

**Grant County Food Policy Council
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, February 17, 2011

ITEM	ACTION TAKEN	PAGE(S)
A. CALL TO ORDER	Call to order 5:15 p.m.	2
B. ROLL CALL	Quorum	2
C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA	Approved	2-3
D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES	Approved	3
E. PUBLIC INPUT	None	3
F. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS	Discussed	3
G. BUSINESS		3
1. Presentation from Local Food Committee (D. Zilm)	Discussed	4-5
2. Strategic planning and subcommittees	Discussed	5-7
3. Proposed action against GM alfalfa	Discussed	7-8
H. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS	None	8
I. ITEMS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS	None	8
J. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL	Discussed	8-9
K. ADJOURNMENT	Adjourned 7:11 p.m.	9

Next meeting: March 17, 2011—5:15 p.m. at the Grant County Administration Center

Grant County Food Policy Council
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 17, 2011

A. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Grant County Food Policy Council was called to order by Council Co-Chair, Mrs. Nennich, on this date at approximately 5:15 p.m. at the Grant County Administration Building, 1400 Highway 180 East, Silver City, NM 88061.

B. ROLL CALL

Roll call indicated the presence of a quorum¹ as follows:

Members Present

Judy Billings
J.J. Dabbs
Alicia Edwards
Deborah Nennich
Richard Olson* (late)
Pete Walden* (late)
Brandi Warhank*
Anthony Gutierrez*
Genevieve Morgan

Members Absent

Sylvia Mendez-Lopez (excused)
Melvyn Gelb (excused)
Alma Grijalva (excused)
Jon Saari*

Staff Present

Andrea Sauer

Others Present

Doug Zilm- Silver City Food Cooperative
Reynate Geyster

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Members did not have a quorum present at the time of voting and agreed the agenda was acceptable to proceed. At approximately 6:00 p.m., a quorum was present. Mrs. Nennich

¹ A quorum of the Grant County Food Policy Council is comprised of three government representatives (denoted by an asterisk *) and four non-government representatives.

made a motion to approve the agenda at this time, seconded by Ms. Warhank. Passed by unanimous vote.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Members did not have a quorum present at the time of voting and agreed to move forward with agenda. At approximately 6:00 p.m., a quorum was present. Mrs. Nennich made a motion to approve the minutes from January 20, seconded by Ms. Warhank. Passed by unanimous vote.

E. PUBLIC INPUT

No public comments.

F. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

The County Commissioners approved resolution 11-04, based on the Food Policy Council's recommendations, to support Senate Bill 63. Senate Bill 63 and resolution 11-04 can be found on the Grant County HKHC website. Farm to Table and Senator Morales have been notified of this resolution and the bill is currently in the Senate Finance Committee.

Mrs. Sauer noted the hiring of an additional staff member has been delayed until March.

The Green Chamber of Commerce Local Food Subcommittee and Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities are conducting a survey of local food infrastructure including cold storage facilities, meat processing facilities, commercial kitchens, and food distribution networks. Mrs. Sauer encouraged the Food Policy Council to consider forming some type of "community food assessment" subcommittee or join forces with the Local Food Subcommittee to assist in this effort. The assessment results will be used for planning and reporting purposes, and HKHC plans to use GIS to map this information for the Food Policy Council and other groups. Results will be presented at the March 26 Garden Expo, Seed Share and Farmers' Market Fundraiser at the Grant County Business and Conference Center (11-3 p.m.).

Mrs. Sauer passed out a sign-up sheet for Food Policy Council members to staff the FPC booth at the Gardening Expo/ Seed Exchange and Farmers' Market fundraiser event.

HKHC is hosting a webinar/listening session on the 2012 Farm Bill on Tuesday, February 22, at 2 p.m. at the Health Council office (3031 Highway 180 East, Silver City). The webinar is an interactive, virtual conversation about priorities for the 2012 Farm Bill, the cornerstone legislation that outlines federal policies, programs, and funds for agriculture and food in this country.

Other events can be found on the HKHC website
www.grantcountyhealthykidshealthycommunities.org

G. BUSINESS

1. Presentation on the Local Food Committee of the Southwest New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce by Doug Zilm

Doug Zilm gave a 15-minute presentation on what the Green Chamber of Commerce 'Local Food Subcommittee' is doing to promote the development of local food in Grant County.

Highlights of his presentation included:

- The Southwest NM Green Chamber of Commerce organized in September 2009 with the mission of promoting local economies through green jobs, local food and sustainability.
- The local food subcommittee of the Green Chamber first met in July 2010. This subcommittee looks at what is needed and what could be done to promote local, sustainable food systems. The core group of members includes Chuck Fuller, Carolyn Smith, Genevieve Morgan, Hillary Nicklas, Doug Zilm, and Andrea Sauer. The local food committee meets the first and third Tuesday of each month from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the Silver City Food Cooperative community meeting room.
- One of the first actions of this group was organizing the Farm2Chef Challenge at the Silver City Farmers' Market on September 11, 2010. This event challenged local chefs and area students to create dishes using local ingredients. The County Commissioners judged the competition and the event gathered almost 100 spectators at the market. The group plans to host this event again in 2011.
- The next activity of the group was hosting a meeting for local producers on December 4, 2010, to develop a plan for agricultural infrastructure needs based off HKHC assessments completed in Spring 2010. Over 40 local producers attended the meeting. Speakers from La Montanita Cooperative Distribution Center, Farm to Table, and local ranchers John and Susie Eickhoff presented information to the group.
- Currently, the local food committee is conducting a food infrastructure survey. The survey examines what infrastructure exists and what existed in Grant County for distribution, storage, meat processing and commercial kitchens. Results will be mapped in geographic information systems (GIS) and presented at the March 26 Garden Expo. The purpose is to identify gaps and plan to develop this infrastructure.
- Committee created a blog to help connect producers to markets and vice versa: www.Grantcolocalfood.blogspot.com
- Mr. Zilm asked if the County would become a partner with the Green Chamber, similar to Silver City. Membership varies from free to more expensive charter memberships. They try to find something that suits every business. Mr. Gutierrez expressed interest in the County becoming a partner with the Green Chamber.
- The Green Chamber Board meets the second Tuesday of each month; the Chamber hosts a member event the second Friday of each month. The group is working on a website. For more information call 575-519-4848.

Doug Zilm is the General Manager of the Silver City Food Cooperative, member of Partnership for Local Business, partner of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities initiative, and is the Chair of

Southwest New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce 'Local Food Committee'. Mr. Zilm can be reached at the Co-op (520 N. Bullard Street in downtown Silver City) or 388-2343.

2. Strategic planning session for prioritizing the Food Policy Council's goals and development of subcommittees

i. Strategic Planning and Goals

- Economic development/planning for local agriculture and food: Mr. Gutierrez noted the County and region are currently developing plans and actions for strengthening economic development opportunities. The County participates in the "Stronger Economies Together" (SET) meetings organized by the Southwest Regional Council of Governments to develop regional strategies for economic development. The County is working with the Grant County Economic Coalition for Progress, a group of county-wide stakeholders, to develop a 5-year Economic Development Master Plan for Grant County to plan for infrastructure, small business and economic development. The Coalition meets every 3rd Thursday of the month right before FPC meetings. Mr. Gutierrez remarked that the County can help identify funding (grant/loan combinations), resources, and relationships with public officials to develop local agriculture. He expressed support for including local agriculture in these plans and processes.

Mr. Olson said the regional aspect is extremely important, because USDA favors regional approaches and connections to tie communities together. Mr. Olson clarified that "region" is defined as Catron, Luna, Hidalgo and Grant (the four county area), and from the border to Reserve there is a range of climates. Mr. Gutierrez noted that "region" could also be defined more narrowly or broadly depending on the context. Our region has the advantage of producing the majority of the year, but this may cost more than food shipped in from out of the region. Mr. Gutierrez agreed that working regionally would make us more competitive, but that we don't fully understand our regional connections and relationships. We may not see initial benefit, but over time there is a benefit. The SET program is supposed to build regional relationship and create a resource for information and funding. He encouraged anyone involved in SET and contact COG for more information. Ms. Edwards suggested partnering with the Southwest Regional Council of Governments (COG) to form an agricultural collaborative.

- Policies vs. Programs: Ms. Warhank reminded the group that the Council that the County has a lot going on programmatically and the Council needs to find the balance between devoting time to policy and/or program development. Mr. Gutierrez said that there needs to be buy-in for policy and show a "tangible" benefit in order for the County to show support.
- Education and Outreach: The Council broadly agreed that educating consumers about various aspects of the local food system is an important goal. A few of the challenges in reaching this goal include getting people to listen and care about food, figuring out who is already conducting public outreach and partnering with

them, and defining what is important for the public to know about local food. For example, educate people on why developing local food keeps dollars circulating in our communities. Ms. Edwards noted 95% of all raw food in NM goes out of state, then it returns as value-added products. All of the profitability is added elsewhere and we need think about how to capture some of that. She noted it would be interesting to see track exactly how our food dollars circulate.

- Expanding Local Food Production: Ms. Morgan suggested separately “public education” from “producer education” to better meet the needs and challenges of local producers for water, land, labor etc. Mr. Dabbs noted challenge of small producers is lack of infrastructure and resources to expand and suggested that producers could be empowered (whether part-time or full-time) with the tools. Ms. Morgan noted that the only local information available to growers is the County Extension Service². The WNMU Small Business Development Center is not set up to support small farmers. She would like to see a subcommittee address issues for producers such as training programs, start-up funding, sharing resources etc. Mrs. Nennich noted one way for producers to get involved is attend Food Policy Council meetings and voice their concerns.

Ms. Morgan felt discouraged because farmers’ in the Southwest have a hard time making ends meet, and they can’t afford to grow food sometimes. Producers currently have a low return on investment in growing food, no access to facilities, and water costs. Mr. Dabbs said larger agricultural operations are subsidized and small producers are not. Mr. Dabbs added that facilities and infrastructure do not currently support local production, and there are lots of costs involved in value-added processing and expanding economies of scale. Council members expressed an interest in knowing what the main barriers are to expanding location production. Mr. Olson wants to use growers to train other growers to address issues. Figuring out how policies can address and/or support these challenges is a key issue for this goal.

- Identify funding opportunities for local food systems: Funding sources need to be identified for food production, infrastructure, training, markets etc. and combined into one resource for stakeholders. The goal is to be a funding clearinghouse for food system projects and resources.
- Develop a local marketing campaign: Create a logo, sticker or other labeling system for local food products so consumers can easily identify, purchase and support local products. Ms. Edwards said this would be “low-hanging fruit” and may not be that expensive. Ms. Morgan said she had examples of this from other locales.

² Grant County Extension Service will be offering a Master Gardener Program in the near future, which has generated a lot of interest. Contact Extension Services for more information.

- Develop Farm to Institution programs: The challenges include lack of equipment in facilities (schools in particular), lack of trained labor, resources, and knowledge about how to run this type of program. Ms. Warhank noted that costs and labor prevent schools from participating.

ii. Food Policy Council Subcommittees

Based on the lengthy discussion about strategic planning goals above, the Council organized themes around which subcommittees could form to accomplish the Council's goals. There was wide agreement that efforts should not be duplicated in the community, but to compliment efforts of existing groups and fill in the gaps where necessary. The Council proposed six subcommittees:

1. The Southwest New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce 'Local Food Subcommittee' could become an advisory committee to the Grant County Food Policy Council on agricultural distribution and infrastructure.
2. Producer education subcommittee
3. Public education and outreach subcommittee
4. Funding possibilities subcommittee
5. Local marketing campaign subcommittee
6. Farm to Institution subcommittee

Ms. Edwards made the motion to approve the above themes to structure Food Policy Council subcommittees. Mr. Olson seconded the motion. Passed unanimously by consensus vote.

The Council agreed to provide a short description of potential goals, actions, and three to four members for each subcommittee at the next Food Policy Council meeting (3/17/2011).

3. Proposed action against genetically-modified (GM) alfalfa

Ms. Morgan clarified that there may not be any action at this meeting, but rather she wanted to educate the community and get input on the issue. She handed out an AP news article about round-up ready alfalfa. She gave background that the USDA deregulated alfalfa, meaning it can be grown in all regions whereas before there were restrictions on where it could be grown. The article outlines the history. She is not sure about whether it is grown already in New Mexico. She is concerned about it from a labeling standpoint, and wants to see some sort of labeling campaign so that consumers know whether they are buying GM alfalfa. If there is any action, she is wants to see GM labels. Ms. Edwards asked whether she wanted to label GM alfalfa or the end product that has GM alfalfa. Ms. Morgan suggested the Council become educated about it and perhaps continue the discussion next month. Mr. Dabbs said he has a resource out East. Mr. Walden confirmed there are no labeling requirements for bales. New Mexico less than 1% of alfalfa grown in the US. He brought up question about bees and cross pollinating. Ms. Edwards said it might be prudent to do some kind of labeling and education to make sure production of GM alfalfa seed in New Mexico. Ms. Morgan said there is always a potential risk for contamination, especially for perennials.

There is concern among growers, especially organic (because technically organic means no GM). Ms. Edwards referred to research positing that round-up ready products leaches nutritional value of the plants, which leads to the degradation of nutritional value down the chain.

Ms. Edwards asked if groups are going to sue to prevent it, and Ms. Morgan said yes. She said GM seed has been sold since 2007, and it has been growing in some places. Some groups have brought an injunction to stop it. Mr. Dabbs said it would be nice to have the choice. Ms. Morgan agreed, which is why labeling would be an appropriate choice. She would like more input from Extension, ranching associations and see if there is support for a labeling campaign. She recognizes that this is a big issue. Ms. Billings said a label wouldn't hurt because it's a value added product. Ms. Billings asked some ranchers about this, and they said they don't market here and ranchers don't have control over feed. 99% of alfalfa fed to cattle in our region is brought in and that ranchers don't feed alfalfa straight to cattle because it will kill them. Instead, ranchers feed their cattle hay in dry form. She thinks labeling is a great idea, but locally they don't really buy alfalfa in that way to feed to cattle. Horses are another thing, but they aren't part of the food chain. Mr. Walden said most of the alfalfa goes to dairy cows. Ms. Billings said you don't buy first cut alfalfa because of the weeds for cows. Mr. Walden said alfalfa is a perennial, so it would take many years to convert. Ms. Billings asked if we could label at the state level, Mr. Olson says yes. Mr. Olson said this has been discussed at the federal level for years, and referred to examples of GM corn. It is a politically contentious issue at the federal level. Mr. Olson says locally grown is not a problem because you can identify it. Ms. Billings said it comes back to education.

Ms. Morgan asked if the Council could make a unified statement on genetically-modified food. Ms. Edwards clarified that a policy statement would not necessarily end in a resolution. Mrs. Sauer could research what other Council's and jurisdictions have done and present back at March meeting.

Council agreed to table the discussion until Mrs. Sauer can present information. Ms. Edwards made motion to table the discussion for the next meeting and Ms. Billings seconded.

H. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Subcommittees are not organized at this time and therefore no reports were given.

I. ITEMS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Ms. Billings and Mrs. Nennich do not have any comments at this time.

J. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL

Ms. Billings asked if any members would like to present any information at the next meeting or what would the Council like to be educated about. Ms. Edwards suggested the Council hear from Mr. Dabbs and Ms. Morgan about challenges producers face.

Ms. Edwards noted there are a lot of things happening at the local, state and federal levels that may affect food—everything is interconnected. The proposed federal budget would cut

\$750 million from the WIC program, including senior commodities, EBT, and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition program. She says from the state level, they project confidence that there will not be a lot of cuts as part of President's budget. Mr. Walden says we probably won't know until late summer. Ms. Warhank says she got cut 50% in WIC vouchers because people weren't using it and therefore money was distributed elsewhere. Mr. Olson said that's part of the education piece to use those vouchers. Ms. Warhank noted the same issues with EBT and commodities. Mrs. Nennich says Snappy Marts are one of the few convenience stores in our area that accept EBT, due to the fact that they must carry certain items to meet the EBT criteria.

Ms. Edwards said there needs to be some mechanism for the Council members to share information with each other and with the public. Council brought up again an education piece. Ms. Edwards says that's the way to get the word out, make public statements etc. Mr. Olson wants to look at where we will have the greatest impact initially—he says focusing on developing locally grown production and public outreach/education. Get people on board, get credibility going and address some of the issues incrementally.

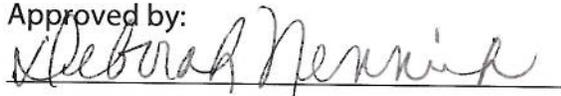
Mr. Olson noted he will be out of town for the next meeting.

Mr. Dabbs thanked the commissioners for their support of SB 63.

K. ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING: MARCH 17, 2011 AT 5:15 P.M.

Having no further business to discuss, the Council adjourned the meeting at 7:11 p.m. Mr. Olson made the motion to adjourn, Mr. Dabbs seconded. Approved by unanimous vote.

Approved by:



Deborah Nennich, Co-Chair



Judy Billings, Co-Chair

Submitted by:



Andrea Sauer, Staff

