



Commission of Food Security, Heritage, and Economy

Wednesday, November 18, 2015 8:00 a.m
1st Floor Conference Room, Tucson City Hall
255 W. Alameda St., Tucson, Arizona 85726

MINUTES

Approved 12/09/2015

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Quorum was met at 8:07.

The Chair briefly reviewed the agenda.

Dr. McDonald requested that staff provide name placards.

Attendance was as follows:

Present:

C.J. Agbanawag, for Erika Mitnik-White
Kris Vrolijk
Robert Ojeda
Kara Jones
Cie'na Schaepli
Maribel Alvarez
Chet Phillips
Jesus Garcia
Daniel McDonald
Kelly Watters
Dora Martinez

Absent:

Debbie Winegarten
Vanessa Bechtol
Sam Alboy
Gary P. Nabhan
Douglas Taren
David Ludwig

Staff Present:

Ryan Anderson, Secretary

Representing:

Local First Arizona
Local First Arizona
Community Food Bank of S. AZ
Community Food Bank of S. AZ
Pima County Food Alliance
Southwest Folklife Alliance
Southwest Folklife Alliance
Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum
UA College of Ag and Life Sciences
Pima County Food Alliance
Pima County Food Alliance

Representing:

Community Food Bank of S. AZ
Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance
Local First Arizona
Native Seeds/SEARCH
UA College of Public Health
Pima County Health Dept

Mayor's Office

2. Action: Review and Approval of Minutes

Dr. McDonald noted that Cie'na Schaepli's name was misspelled in the minutes, and that the arrival/departure times listed for Gary Nabhan and Jesus Garcia were carried over from the September meeting. Those corrections were made.

Action: Dr. McDonald moved to approve the minutes with the noted corrections. Dr. Alvarez seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3. Presentation by Chet Phillips & Discussion

Chet Phillips spoke about the Borderlands Food Bank (BFB) and the Rio Rico Landfill. During his presentation, he noted the following:

- 2 million tons of food cross the US/Mexico Border annually. Approximately 6,000 pounds of that go into the Rio Rico Landfill. This is material that has passed the USDA inspections.
- Currently, Borderlands Food Bank is limited to 900 pounds of free dumping annually, above which Borderlands must pay a tipping fee. Previously, BFB did not have a cap. During 2012 they dumped approximately 12,000 pounds into the landfill. Once the cap was put in place, BFB contacted the Compost Cats about diversion into a composting program, as composting became less expensive than the tipping fees.
- After the cap was established, BFB continued to dump, and accrued a \$30,000 debt.
- BFB has issued a petition asking to have the cap removed.
- Chet noted that the cap created the incentive to divert produce into other uses, such as composting or human consumption. Removal of the cap may remove the incentive to divert viable food stuffs.
- The Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors have not decided to grant a “no cap” policy. The Board is allowing the BFB to credit their bill against future years.
- The larger issue here is not about the BFB, but about how our region processes food excesses. A large food processing facility is needed in order to extend the shelf life of these food items. There is a significant opportunity here. Unlimited dumping will remove the incentive to process this food.
- Chet stated that he spoke to Gary Nabhan, and that Gary was concerned that the Commission’s comments about the issue may not be appreciated in Santa Cruz County.
- Many cities ban organic materials from a landfill. If the BFB petition succeeds, the region will be going in the wrong direction.

Discussion followed:

- Robert noted increased competition from out of state food producers, and that processing the excess food is a large logistical challenge. If the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona could take waste, distributors could send more product to them. Sorting, however, is a significant challenge. The Mariposa Port of Entry is more efficient, increasing the volume flowing through the border. Water issues are becoming exacerbated for growers in Sonora.
- The 3000 Club is working on an experimental project to transform waste into fertilizer.
- Dr. McDonald asked how traceable the food stuffs are. He stated that the USDA will not let his program work with Produce on Wheels Without Waste (POWWOW).
- Chet asked that we keep this on the radar, but proposed no specific action.

Action: none.

4. Commissioner Biographies & Presentation Schedule

The present Commissioners spoke about their backgrounds and what they hope to bring to the Commission. Robert requested this item, stating that an effective committee must be aware of its member’s strengths and experiences.

- Dr. Dan McDonald- works for the Pima County Cooperative Extension, going into schools, community centers, and garden kitchens to do outreach on food budgets, nutrition, recipes, etc. They reach 5,000-10,000 people annually. Personal interest: family food security. Believes our community can do better to link need to services.
- Kelly Watters- works at the Food Coop. Interested in democratizing the food system in the face of consolidation. Wants to create spaces for farmers to sell direct; she created the Santa Cruz Farmer's Market. Wants to support farmers and make nutritious, healthy food available and affordable.
- C.J. Agbanawag (for Erika Mitnik-White)- works for Local First Arizona, which advocates for local business, with a focus on regional economics. LFA wants to make farming viable in our community, and is part of the rural policy forum. LFA has also developed the food finder at goodfoodfinderaz.com.
- Dr. Maribel Alvarez- a folklorist and anthropologist, working at UA. Represents Southwest Folklife Alliance for this Commission. Runs Tucson Meet Yourself (TMY), a 42 year old event of heritage and tradition. Will likely ask the Commission to consider evolution of TMY.
- Kris Vrolijk- Chef de Cuisine at Proper. Interested in a food hub. Wants to support fresh produce in the restaurant industry. Would like to partner with the Compost Cats.
- Kara Jones: representing the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona. Focus is emergency food relief and capacity building in five counties. Manages the farmer's market program, which generated \$250,000 for farmers and growers. Would like to create a brokerage to aggregate supply for institutional buyers. Wants access to healthy foods to be economically viable.
- Jesus Garcia- works at the Desert Museum, with a focus on maintaining a vital connection to Mexico. Works supports preservation of traditional food harvesting/preparation practices, but would like the classes to be more accessible. The focus for the last 10 years has been ethno botany. Working with many institutions and schools that want to revive traditional food practices.
- Chet Philips- works at the UA, director of Compost Cats and the sustainability coordinator for the Student Affairs Office. Represents the Southwest Folklife Alliance as the Sustainability Director. Understands poverty, cherishes food-based gatherings. Loves working with students.
- Cie'na Schaepli- works for San Xavier cooperative farm. Moved to Tucson from New Mexico. Helped start the demonstration farm in Marana, which has resulted in the Las Milipitas Farm. Works closely with the tribes, in particular youth based education, promoting agriculture on the reservation. Would like to address soil related issues, get more people digging in the dirt, and elevate the issue of agriculture.
- Dora Martinez- works for the Community Food Bank, with a focus on equity and justice. Seeks to give voice to the voiceless. Also supports creating sustainable livelihoods for farmers.
- Robert Ojeda- works at the Community Food Bank. Focuses on dignity. Likes to work closely with communities to identify local issues and encourage local participation. Believes in empowerment and dignity.

5. **Future Agenda Items/Committee Business (15 minutes)**

The Commissioners identified a number of potential agenda items:

- Examine policies that support farmers
- Examine Water policy
- Examine Plan Tucson
- Examine key cultural institutions/events and food production policies

- Examine mulberry and olive production in city limits
- Examine issues around community kitchens

Action: none.

6. Announcements (5 minutes)

Staff encouraged Commissioners to appear at the December 8 Mayor & Council meeting to support the Urban Agriculture amendments.

7. Call to Audience (5 minutes)

None.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:28a.m.