

**Grant County Food Policy Council  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 17, 2011**

ITEM	ACTION TAKEN	PAGE(S)
A. CALL TO ORDER	Call to order 5:24 p.m.	2
B. ROLL CALL	No Quorum	2
C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA	Tabled	2
D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES	Tabled	3
E. PUBLIC INPUT	Discussed	3
F. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS	Discussed	3
G. BUSINESS		3
1. Presentation from local producers	Discussed	3-5
2. Strategic planning and subcommittees	Discussed	5
3. Food Policy Council staff and county assistance	Discussed	5-6
H. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS	None	6
I. ITEMS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS	Discussed	6
J. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL	Discussed	6
K. ADJOURNMENT	Adjourned 7:15 p.m.	6

**Next meeting: April 21, 2011—5:15 p.m. at the Grant County Administration Center**

**Grant County Food Policy Council  
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, March 17, 2011

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Grant County Food Policy Council was called to order by Co-Chair, Mrs. Nennich, on this date at approximately 5:24 p.m. at the Grant County Administration Building, 1400 Highway 180 East, Silver City, NM 88061.

**B. ROLL CALL**

Roll call indicated a quorum<sup>1</sup> was not present to conduct official business:

Members Present

Judy Billings  
J.J. Dabbs  
Alicia Edwards  
Deborah Nennich  
Pete Walden\*  
Brandi Warhank\*  
Genevieve Morgan  
Melvyn Gelb  
Sylvia Mendez-Lopez (late)

Members Absent

Richard Olson\* (excused)  
Alma Grijalva  
Jon Saari\*  
Anthony Gutierrez\*

Staff Present

Andrea Sauer

Others Present

Huetotl Lopez (proxy for Sylvia Mendez-Lopez)  
Melanie Goodman (Field Representative for Senator Bingaman's office)

**C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Members did not have a quorum present at the time of voting and agreed the agenda was acceptable to proceed.

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

**D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Council reviewed the minutes from February 17, 2011. Mrs. Nennich requested a statement be changed on page 9 of the minutes to "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." No other corrections were identified at this time.

Members did not have a quorum present at the time of voting and agreed to table approving the minutes until the April 21 Council meeting.

**E. PUBLIC INPUT**

Ms. Goodman, a field representative from Senator Bingaman's office, told the Council that the Senator and staff have been watching the development of the Council with interest and wished to express their support for the Council's future initiatives.

**F. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

Mrs. Sauer thanked Council members who signed up to staff the FPC booth at the March 26 Garden Expo, Seed Share and Farmers' Market Fundraiser. She suggested that the FPC invite representatives from each farmers' market to next month's Food Policy Council meeting to present their plans for farmers' markets this year in Grant County.

Mrs. Sauer noted the hiring of additional staff for the Food Policy Council will be delayed until September, pending available funds and open positions with the AmeriCorps program.

On a related note, regarding the third item of business on the agenda, Mrs. Sauer asked the Council to consider asking the County for additional assistance to begin taking ownership of the Council. Requested additional assistance includes:

- 1) A stenographer to take the meeting minutes
- 2) Post agenda and minutes on the County website rather than HKHC

The County is already providing in-kind assistance in the form of meeting space, televising FPC meetings on community access television stations, and posting legal notices on the County website.

**G. BUSINESS**

**1. Presentation on the challenges and needs of local producers (Genevieve Morgan, Farm Manager for San Vicente Farms; JJ Dabbs, Farmer and member of Gila Cooperative; and Judy Billings, Rancher in White Signal)**

In efforts to improve communication and knowledge of the local food system, three producers and Food Policy Council members spoke on the challenges, needs, and opportunities facing producers in our area.

Genevieve Morgan:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> season as NM farmer; 7 year farming in the High Desert

- Joined FPC to be a voice for young farmers in the area and wanted to advocate for the importance of local food production.
- Challenges:
  - Access to land
  - Unwilling to take on debt
  - High start-up costs
  - Conventional food is too cheap
  - Difficult to compete with large producers
  - Labor—hard to find skilled people with strong work ethic for an affordable rate for small farming operations (10 acres or less)
  - Increased transportation costs
  - Lack of infrastructure to support small operations
- Would like to see more young farmers and it can be the right lifestyle for some

#### J.J. Dabbs:

- Mostly farms for his family; sells extras at Gila Market. Would like to expand.
- Grew up working on dairy farm in Eastern Pennsylvania and wanted to continue farming, but didn't see a future in it. Background degree in Agronomy.
- Sees a revival in agriculture around the country because of increasing costs in supplies, interest in where food comes from, and health outcomes.
- Challenges:
  - Burdensome regulation—ex. Can't sell milk from dairy cows; cost prohibitive. Meat processors face regulations and lack of infrastructure to process and sell meat locally. Can't have value-added products because there are no commercial kitchens (ex. Fruit trees → jelly). Can't sell poultry to restaurants, but can sell at farmers' markets, due to regulations at the state level. Regulations not in favor of small producers; tailored to food safety laws for larger operations.
  - Cultural shift needs to happen to appreciate local food again and understand the costs involved in food (not cheap, subsidized food)
  - Lack of nutrition education—there should be classes etc.
  - Debunk the following myths:
    - Industrial agriculture can feed the world.
    - Trend of sustainable and local food will control what we eat
  - Farmers have an image of low-skilled workers; agrarian workers should hold a high place in society
  - Lack of infrastructure: cold storage, meat processing, commercial kitchens
- Advocates for direct farm to consumer sales (institutional, private consumers, CSA's, farmers' markets)
- Promote local food and think about legacy created with a local agricultural system
- For every dollar spent a local business, 60% goes back into the community

#### Judy Billings:

- Challenges:

- Border security: multi-faceted problem related to proximity to border and drug trade. “Drug traffic is just a given way of life”. Border security not as tight with animals coming back and forth. Worries among local ranchers about terrorism in the food system.
- Environment: Lack of grass on the range and now in a period of drought. Problems during fire season.
- Trespassing: People shoot up facilities (tanks, windmills); leaving gates open and cattle get out
- Beef safety: contamination an issue (tuberculosis can pass through milk if it’s not pasteurized)
- Water rights
- Cost: majority of Grant County ranchers do not sell locally (99% of beef produced is not sold here)
- Lack of infrastructure and regulations
- Ms. Billings provided a handout about different types of beef (grass-fed vs. natural)

Mr. Lopez asked Ms. Billings about what specific diseases inflict cattle. He preferred the use of the word “undocumented immigrants” rather than “illegal aliens”. Mr. Dabbs commented that undocumented immigrants should be allowed to work on farms as a source of labor and could be addressed at the federal level.

## **2. Continue discussion of Food Policy Council subcommittees and strategic planning to meet short-, medium-, and long-term goals**

- 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. Council agreed that this should be an advisory committee to the Food Policy Council. Ms. Edwards asked for clarification about terms of advisory committee and subcommittee. Council agreed that all groups are essentially subcommittees of the Food Policy Council. Ms. Morgan notified the group that the local food subcommittee is working on a food infrastructure survey, a farm apprenticeship program, and potentially another Farm2Chef Challenge in the Fall.
- Other subcommittees: The Council discussed the purpose and goals for the producer education and public education/outreach subcommittees. The Council decided to table discussion on the other three proposed subcommittees until the next meeting. The other three proposed are funding possibilities, local marketing campaign, and farm to institution subcommittees.

Mrs. Nennich asked Council members to please send their summaries, goals, and proposed members for each subcommittee to Mrs. Sauer. Mrs. Sauer will compile the information to distribute before the next Council meeting.

## **3. Food Policy Council staff and assistance from the County**

Council agreed to request further staff and support for the Food Policy Council at the next County Work Session. Mrs. Sauer will write a memo to County Commission requesting the County provide a stenographer and post the meeting minutes and agenda on the County website. Mr. Gelb offered to attend the County Commission Work Session with Mrs. Sauer to present these requests. Mrs. Sauer will email group the date, time, and location of the next County Work Session.

#### **H. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

#### **I. ITEMS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS**

Mrs. Nennich asked if anyone would be willing to fill her spot from 11-1 at the March 26 Garden Expo, as she has another obligation. Mr. Gelb volunteered to fill her spot during this time. Ms. Warhank noted that WIC and Food Stamps will be at the Garden Expo. Mrs. Nennich mentioned the The Volunteer Center is hosting an event about bees and beekeeping with Les Crowder beginning March 18; for more info (575) 388-2988.

#### **J. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL**

Ms. Edwards announced she is working on a cooperative sharing agreement to allow small producers to use the commercial kitchens at the Gila and Mimbres Senior Centers. She said she will know more after a March 28 meeting with County representatives. Mr. Lopez asked if the Bayard Community Center could be included in this arrangement. Ms. Edwards commented that the Bayard Community Center is owned by the City of Bayard, rather than the County, and requests would go through them. Mrs. Sauer added that the Bayard Farmers' Market has already gone to the City to reduce facility fees for the Bayard Community Center kitchen.

Mr. Walden noted that Extension Services will be offering a free workshop on building a hoophouse for year-round production on Friday, April 15. The public is invited for this hands-on workshop located behind the Grant County Administration Center. For more information, call (575) 388-1559.

The Volunteer Center is working with Extension to offer three new workshops in April and May for producers: 1) small business planning for producers; 2) Nancy Flores on how to get a product ready for market; and 3) Judy O'Loughlin on how to create the value-added product. For more information, call (575) 388-2988.

Council members should send "homework"<sup>2</sup> to Mrs. Sauer for compilation and discussion at the next meeting on April 21. Ms. Warhank will not be at the next meeting.

#### **K. ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING: APRIL 21, 2011 AT 5:15 P.M.**

Having no further business to discuss, the Council adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

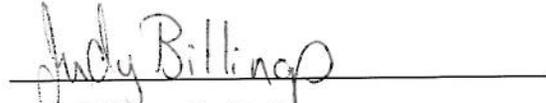
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<sup>2</sup> "Homework" is a short description on the short-, medium-, and long-term goals of each subcommittee. Also, submit potential subcommittee members.

**Approved by:**



Deborah Nennich, Co-Chair



Judy Billings, Co-Chair

**Submitted by:**



Andrea Sauer, Staff

