

TFSC / Thurston Food System Council	
November 5, 2014	3:00pm – 5:00pm at TRPC
Meeting	Monthly Meeting Minutes
Facilitator	Sash Sunday, Chair
Note taker:	David Skattebo

AGENDA:

- 1) Introductions + Projects (3:00-3:10)
 - 2) October Meeting Minutes (3:10-3:15)
 - 3) Public Communication (3:15-3:20)
 - 4) Working Issue Team (WIT) Reports
 - i) Leadership – 2014 leadership team (3:20-3:30)
 - ii) Membership (3:30-3:40)
 - iii) Communications (3:40-3:50)
 - 5) Policy Information Gathering Session – (3:50-4:50)
 - 6) Alignment assessment regarding the food work of Thurston Thrives, Sustainable Thurston and the Asset Building Coalition. Katie Rains & Karen Parkhurst (4:20-4:50)
 - 7) Public Communication (4:50-4:55)
 - 8) Events and Announcements (4:55-5:00)
- Next Meeting: December 3, 2014

Attendance and briefs on member projects:

Sash Sunday, OlyKraut

Katie Rains, Executive Director, GRuB: Currently working with Tumwater School District to launch a farm(s). Also working to bring more veterans into GRuB's work.

Karen Parkhurst, Thurston Regional Planning Council: [Thurston Bountiful Byway](#) kicked off on Oct 13 with 50-60 people at the launch event. She gave a sustainability talk to Black Hills HS. Class said they didn't like the healthier school food, and wanted more choices. In January the class will work on improving the food, and are going to write to Michelle Obama. Karen worked with our representative to assure that students will get a response from her.

Loretta Seppanen, Slow Food Greater Olympia; Slow Food and GRuB are hosting "Demystifying Holiday Meals", a farm-to-table dinner 11/23, 4-7pm at GRuB. \$15 general public, free for KGP gardeners. The Farmland Trust is beginning to put together their annual farm map, set to come out

in March. Small ads are available for \$150, large ones for \$250 plus sponsorship opportunities at various levels.

Diane Grace Crutcher, Food Sovereignty Nutritionist, Nutrition and Citizens Sector Liaison – Dianne did research project on yields from hobby growers. Also mentions article in PCC Sound Consumer about climate change and changing policy in the PNW.

Aslan Meade, West Olympia Farmer’s Market and Bank Local Washington: The West Olympia Farmer’s Market is moving to West Central Park, and will be hiring a market manager. Aslan is also organizing a tour of the Port of Olympia on 12/5. On December 8th, “Procure Local”, an event at the Fairgrounds getting processors and buyers together with producers.

Michaela Winkley: As school garden projects wind down she is doing more nutrition education in classrooms.

Gifford (Marco) Pinchot

Rachel Floyd, TESC Campus Food Coalition Co-Coordinator , Campus Food Coalition is hosting a “Stone Soup” event with a panel of students who work in food and the food movement.

David Skattebo, TESC student examining inequalities in the local food movement

ABSENT:

Lesley Wigen, Thurston County Public Health Nutrition; TFSC Communications - needed at meeting with grant provider

Susan Ujcic/Annie Salafsky, Helsing Junction Farm

TJ Johnson, Sustainable South Sound, needed to attend meeting at TESC

Lisa Smith, Enterprise for Equity

VISITORS:

Zack Holcomb, AmeriCorps member at the Food Bank working with school gardens

James Hibbs, Americorps VISTA, Center for Community-Based Learning & Action at TESC Food Justice Liaison

R. Peggy Smith, League of Women Voters Ag Lobby Team

II. APPROVAL of MEETING MINUTES (October 1 2014)

Meeting Minutes for October 1, 2014 were motioned, seconded, and passed for approval without changes, and submitted for upload to TFSC website.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:

None given.

IV. WORKING ISSUE TEAMS

IV. A. LEADERSHIP Sash Sunday, Chair

Sash Sunday discussed the pattern in unpaid boards, in which limited resources prevent action. How can we deal with that challenge? Do we want to have that conversation?

IV. B. MEMBERSHIP (Loretta Seppanen)

Loretta Seppanen discussed some of the details of membership terms and what the membership patterns have been. Terms are 2 years, and there can be a maximum of 20 members. The membership committee is trying to recruit more members, as well as contributors and presenters who are not members. The committee will ask if Zena Edwards, WSU Extension can join. She noted that Sue from Helsing Junction will attend meetings in the winter and had hoped to get to the meeting today.

Loretta Seppanen also motions that David Skattebo be voted in as a member of the board, and the interim secretary. Dianne Grace-Crutchter seconds, and David is voted in unanimously.

IV. C. COMMUNICATIONS: (Lesley Wigen)

No report

V. POLICY INFORMATION Gathering Session

The goal of this discussion is that as a council, we can do work to address changes in policies that the group regards as working against a stronger local food system.

Katie Rains discussed two policies, the first of which is one of TFSC's internal policies.

- A) **Youth representations on the TFSC:** The Oakland Food Policy Council has a youth advisory council that represents youth voice on the council. What would it look like to have youth on our council? Would we need to change our time?
- B) **Bill to support replication of the GRuB school program:** GRuB worked with Sen. Reykdal on the "GRuB bill", which did not go through, because "WA doesn't pay for students to go to school". That bill may return in the 2015 legislative session.

Sash Sunday said that what she was concerned about turned out to not be a concern at all. The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) originally classified sauerkraut as an acidified food with special food processing requirements. Due to public comment that classification has been changed.

Karen Parkhurst brought two policy issues to the table.

- A) **Rural water safety requirements:** There are different rules about wells for residential, agriculture sites, and different rules still if the farm has visitors coming to the property. For example, a distillery in Thurston changed regulatory classifications when he opened a tasting room. While we need water safety, we need clarity and ways to help farmers to make money if they change well classifications.
- B) **Food Truck Barriers:** Thurston has the toughest food truck laws in WA; some of our rules create barriers to local food. The rules are often confusing. Could they be less restrictive and still be safe?

Loretta Seppanen shared 3 policy issues:

- A. **Strategies to Counter-Act Loss of Farmland:** noted that according to the Agricultural Census, that between 2007-2012, when the economy was bad, Thurston still lost 3,000 acres of farmland. There are 3 major strategies, in addition to having a strong local ag economy, for

saving farmland that could each be strengthened. Loretta suggests asking county officials and other groups to gather together to discuss which of these makes sense to pursue:

- Long-term Ag District: The county is allowed to zone land as being agricultural, but it doesn't protect land completely, because properties can be divided into 20 acre units as long as each is still farmed. That, however, means more houses on the property. Adding more land to the ag district, takes away the current development rights and thus is controversial.
 - Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Farmers can transfer the development rights of their land in a private exchange with builders in urban areas. The farmer gains financially and the builder gains some rights in the new construction they might not otherwise have. Thurston County has a TDR program that has been used just once, but given the limits on growth options in Olympia, it may be appropriate to emphasize this option by raising awareness.
 - Land Trust Purchase of a Farm's Development Rights: There is considerable federal funds for development rights (purchasing a agricultural conservation easement) but the qualifying land trust must match those funds 50/50 with local or state funds. In addition to local contributions from individuals or businesses, land trusts in Thurston County tap two sources of matching fund dollars:
 - a. Conservation Futures which comes from property taxes and could be increased by a vote in the county to tax ourselves more. Loretta's property tax now has \$15 allotted to Conservation Futures. State law allows the county to tax at a level that of about \$30.
 - b. A portion (8%) of the state's WA Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) is allocated to farmland conservation. For example, if funded at \$50 million for 2015-17, some of the funds will allow Capital Land Trust to acquire a conservation easement on much of the Nelson Farm. The American Farmland Trust advocates for greatly increasing the level of funding so that more match money would be available for farmland preservation across the state.
- B. **Get Fair Property Tax Rules for Small Farms:** The "current-use" property tax has farmers paying less taxes, about ½ market value. This is good for many farmers, other than those with very small farms, because 1 acre of each farm is taxed at market value because of the house. These taxes can become unbearable to pay. This tax comes up to be changed every year and fails. Their needs to be a campaign.
- C. **Return to funding development of seeds specific to our area:** Federal funds for WSU seed innovations have dried up, so the research has stopped. This research is critically needed, especially considering the impacts of climate change. Money needs to be raised to fund this research.

Michaela Winkley focused on farm-to-school policies, particularly in Tumwater School District. She discovered that money is a much bigger barrier than policy. Peter G. Schmidt Elementary is down the road from Kirsop farm, and Michaela wanted to get Kirsop carrots into the school for the kids. She found funding (600 carrots at 25 cents each) from Tumwater Family Practices and made it happen. This wasn't policy work, but action, which Karen Parkhurst noted sometimes policy follows action. Katie Rains noted that another issue is that Tumwater School District doesn't have a central kitchen and can't process whole foods. Capital funding dedicated to adding full kitchens in local schools is needed to allow use of fresh produce in school meals in the Tumwater district.

Dianne Grace-Crutchler researched regulations regarding the distribution of home-preserved food. Residential growers can produce a lot of food, but health and safety regulations restrict distributing home-preserved food. Would more licensing solve the problem? How can we make a smooth chain so that small producers can preserve food safely without cooking out the nutrients?

Marco Pinchot said that there's a whole lot going on in the shellfish industry regarding policy, which is why Taylor Shellfish has two lobbyists on staff. Demand for Washington shellfish exceeds supply but a maze of state and local water regulations make growing the number of shellfish beds, especially among small shellfish growers, close to impossible. There used to be more shellfish farm acreage, but it was decreased by pollution. As pollution is controlled farmers want to return to growing shellfish in some of the cleaner water areas. The sad part is only large farms can afford the lawyers needed to navigate the maze of federal, state and local regulations. Despite cleaner water, there have been no new shellfish farmers in Thurston in the past 7 years. This work is not necessarily applicable to TFSC, but it is significant that the largest agricultural industry in Thurston can't grow because of layers of regulatory oversight.

David Skattebo noted that in some counties across North Carolina, food policy councils have gotten county governments to implement a policy that requires all food-serving county institutions purchase 10% local food. What sort of funding and political will would it take to make that happen here? Most of these counties had a full-time position working on local food systems, which was critical to implement this policy. Thurston needs to hire someone for local food systems work, if they really care about strengthening the local food system.

Sash Sunday concluded by saying that next month we can pick policies we specifically want to take action on, and discuss if we want to officially adopt a policy agenda. We will also identify what we can feasibly accomplish, and narrow down which policies to focus on in the long and short terms. We will also talk about elections for the boards leadership, and vote in January.

VI. ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT REGARDING THE FOOD WORK OF THURSTON THRIVES AND THE ASSET BUILDING COALITION (Katie Rains & Karen Parkhurst)

Katie Rains and Karen Parkhurst had spent the morning in a Thurston Thrives Food Action Team (TTFAT) retreat. That team plans to keep meeting about 4 times a year.

They brought back the possibility of joining forces with the Food Action Team. Together we would determine new norms concerning how often we would meet and what collaboration between our organizations would look like. Some advantages of joining together would be:

- Ability to strengthen the local food/food sovereignty perspective in the action plan and to add related measures.
- Bring the quality of persistence demonstrated by TFSC members to the Food Action Team to assure they can continue in the future.
- Could help the Food Action Team become the coalition of coalitions it seeks to be and support the TFSC vision of coordinating among all working to strengthen to local food system.
- For the 4 to 5 individuals who staff the Food Action team or are members and members of TFSC meeting together would be beneficial in terms of time spent.
- Reduce communication gaps between the groups.
- Recognizes the extent to which the groups, while starting from the different perspectives of health versus the local food system, are working in very similar areas.

The next TTFAT would likely be in March on a workday morning.

There was a lot of support for the idea of pooling our strengths and collaborating with TTFAT, and that such collaboration shows power. We could be one body where lots of voices come together, but retain WITs and committees.

There were some concerns about merging, and TFSC retaining its identity—since identity was one of the main focuses of 2014 for the council. At the times of joint meetings we would need to adopt new norms for the larger group. We could convene a meeting between all the groups prior to March to figure out what we're doing and what collaborating will look like.

This conversation will continue, with ideas of how we'll move forward, in December.

Loretta Seppanen asked the group to consider time on the December agenda to consider a letter in response to the revised regulations in the Food System Management Act. Information on issues is available at the National Sustainable Agricultural Coalition [website](#). The letter should thank the FDA for listening to previous input and making positive changes and highlight areas needing additional changes. One issue, for example, is that as a farmer, if you store food off the farm, and try to sell it, you become a food facility, with all the special regulations for a "facility."

VII. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

None

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS:

NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, December , 2014 at TRPC at 3:00pm

[Conference phone is available at TRPC for those unable to attend.]

Future Meetings: December 3

Draft Agenda Items:

Next steps related to policy issues described at the November meeting

Consider the option to align with Thurston Thrives Food Action Team

Review a draft letter to the FDA about FSMA with comments on the revised regulations due Dec 14

Prepare for TFSC leadership WIT election in January