



Agricultural Commission

Remote Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2022

7:00 - 9:00 PM

Attending: Lucy McKain, Brittany Overshiner, Sherrill Rosoff

Guests: Holly Fowler, Tony Beattie, Sue Edwards, Margie LaFleur, Gene Jonas

Absent: David Sears, Tom Mirabile

Meeting came to order at 7:06 PM.

Motion to approve December 22, 2021 by Lucy McKain, seconded by Brittany Overshiner. Unanimously approved.

No treasurer's report.

Co-Chair announcements: Civic Engagement Night is tomorrow night and will focus on AROD.

The meeting was then turned over to Holly Fowler of Northbound Ventures. A public shared folder has been created where our working documents will be housed.

The committee discussed the following:

1. Acreage (Questions 4 and 5). Purpose: to determine participation in the food hub, how much extra product a farmer might have to sell into a food hub
2. Eliminated demographic questions
3. The Buyer survey she's proposing as an interview. In her experience, she gets more information and understanding from a personal interview than a survey.
4. Holly will check for any redundancies in the survey; gave example of what a survey matrix will look like.
5. Discussion ensued about on-farm waste and gleaning. Boston Area Gleaners as a non-profit; recent purchase of Stonefield Farms in Acton. Will be included in the report's environmental scan.
6. Discussion about the Real Organic movement and food certifications in general
7. Questions 22, 23, and 24 are the three biggest questions in the survey as they have to do about production volume, pricing requirements and preferences. Some are "gut" questions.

8. Survey contains “branching” question (#25) where respondents can jump to questions related to the commercial kitchen, or to the end of the survey if they’re not interested in the kitchen. Farmer Survey contains an abbreviated form of the kitchen user survey.

9. Food certifications e.g. GAP certification. Is this a regulatory barrier or an administrative one? Will farmers have to be GAP certified to participate in the food hub? Holly responded that that might depend on the Buyers (such as schools).

10. Discussion about the licensing and certifications of the commercial kitchen and what would be required. A food manager of the hub would need to know all the regulations around mixing produce, meats, dairy in the kitchen.

11. Added training classes to question 19 as it was mentioned that Shon Rainford had great success training people in food certifications in Worcester.

Next step is to have Shon look at the survey because he’s putting together the operational plan. Sherrill will swing back to Shon for his “gut check” on the survey.

Is HIP and SNAP relevant to this survey? Holly Fowler answered that the question about how they’re selling their products will reveal if they are using HIP and SNAP in their CSA, farmstead or participating farmers markets. It does speak to the values of the food hub. She is adding Greater Boston Food Bank in the survey question. A typical value question would be if it’s important that the food hub donate a certain percentage of what it manages? It was noted that Kearsarge has the “freege” where anyone from the community could take what they wanted. Supported by grant money. Food Connects does farm to school and food pantry - they receive grant money for that. How important is it to the Commission whether the food hub is non-profit or for profit? The Fitz Collaborative is a non-profit so would the operation of the commercial kitchen be non-profit?

Holly Fowler noted that part of what would come out of the operational and business plan is what makes sense for the food hub? Should it be a collaborative? If it’s a non-profit, it can access funds...We will look at the alignment between producers and buyers to determine the GAP analysis and this question of for profit or non-profit status may be addressed there.

Holly Fowler is very comfortable with the kitchen survey and so is focusing more on the farmer survey. Reviewed the Buyer interview script with the group. Are Buyers interested in branding? Traceability of the produce for their menu offerings? Added to the Buyer survey. Buying from local farms is a values decision as well as cuts down on co2 emissions, lowering carbon foot print. Can we promote that point to encourage consumers to buy local? Holly Fowler responded that we can ask Buyers what motivates them as far as competitive differentiation and include carbon footprint/climate change impacts.

TB: are they interested in branding? Are they interested in putting on their menus PepperellFresh? It’s the traceability question - this was added to the Buyer interview survey.
SE: do local stores know that local buyers are interested in knowing that farms are providing the produce - delighted to see local produce from our farms in the grocery stores because she wants to see them survive as well. Climate change is a value decision as well; buying from local farms cuts down on co2 emissions.

Sherrill will send surveys to The Fitz Collaborative and Shon Rainford for comment but we have a tight timeline. Discussion ensued about the timeline; surveys will be live for at least three weeks. Sherrill noted that what’s driving the timeline is the Fitz Collaborative. Must have this done by the end of April so that they would have May and good part of June with a hard deadline to submit the operational and business plan by the MassDevelopment grant deadline. The hand-off is really important. She doesn’t think The Fitz Collaborative will have any serious questions

about the producer survey; but they'll be interested in the kitchen survey. Would be better to jump in on one of their meetings to be sure about that.

Lucy McKain motioned and Brittany Overshiner seconded to authorize Holly to make any changes on the surveys from this point on. Passed unanimously. Holly noted we can have a public information meeting a week after the surveys launch to give people a chance to hear about it. Should include Ag and Fitz in the meeting to be available to answer questions. Sherrill will invite Ag Commissions to the information session. Holly will include the informational session invitation to the survey launch and will draft the language. February 15th for the information session. Holly will provide the zoom link and lead the discussion. Sherrill and Holly will meet post meeting to track the survey outreach.

Right to Farm Bylaw discussion. What is the reason for doing it? Sherrill Rosoff noted that it needed to be updated to the current state model. After discussion the decision was to take it up at the next working meeting. She'll send the current Right to Farm Bylaw and the state's model Right to Farm Bylaw to the group so the two can be compared.

Please remember ARPA funding requests and think about what we would like to submit.

Motion to adjourn by Lucy McKain, seconded by Brittany Overshiner. Approved. Adjourned at 9:45 PM