

## **Multnomah Food Initiative Steering Committee 10/23/2009**

### **Condensed notes**

#### **Introduction from Judy Shiprack, Multnomah County Commissioner**

#### **Multnomah County's Call to Action**

#### **Steering Committee Introductions and Visions for the future of food**

##### *Equity*

- A community of caring that ensures access to healthy foods for all
- Ensuring that all neighborhoods have access to fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Help people become self-sufficient by growing their own food.
- Understand relationship between hunger, income and population growth.
- Food needs to be affordable but also healthful – helping people to feed themselves with fresh fruits and vegetables. Nutrition, not just calories.
- Trying to figure out how to deal with food security in a more systematic way, especially in this time of economic hardship.
- A bag of carrots will cost less than a bag of Cheetos.

##### *Economic Sustainability*

- The development of a local brand on which we can rely.
  - The most profitable businesses being the most supportive of community, those who have best demonstrated care for the community.
  - That we can access the time, talent and creativity of both the hospitality/food industry as well as the health care industry (the two largest industries) to make this happen.
  - A healthy regional agricultural economy where both existing and aspiring farmers can make a viable living.
  - Increase market share for farm-direct sales.
  - Community kitchens.
  - Create more demand for healthful, local food and thus shape the system.
- Systemic change in agriculture is needed.

##### *Education*

- Educating children about food and gardening. 4-H as model.
- The lunchroom and dining area become a classroom. That children are fully engaged in the food that they're eating – they may have grown it on campus or nearby. That the lunch program is not bound by federal or state statute/rules. That a healthy meal is presented to all children every day and that those foods are procured and processed as close to home as possible so that students can make the connection.
- Educating new farmers and helping them get started (to reverse trend of aging farmers).
- Land grant institutions need to be much more engaged in where people live – urban areas!

##### *Urban Agriculture*

- A greatly expanded grow-your-own movement
- Access to land and capital for farmers
- Maximize any vacant land to grow food – using what we have as best we can.
- Integration of farms and food inside UGB. Want to see whole region collaborating and sharing success stories.

- There is a tension between wanting to grow food in the city and wanting to keep the UGB where it is when the likelihood is that a million additional people will move into the region in the near future.

#### *Policy*

- How do we connect the policy that is happening at the federal, state and local level and integrate that into the community to make good change happen?
- Make sure whatever policies we enact work for low-income people.
- Elevate the policy debate around food to the same level as housing, transportation, other issues governments routinely address.
- We continue to have land grant and other public research universities inform public policy.

#### *Process*

- Ensure farmers are represented in this process.
- Consider the entire food system and the integration of different parts: farms, schools, hospitals, etc.
- We need to talk about the tensions and difficult issues. We need to acknowledge and discuss them, move beyond niceties to the nitty-gritty.

#### *Values-type statements*

- Good food is a right and needs to be recognized as such.
- Good food is not exclusively for the wealthy.
- On implementation level, food as necessity, a community asset and elevating it to that level.
- Redesign the local food system so that it doesn't just produce food but also healthy people.

#### *Other*

- MFI bridges not only Portland-Vancouver divide, urban-rural, PNW and national divide.
- There is a real tension between affordability of food and viability of farmers. We need to talk this through.
- Food safety – it's personal.
- Multnomah County residents produce 50% of the food they consume while continuing to enjoy the livability we all appreciate.

**Summary of big themes:** equity, access, nutritious food, the ways to do some of those things: public policy, education, awareness

#### **Multnomah Food Initiative Context/Outcomes**

#### **Questions/Open Discussion and Food Summit Brainstorm**

##### *Questions:*

Q: What is the relationship between this body and Portland Multnomah FPC?

Q: Is there a way to get everyone to buy in to this shared vision? So many new organizations are growing up all the time. We need to make the tent big enough to get everyone on board. How are we going to get everyone heading in one direction?

A: We're hoping that with this strategic action plan that a lot of organizations adopt, we can get rid of duplicity and secure buy-in.

Q: What funding does the County have?

A: EPA funding seed money: \$20,000 grant through food summit and into development of action plan. We don't have implementation funding now but have

some lead time to find that. Kat spending 1/3 of her time on food; Keith is 100%.

Strong commitment through staff but we'll also seek additional funding.

Q: Amy Ruiz is on our list from the City; otherwise, there is not a lot of buy-in from City of Portland which is a major stakeholder in our area. Without tandem action, this effort might be less effective.

A: It depends on how you look at the city. Nick Fish's office have given support and want to be involved, and are working on a community gardens initiative concurrently. The Mayor's office has assigned staff to come and sit on the steering committee. Mayor's office is involved in the Portland Plan so we're hoping to see some alignment.

Q: I have to say that there has already been a lot of work around visioning and we are already on the same page. We're working on all the angles in our individual organizations. The roles that we're each playing need to be more defined so that we can think of each other as working in concert rather than competition. Everybody is working toward a healthy food system. I looked at the Multnomah County website to see areas of crossover. We need to work from inside out. There need to be people from food safety, health equity, and other related areas within the county involved in this effort. We need to educate the public about the intersections and roles distinctive between the city and county and within the county. A lot of the language in here is Portland-focused. We need a clear sense of the role of the county – not just umbrella. Very important how you position this work and how we contribute to it. I can't say enough about the role of public health. In some places they're leading FPCs. I don't see an organizational chart of the county in our packet. There is a new source of grant funds available from CDC to public health department and organizations can write letters of intent. Are you talking to the health department about this?

Q: There is a lot of energy around the food conversation. We need to take this to a whole other level – even if local is the goal! Wendell Barry's goal is buying closest to home as possible. This may look different in winter, or in Wyoming. We need to grapple with these issues and go beyond just "buy local."

For this steering Committee, we're asking you to commit to the first phase through the food summit and one additional meeting. Then we will see who wants to continue with action planning and then who else needs to be involved.

Q: calling it the Multnomah Food Initiative could make people think of the governmental body rather than the geographic area – may want to rethink name.

A: yes, MFI is a straw name and this group can change it.

Comments:

- There's an opportunity to include fast food in the solution. Fast food is a dilemma but important to include them in the discussion.
- It is important to work through the tensions and difficult decisions.
- We need more private sector people on the Steering Committee.
- Concerns about pulling together the summit in 4-5 months expressed by two individuals.
- Michael Pollan is potentially divisive; some Steering Committee members are not overly excited with this idea.
- Who do we want to show up at the summit? What's the goal? We need to have that conversation first and let it inform the content development.
- We don't need to worry about a huge draw – people will come to this conversation regardless. It's more important to get into deep conversation and wrestle with issues (may want to limit the number of people!).

- We have momentum at the USDA like never before. Let's use that to jumpstart real conversation.
- Action plan outcome: re-*regionalize* the food system (not just city or county)
- Need understanding that there is no absolute right or wrong way to proceed and the solution will take time.
- Less concern expressed about having a big name or a keynote at all; more interest in grappling with the big issues.
- Keynote ideas: Raj Shah (sp?), MD formerly of the Gates Foundation. Michelle Obama – she's bound to come to Portland eventually!. Vilsack or other government representative.

**Next Steps:** turn in handout within a week. Kat will follow up with everyone individually. A Meeting Wizard will go out to everyone to plan the next meeting.