metro area is Oregon's second largest after Portland ("Quick Facts about Lane County.") According to the 2000 Census, Lane County's population is 322,959 people, over half of whom live in Eugene and Springfield ("Quick Facts"; Eugene and Springfield websites). Besides these two cities, Lane County has many smaller, rural towns. The countywide food policy council will work to strengthen connections between the rural and urban areas of Lane County.

Lane County already has the beginnings of a strong local food system. Though most of Lane County's farmland is used for hay, many farmers grow food here. Of all Oregon counties, Lane County ranks third in peppermint production, fourth in wine grape production, and fifth in hazelnut trees (Oregon Agricultural Statistics Service). The scope of agricultural production is wide, including orchard fruits and berries, vegetables, dairy products, and a variety of meats. The Lane County Farmers Market in Eugene grossed \$1.27 million in 2002 by marketing this bounty to local consumers (Harwood 2003). Because of the mild climate, local produce is available much of the year, as reflected in the market's schedule of April to December. Lane County is home to many community supported agriculture farms, including one that offers a winter share. The Organically Grown Company, the largest distributor of organic produce in the Pacific Northwest, has a warehouse in Eugene and buys from Lane County farmers (Organically-Grown Company). Some natural food stores and restaurants in Eugene strive to use locally-grown food as much as possible. Though Agripac, a large canning operation, closed a few years ago, many small-scale food processors exist here, making soy products, granola, herbal teas, salsa, baked goods, preserves, and juice. From this strong base there is much room for Lane County's local food system to grow.

Despite the availability of local food, there is a great need to improve food security in Lane County. With 5.8% of the population experiencing food insecurity with hunger, Oregon leads the nation in hunger (Sullivan and Choi 2002). An additional 13.7% of Oregonians are food insecure, so approximately one in five Oregon residents is hungry or at some point in the year doesn't know where their next meal is coming from. Lane County reflects the state in this respect; FFLC serves one in five residents at some point in the year through emergency food boxes, hot meals, summer lunches to children, gleaning, and other projects. Oregon also leads the nation in unemployment; the lack of income for many families contributes to food insecurity ("Oregon" 2002).

Given the Lane County's size and rural character, FFLC staff expects to find transportation an issue in the upcoming local action group meetings. It is easy to conjecture that rural low-income residents in particular face difficulty reaching social services such as food stamps. Some Lane County residents face a thirty-minute drive or more each way to obtain benefits. Transportation affects city residents as well. In a recent survey of low-income seniors in Eugene, 17% cited lack of transportation as a reason they could not reach emergency food sources (Weinstein-Tull 2003).

A countywide food policy council could facilitate many projects to improve Lane County's food security while strengthening its local food system. There may be ways to expand local food production and thereby create jobs. One model already exists in the FFLC Youth Farm, which employs at-risk youth to grow organic produce for sale and donation to FFLC ("Springfield"). This program trains youth in gardening and business skills while increasing the availability of fresh produce to low-income people. Improving distribution networks for local food and increasing local food processing are other ways to combine economic development with local food system improvement. The local action groups will reveal yet more ideas specific to their communities.

Finding a Place in Lane County Government

Let us now turn to Lane County government to see where a food policy council might make a foothold. An initial review of the government's structure reveals one likely possibility. The food policy council could serve as a non-mandated committee to the Board of Commissioners.

Nearly fifty advisory committees serve the Lane County Board of Commissioners, according to their website. The state of Oregon mandates that Lane County have twelve of these committees. Some of the non-mandatory committees include neighborhood associations, watershed councils, and standing committees for specific topics. The standing committees are comprised only of county officials. Another category of non-mandatory committees is called simply "non-mandated committees." The Board of Commissioners creates "non-mandated committees" as necessary for certain issues. Given that the State of Oregon has not mandated that all counties have a food policy council, the Board of Commissioners would need to create one as a non-mandated committee.

Non-mandated committees exist as part of a particular department of county government. Committee members are not paid, though those living far away are paid mileage for travel to meetings. The department's secretary attends committee meetings, usually held monthly, and compiles minutes. The committee's budget comes from the department of which it is a part (Meshaw 2003). The food policy council thus would start with some basic staff support, though a budget would not be guaranteed.

Among Lane County departments, I found two possibilities for the placement of a food policy council. The first possibility is the Public Health Division of the Health Department. Finding common ground in nutrition, some municipal health departments have sponsored food policy councils as advisory committees. Such a relationship could be built here. Nutrition is not as politically strong a topic as the economy in Lane County, however, so a better choice of departments would be the Community and Economic Development Program, a division of the Administration Department. Lane County, like the rest of Oregon, suffers from high unemployment. Associating the food policy council's activities foremost with strengthening the

local economy should give the council broad appeal. The food policy council’s projects would benefit community health and the environment as well, but focusing on the economic benefits would likely generate the most support.

The Community and Economic Development Program “provides coordination and development services to communities throughout the county with particular attention to rural county needs” (“Community”). The program assists organizations, helps communities invest in their infrastructure and downtown areas, encourages business growth, and promotes workforce development.³ The food policy council’s work in agriculture would overlap with the program’s interest in attending to the needs of rural areas. Rural areas have particular food security needs related to transportation that this collaboration could help address. Improving the sale of local foods in any venue would strengthen the local economy, and this focus might be incorporated into business creation, such as farmers markets and roadside stands in rural towns. These are just a few examples of how a food policy council’s work can be tied to community and economic development.

To truly initiate the food policy council, we need a reality check at this point. The idea of a food policy council must be presented to different county officials. Certain departments may be more willing than others to sponsor a food policy council or have more resources to do so. FFLC must cultivate relationships within county government to share the ideas and energy from the local action groups and create a countywide body to improve community food security. The Community and Economic Development Program is a good place to start in this effort.

Networking with Other Organizations

My investigation into Lane County government revealed many advisory groups that could collaborate with a food policy council on specific projects. These include:

Advisory Committee	Relevant Function
Community Action Advisory Committee	Advises community action services for the needs of low-income residents
Fair Board	Manages County Fair finances
Farm Review Board	Assesses agricultural land
Health Advisory Committee	Makes recommendations regarding public health
Parks Advisory Committee	Recommends projects and long-term planning for county parks
Planning Commission	Addresses land-use issues
Resource Recovery Advisory Committee	Investigates alternative solutions for the Solid Waste Program
Roads Advisory	Plans for future transportation needs
Rural Community Improvement Council	Implements rural development projects
Vegetation Management	Makes recommendations regarding vegetation management
Watershed Councils	Protects and enhances local watersheds

(“Advisory Committee Definitions”)

³ The Community and Economic Development Program could support the local action groups also.

FFLC has many partners in the Community Food Projects grant that can work together in food policy council formation. The non-profit Lane County Food Coalition (LCFC) works to strengthen local, sustainable agriculture through projects like the upcoming “Buy Local, Buy Lane” campaign. LCFC has also started a local food system assessment, which will provide information much like food policy councils are known to collect. This information will be valuable in sharing with policymakers the opportunities to enhance the local food system. The Lane County Farmers’ Market will be involved in enhancing marketing of locally-grown food. The University of Oregon Urban Farm teaches college students how to farm organically and can provide insights about educating students about their local food system. The School Garden Project, which focuses on elementary and middle schools, can offer a similar perspective on a younger population. As FFLC itself will be separate from the food policy council, it will become a strong partner as the largest anti-hunger organization in Lane County. FFLC itself has many innovative food security programs that could perhaps be expanded with the help of a food policy council.

Outside of Lane County, there exist at least two other food policy councils in Oregon: the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council and the Tillamook Community Food Security Council. These groups are both relatively new, and the Lane County Food Policy Council is as yet unformed, but they still can learn much from each other. Already the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council and FFLC have been in contact. The former has offered advice on food policy council formation, while FFLC can provide support about outreach as it develops the local action groups. As the groups establish themselves and develop goals, they may well find benefit in collaboration. Portland and Eugene-Springfield are the two largest metro areas in Oregon. Between them lie Salem, Corvallis, and Albany along the I-5 corridor. These cities exist amidst some of Oregon’s best farmland; the councils could easily work together on farmland preservation and increasing the amount of farmland used to feed the local population. Tillamook and Lane County could strategize on best serving their rural populations. All could work together on tackling the problem of hunger in Oregon.

There has been some talk of developing a statewide food policy council in Oregon. As the project in Lane County works to connect urban and rural populations, so too could a statewide food policy council work to bridge those gaps, among other projects. For the mean time, however, it will be plenty for the existing food policy councils in Oregon to develop into strong bodies. Ken Dahlberg (2002) advises, “...and remember that it takes two to three years to build a group that understands the full dimensions of their local food system and the important policy issues.” The task over the next few years in Lane County, then, will be to start and develop the food policy council, in conjunction with other Lane County organizations and in communication with other food policy councils for support and perhaps collaboration. A food policy council for Lane County holds much opportunity to improve the local food system, resulting in a healthier population and stronger local economy and environment.

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Food Policy Council Profiles

Austin-Travis Food Policy Council

History

In 1995, the non-profit Sustainable Food Center completed *Access Denied*, a study of food availability in East Austin, Texas. This study found that residents of this low-income neighborhood not only faced poverty, but structural difficulty in buying food. The food outlets in East Austin offered higher prices, lower selection, and overall poorer conditions than food outlets elsewhere in the city. The neighborhood itself only had two supermarkets; other food outlets were convenience stores, only half of which sold milk and fresh produce. Bus routes were not suited to bringing people to food outlets, one of many transportation difficulties residents faced.

The study proposed a variety of solutions, including creating a new bus route to reach food outlets, providing assistance for convenience stores to buy from wholesalers to increase selection, and connecting residents to alternative means of acquiring food, such as gardening. The prime proposal, however, was to create a food policy council to oversee such projects and monitor progress towards increasing food access in East Austin.

Current Structure

The Austin City Council and Travis County Legislature appointed a twenty-member council representing a broad spectrum of the community. Members have represented “grocery store chains, community clinics, a private think tank, the county legislature, the Transportation Authority, religious groups, the Parks Department, and community organizations.” The local government sanctioned the council and provided it with meeting space and technical support, but no budget. All the members are volunteers and must contribute \$200 or an in-kind equivalent each year. The Sustainable Food Center, which wrote *Access Denied*, allocates part of its time and resources for food policy council projects. The availability of paid staff, usually a graduate student intern, varies with funding availability.

Major Accomplishments

- Eastside Circular: a bus route that travels from public housing units and Eastside neighborhoods to food outlets and other social services
- Community Garden Fee Waivers: community gardens are exempt from the high costs of water access in Austin (over \$5,000 for one lot)

Challenges

- Lack of paid staff means that the food policy council does not have consistent help.
- Had one main leader without as much leadership spread throughout the group.
- The council members are all very busy with the involvements that led them to the food policy council, though they have shown commitment and ways to bring food issues into their other work.

Documents and Sources

- *Access Denied:* http://www.main.org/sfc/access_denied/index.html
- Sustainable Food Center: www.main.org/sfc

Note: The Austin Food Policy Council is no longer in existence. However, the Sustainable Food Center still tries to bring food-related issues before the City Council. Another group, the Austin Food Network, helps groups working on food-related issues network.

Berkeley Food Policy Council

Mission: To build a local food system based on sustainable regional agriculture that fosters the local economy and assures all people of Berkeley have access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food from non-emergency sources

History

The Berkeley Food Policy Council “is a coalition of residents, non-profit agencies, community groups, school district and city agencies formed in May 1999 to increase community food access.” In July 2000, the Berkeley Food Policy Council entered into collaboration with the Berkeley Health Department as a policy advisory group (See attached Memo of Understanding). This relationship was formed partly in response to a study by the Berkeley Department of Health that found lower life expectancies in South and West Berkeley. Poor diet was a contributor to that phenomenon. The City of Berkeley Food and Nutrition Policy includes a section acknowledging the food policy council and describing its responsibility to “provide technical assistance to City programs, staff and community groups in the implementation of this Food and Nutrition Policy and subsequent recommendations.”

Current Structure

The Berkeley Food Policy Council is a coalition of many stakeholders in the food system. Those involved, ninety people in all, include residents, food-related and non-food related non-profit agency staff, farmers, restaurateurs, grocers, school district representatives, scholars, and health department members. Membership on the council is open. Individuals must have attended at least two of the four previous meetings to be able to vote, though most decisions are made by consensus, so votes are rarely necessary.

A steering committee comprised of eight members leads the group. Groups of food policy council members nominated the original steering committee in a structured break-out session. Now, individuals are personally invited or a general request is made at a food policy council meeting to fill empty seats. The steering committee handles the logistics of planning council meetings, as well as forming the agenda and facilitating decision-making during the meeting. Both the council and the steering committee meet once a month. Subcommittees work on individual projects.

The council has no funding from the city of Berkeley, so the council has had to find outside grants to fund individual projects. Two members of the council are able to donate limited paid time to serve as co-secretaries for the council.

Major Accomplishments

- Policy:
 - Worked with the City Council to develop and pass one of the nation’s first municipal food policies (See attached policy).

- School nutrition:
 - Assisted in the development of the Berkeley Unified School District Policy recognizing the link between nutrition and school performance, including a request for local and organic foods, as well as food from school gardens, to be served in school cafeterias.
 - Supported policy to renovate the schools, including the development of kitchens where fresh foods can be easily prepared.
- Genetically modified foods:
 - Co-sponsored a symposium on genetically-modified foods at the University of California-Berkeley.
 - Wrote a policy adopted by the Berkeley City Council in support of a federal ban on genetically modified foods.
 - Both testified and organized a rally at a FDA hearing on genetically-modified foods.
- Urban agriculture and markets:
 - Advised the inclusion of urban gardening and a public health perspective on hunger and food security issues in the Berkeley General Plan.
 - Supported the Tuesday Farmers' Market remaining at Derby Street.
- Outreach:
 - Developed a newsletter both to educate consumers about food issues and to encourage their involvement in them.
 - Is developing a guide to locally-grown foods.

Challenges

- Maintaining attendance at the general meetings and, related to this, making the meetings worthwhile and maintaining cohesion among members.
- Finding time that members can work together on group projects and complete other tasks for the council.
- Identifying the next project once an accomplishment has been made.

Documents and Sources

- Berkeley Food Policy Council: www.berkeleyfood.org
- Memorandum of Understanding with City Health Department: www.berkeleyfood.org/Archives/MOUfin00.rtf
- City Council Resolution to Pass the Food and Nutrition Policy: www.berkeleyfood.org/res925.htm
- City of Berkeley Food and Nutrition Policy: www.berkeleyfood.org/fdpoA925.htm
- City of Berkeley Health Status Report 1999: www.ci.Berkeley.ca.us/publichealth/statusreport/cover.html
- E-mail from representative of Berkeley Food Policy Council

City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy⁴

History

In 1990, the Hispanic Health Council completed the Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project, which revealed that 76% of low-income Hartford families with children under twelve either experienced a hunger problem or were at risk of hunger. In response to these findings, Hartford's mayor appointed a Hunger Task Force. The Task Force, after further research, recommended the creation of a municipal food policy council to address hunger and food security among low-income residents. The City Council created such a council, the Advisory Commission on Food Policy, in 1991. The Commission was charged with linking two formerly separate realms: government agencies and private organizations that address food issues. Through these connections, the Commission was charged with explicit food security goals:

- “To eliminate hunger as an obstacle to a happy, healthy and productive life in the city;
- To ensure that a wide variety of safe and nutritious food is available for city residents;
- To ensure that access to food is not limited by economic status, location or other factors beyond a resident's control;
- To ensure that the price of food in the city remains at a level comparable to the level for the state.”

The Commission has worked in a variety of areas, including “transportation, land use, advocacy to local, state, and federal government, education, business development, health, monitoring, emergency food supplies, and the role of the private sector” to improve Hartford's food security.

Current Structure

The City of Hartford mandates that the Commission be comprised of fifteen members, ten of whom work with anti-hunger organizations and five members of the general public. These volunteer members, appointed by the mayor and city council, serve staggered three-year terms. As of 2001, the Commission includes representatives from the Hartford Food System, Hartford Public Schools, anti-hunger organizations, local business, an area church congregation, the parks foundation, and a farm. Two ex-officio members from the Department of Human Services and WIC also serve on the Commission.

The Commission's \$25,000 budget in 2001 came half from the city government and half from private donations. The city government portion included contributions from the Hartford Health Department (60%) as well as Human Services and the Board of Education. Nearly all of the budget was spent on staff as well as reimbursements to commissioners for their time spent on the Commission (outside of meetings). The

⁴ Advice from Mark Winne, executive director, is available later in the packet.

remaining 10% was spent on office needs such as printing and phone service. The Hartford Food System, a non-profit organization, provides in-kind donations of time and staff.

The Commission writes an annual report on its projects, including a new “State of Hartford’s Food System” report on emergency food and nutrition. It also completes a variety of on-going projects. The Commission surveys grocery store prices of forty basic items on a quarterly basis and monitors public transportation to food outlets. It annually bestows the “Golden Muffin Award” on public schools that improve National School Breakfast participation and “Community Food Security Awards” to organizations in the government, private, and non-profit sectors that improve Hartford’s food security.

Major Accomplishments

Over its eleven year history, the Commission has recognized groups for their food security achievements, communicated with different agencies to improve food security knowledge and programs, monitored and researched emergency food participation and access to food outlets via public transportation, advocated policies to improve food security, and continued development of the Commission itself. The attached Annual Report details the Commission’s accomplishments in 2001.

Here are a few of the most Commission’s most significant efforts:

- Assisted in the creation of the “L-Tower” bus route that directly connects north Hartford residents to affordable food stores, typically saving residents forty-five minutes in their travel time.
- Stopped supermarket practices that caused, within the same chains, higher prices and lower coupon availability in certain areas of Hartford.
- Supported the implementation of child nutrition programs, including hosting workshops for teachers and administrators about the School Breakfast Program and monitoring meal quality and participation rates in the Summer Food Service Program.

Documents and Sources

- Hartford Food System: www.hartfordfood.org
- City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy 2001 Annual Report: www.hartfordfood.org/programs/2001HFPC.html
 - Web Appendix to Annual Report: L-Tower Avenue Bus Route: Saving a Route that Works!
 - Web Appendix to Annual Report: Feeding Hartford’s Children When School’s Out: The Summer Food Service Program
- City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy 1995-1996 Annual Report
- Seedling Summer 2002 (Hartford Food System’s quarterly newsletter; includes commission update): www.hartfordfood.org/get_involved/seedling.html
- Supermarket Survey, May 2002: www.hartfordfood.org/programs/food_policy_survey.htm

Connecticut Food Policy Council

History

In 1995, the State Legislature's Planning and Development committee created an ad hoc committee to examine food security in Connecticut. The ad hoc committee produced a document of recommendations, *Toward Food Security for Connecticut*, in 1997. A task force continued the committee's work through 1996, recommending legislation for a food policy council. Public Act 97-11, Section 21, established a statewide food policy council under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture in 1997.

The council's purpose, as described by the act, is to:

- “develop, coordinate, and implement a food system policy linking economic development, environmental protection and preservation with farming and urban issues
- review and comment on any proposed state legislation and regulations that impact food policy and food security
- make recommendations to the Governor
- prepare and submit an annual report to the General Assembly.”

Current Structure

The Connecticut Food Policy Council has eleven members: two from agriculture or an agricultural organization; one each from an anti-hunger organization, the Cooperative Extension System, the food retail industry, and the produce wholesale industry; the Commissioner or a designee from the state departments of Agriculture, Administrative Services, Education, Transportation, Health, and Social Services. Various legislative officials appoint the positions not connected to commissions.

Major Accomplishments

- Identified opportunity to develop single application form for assistance programs (e.g. food stamps, WIC, reduced price lunch, and Health Care for Uninsured Kids and Youth), saving both the government and clients time by reducing paperwork and required appointments.
- Initiated the purchase of development rights for 12 farms in the year 2000, saving 1,350 acres of farmland in collaboration with the Working Lands Alliance and Save the Land Conference.
- Encouraged the University of Connecticut to switch from “sole source” wholesaling to using multiple wholesalers, thereby allowing smaller local wholesalers to win bids.
- Collaborated with the Departments of Agriculture and Transportation to develop a Connecticut road map with locations and brief descriptions of all farm stands, farmers' markets, and other venues for locally-grown food in the state.

- Collaborated with the Departments of Agriculture and Social Services to include farmer's market coupons with food stamps for seniors.
- Co-sponsored the public hearing, *Barriers to Food Access in Connecticut*, which focused on lack of supermarkets and transport to them in low-income neighborhoods and lead to proposed legislation to support supermarket development in low-income areas.

Documents and Sources

- Connecticut Food Policy Council: www.foodpc.state.ct.us
 - Connecticut Public Act 97-11, Section 21. Look up the Act at:
<http://prdbasis.cga.state.ct.us/BASIS/TSAMDHP/LIN1/AMD/MSF>
 - Making Room at the Table: A Guide to Community Food Security in Connecticut
 - Food Security in Connecticut: The 2000 Annual Report of the Connecticut Food Policy Council
 - Food First: Making Room at Connecticut's Table (June 2002 newsletter)
- The last three are all available at www.foodpc.state.ct.us/publications.htm

Iowa Food Policy Council

History

In 2000, governor Thomas Vilsack issued Executive Order 16, creating the Iowa Food Policy Council. The governor instituted the council to examine how state and local governments could create opportunities for farmers and consumers to increase Iowa's food security. The Council developed four guiding principles to follow while developing such opportunities. The Council will seek to:

- “Insure access to nutritious food for all Iowans
- Manage Iowa's resources sustainably
- Promote diversity in Iowa's foods, culture, and people
- Support prosperous, independent farm and food businesses in Iowa.”

Current Structure

The governor appoints 18 to 24 members who represent various components of the food system, including farmers, food processors, retailers, anti-hunger advocates, cooperative extension agents, and, of course, consumers. The Council also includes eight ex-officio members from various state agencies. At the Council's recommendation, the governor in 2001 created two inter-agency task forces. One addresses food security; the other promotion of Iowa-grown products. The Council's chair, Neil Hamilton, recently received a \$200,000 grant from the USDA Risk Management Agency to work on state food policy councils. Most of the food policy council's funding comes from this grant. The food policy council currently has a staff of four, two of whom are consultants, as well as law school students assisting on legal research and projects (Pardee 2003).

Major Accomplishments

- At the end of its first year of existence, presented recommendations to the governor's office on improving Iowa's food system. The recommendations addressed food security, consumer awareness, environmental sustainability, economic development and diversity, the needs of producers, and opportunities to increase farm to institution marketing. The Council prioritized six recommendations as most important.
- Succeeded in convincing the governor to create two inter-agency task forces to assist the Council in food security and promotion of Iowa-grown products
- Will assist in evaluating the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Pilot Program, which is funded by a \$560,000 USDA grant
- The Chair received a \$200,000 grant from the USDA Risk Management Agency to support the development of the Iowa and Connecticut food policy councils and the creation of food policy councils in North Carolina and Utah.
- Co-sponsored the Iowa Food Policy Conference.
- Developed an on-line county-based directory of farmer's markets and fruit and vegetable producers.

Documents and Sources

- Iowa Food Policy Council: www.iowafoodpolicy.org
The following are easily located on the Iowa Food Policy Council website.
- Executive Order 16, which formed the Iowa Food Policy Council
- Recommendations of the Iowa Food Policy Council to Governor Thomas J. Vilsack and Lt. Governor Sally Pederson
- Iowa Food Policy Council Summer 2001 Newsletter
- Iowa Food Policy Conference Brochure, April 2002
- Personal communication from Christine Pardee, State Food Policy Council Coordinator, February 1, 2003.

Knoxville -Knox County Food Policy Council⁵

History

An initial assessment of the food system in Knoxville, Tennessee helped identify the need for comprehensive planning therein. The study, completed by a group of graduate students at the University of Tennessee in 1977, highlighted nutritional needs and hunger risks in the area and discussed problems of farmland loss and fragmentation of the food system. Seeing how these issues related to their agendas, the Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC) and the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) got involved. A federal Community Food and Nutrition grant was administered by the CAC to develop such programs as community gardens and food assistance outreach.

Another purpose of the grant was to organize a body to examine and address the food system as a whole. Meanwhile, the City Council acknowledged that food planning is a legitimate responsibility of local government. In 1982, the Knoxville Food Policy Council (KFPC) became this body, the first in the nation of its kind. Recognizing that food issues “transcend the City’s geographic area”, the body was expanded to be the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council in 2002.

Stated purposes of the council are to:

- “Monitor and evaluate the performance of Knoxville’s Food system, in terms of costs, availability, accessibility, and implications for public health and economic efficiency.
- Identify food related problems needing attention and disseminate public reports describing those problems, along with suggested remedies where possible.
- Promulgate goals and objectives for the food system.
- Communicate findings and recommendations about food issues to the Mayor, City Council, County Commission, and other relevant public officials.
- Act as a forum for discussion and coordination of community-wide efforts to improve the overall food supply and distribution network of the Knoxville community” (Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council Bylaws).

Current Structure

The Knoxville-Knox County FPC has the jurisdiction to make and recommend proposals and is an advisory body to the Mayor, County Executive, City Council, and County Commission, as well as to the community at large. The council does not have the power to enforce or control local policies. Up until 2002, KFPC was composed of nine volunteer members, each appointed by the mayor on the basis of “their knowledge of city government and the food system” rather than being representatives of particular parts of the food system. Since expansion to the county level by passage of a resolution in August 2002, the council is now composed of 11 volunteer members. Still appointed, five members are chosen by the mayor and the remaining six members are chosen by the Knox County Executive. Members include one City Councilor, one County

⁵ Written by Lauren Maul, Lane County Food Coalition Intern, University of Oregon

Commissioner, consumer and neighborhood advocates, representatives of the nutrition and health sector, and people involved in agriculture and the food industry.

Recently, the FPC allowed for an Associate Member category to include relevant agency representatives and counter the group's small size. These members participate fully in deliberations of the council, but do not have voting privileges. The Council has elected officers and is organized into executive, nominating, and special committees whose members can be elected, appointed, or assigned respectively from among its members. Advisory committees are occasionally assembled from external representatives to provide access to issues and additional expertise.

A staff of four for the Council is provided, on a limited, part-time basis, by the city from the CAC, who hires a planning consultant, MPC, the Department of Resource Development, and Knoxville's Community Development Corporation. Upon the recent expansion, the County is expected to show an additional commitment of staff support from relevant agencies. Suggestions include the Department of Community Services, Public Works, the Health Department, and the County School System, as noted in a proposal for the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council.

The City of Knoxville allocates \$4,000 a year for administration of the FPC. Most of this is used to pay the CAC planning consultant. Grants are sometimes drawn upon to pay other staff salaries. Upon expansion, the County government was asked to provide funding equivalent to the City's contribution.

KFPC has established a "community-based food monitoring system" that it uses periodically to evaluate the state of the food system and the effectiveness of the council. With the help of a USDA Community Food Security grant and a group of UT graduate students, KFPC formed a project team to develop the system. The system is composed of prioritized indicators and data elements that are compiled in a regularly updated database. Using this information, recommendations are given to the mayor, city council, and Knoxville residents about what policies and actions should be taken to improve the community's food security.

Major Accomplishments

- Nutrition Education: The Knoxville Public School District, after receiving a recommendation from KFPC, hired a full-time nutrition educator. The nutritionist is responsible for preparation and delivery of educational programs and coordinates existing programs.
- School Breakfast Program: The Knoxville Board of Education was urged to enact a policy in the district to offer the School Breakfast Program. Breakfasts are now provided free or at reduced cost to all of Knoxville's low-income students
- Advising planning agencies: Involvement of the MPC has led the agency to consider food access in their planning reports.
- Increased awareness: The FPC issues newsletters and annual reports in order to maintain accountability and increase visibility. It conducts workshops, forums, and hearings to call attention to deficiencies in the local food system.
- Transportation access: Initially, a "grocery Bus" was created to provide supermarket access to underserved areas. Though it no longer operates, the regional transportation authority commonly requests a review of food access from the FPC when altering its

- bus routes. Some buses have installed racks for the convenience of riders who take the bus to do their grocery shopping.
- “Calorie Conscious Consumer” awards were created to recognize food businesses that encourage healthy food choices from their customers through the use of displays and written materials.
 - Twenty-seven community and school gardens

Challenges

As with most food policy councils, limited staff and funding hinder the activities on their agendas. Staffing for the Knoxville-Knox County FPC is provided by several different agencies, but none of these positions is permanent or full-time. This arrangement does allow for a connection to many relevant government agencies. In reality, the fluctuation of staff leads to a loss in continuity. Without full-time status, personnel do not have the time and resources to maintain a level of activity consistent with the desires of the council’s membership. However, the recent expansion of the council gives additional resources and a greater level of commitment that should only increase the viability and future success of the food policy council.

Documents and Sources

- Knoxville Food Policy Council website: <http://www.kornet.org/kfpc/>
- Knoxville Resolution 202-81, which created the food policy council
- Knoxville Food Policy Council Flyer, 1988:
<http://unix.cc.wmich.edu/~dahlberg/F3.pdf>
- Initial Proposal for Knox County Food Policy Council
- Knoxville Mayor’s Letter of Support for Countywide Food Policy Council
- Structure for Knoxville/Knox County Food Policy Council
- Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council by-laws
- Notes on Knoxville (from Community Food Security Coalition Conference)
- Action Guide to Local Food Policy

Onondaga Food System Council, Incorporated⁶

History

Residents in Onondaga County were searching for a way to address concerns about hunger, farm closings, food safety and affordability. Though they recognized the interdependencies in the food system, they also knew that most areas lack an agency or organization that considers this system from production to consumption. In 1984, under the initiative of concerned local citizens and the Planning, Research and Development of the Onondaga County Legislature, the Onondaga Food System Council was created. The Council was designed to serve as a forum for representatives from many sectors of the food system to communicate and address common interests and concerns.

In 1992, the Council received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for projects to preserve agriculture in the county and improve food access for local consumers. The grant included funds to hire a part-time staff person through the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service. Upon completion of this two-year grant, the council was at a crucial transition point. The amount of staffing and funding it could generate at that time was to determine its future form and function.

As no information has been found thus far about of the council dating beyond 1994, it is suspected that the group is no longer active. The government of Onondaga County gives no acknowledgement of the council, nor does Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Current Structure

From its inception in 1984 to 1989, the Council was elected by the County Legislature. In 1989, the council incorporated as a public non-profit whose members the county appointed. The organization is comprised of representatives from the public and private sectors who have diverse backgrounds in association with the County's food system. The Council consists of a Board of Directors with eleven voting members and a group of seven Special Advisors. The Directors include processors, distributors, marketers, grocers, farmers, and community organizations involved in hunger, health and nutrition. The special advisors represent the County Department of Health, Planning, and Social Services, the County Legislature, the City of Syracuse and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The council is an advisory body whose mission is to aid the legislative and executive branches of local government, as well as leaders of public and private agencies and organizations, in local food system planning and policy formation. The council also assists residents in gaining an understanding of the food system and food policy in their region.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Onondaga County provides limited staff support for the council's operations. These include meeting space, routine administrative functions, and technical assistance. The council meets on a monthly basis. Consultants are used both regularly and on an occasional basis to provide general advice and prepare special reports.

⁶ Written by Lauren Maul

Major Accomplishments

The Council was quite active in its early years. Some of its specific activities are listed below:

- Sponsored and conducted tours in four major areas of the local food system: food production, food processing, wholesaling/retailing/distribution, and emergency food programs.
- Directory of Informational Sources that gives information about agencies, organizations, and businesses involved in the local food system.
- Discussion forums on economic and environmental aspects of farming, agricultural districts, farmers markets, hunger issues, food policy during emergencies, and food safety.
- Created a flow chart of the emergency feeding system and a graphic display of emergency food sites and retail outlets.
- Assisted Onondaga Citizens League in 1988 study “Role of the Food Industry in the Economy of Onondaga County”
- Held a “Food System Dinner”
- Began an inquiry with City into inner-city and rural food retailing problems and options.

Challenges

The challenges faced by this group were likely too large to overcome. Once the

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