



# Commission of Food Security, Heritage, and Economy

Wednesday, December 9, 2015 8:00 a.m.  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, Tucson City Hall  
255 W. Alameda St., Tucson, Arizona 85726

## Minutes

Approved by the Commission on Jan 13, 2016

### 1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:04am.

Attendance was as follows:

#### **Present:**

Erika Mitnik-White  
Robert Ojeda  
Kara Jones  
Chet Phillips  
Jesus Garcia (arrived at 8:17)  
Daniel McDonald  
Kelly Watters  
Dora Martinez  
David Ludwig  
Douglas Taren  
Sam Alboy (arrived at 8:20)  
Debbie Weingarten

#### **Representing:**

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

#### **Absent:**

Vanessa Bechtol  
Gary P. Nabhan  
Maribel Alvarez  
Kris Vrolijk  
Cie'na Schaefli

#### **Representing:**

Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance  
Native Seeds/SEARCH  
Southwest Folklife Alliance  
Local First Arizona  
Pima County Food Alliance

#### **Staff Present:**

Ryan Anderson, Secretary

Mayor's Office

### 2. Action: Review and Approval of November 18, 2016 Minutes

Dr. McDonald noted that his name was misspelled and asked staff to make the corrections.

*Action:* Dr. McDonald moved to approve the minutes with the noted corrections. Chet Phillips seconded the motion, which passed with 12 votes. Vanessa Bechtol, Gary P. Nabhan, Maribel Alvarez, Kris Vrolijk, and Cie'na Schaefli were absent.

### 3. Presentation by Local First Arizona & Discussion

Erika Mitnik-White conducted a presentation on the efforts Local First Arizona (LFA). Ms. Mitnik-White discussed how Local First Arizona seeks to promote, support, and celebrate a vibrant and sustainable Arizona economy by educating citizens about local business ownership, social equity, cultural diversity, environmental kinship, and collaboration. She also focused on farming and agriculture.

Her presentation can be found on the webpage of the CFSHE.

Discussion included the following:

- Kara noted that the FDA and USDA use different metrics in their identification of farm sizes.
- Commissioners asked Erika about LFA's key events. Those events include, but are not limited to: Farmer +Chef Connection, Devoured, Savor, etc. Events can be found on the LFA website.
- Commissioners discussed LFA's Food Farm Finance Forum, which explores financing models for farms and other food producers. The Food Conspiracy is developing a direct loan model. LFA noted that 95% of Arizonans put their money in the 3 big banks, which do not loan to smaller local businesses. LFA encourages locals to put their money in credit unions, etc., in order to free up money for lending to smaller, local businesses. LFA also discussed the new financing models: restaurants offer shares in the business that consumers use as credits once the business opens.
- Dr. McDonald suggested LFA work with some of his colleagues.
- LFA stated that their funding source is made up of membership dues, grants, and revenue from advertising.
- Robert Ojeda noted that LFA emphasizes collaboration. He suggested the Commission look at LFA work in the context of Plan Tucson.

No action was taken.

#### **4. Presentation by Visit Tucson & Discussion**

Brent DeRaad, CEO of Visit Tucson, introduced Felipe Garcia, Executive Vice President, and Dan Gibson, Director of Communications.

Mr. DeRaad outlined the efforts of Visit Tucson, a 501(c)6 non-profit, that is charged with promoting regional tourism. The bed tax funds operations, as well as contributions from the City of Tucson, Pima County, Oro Valley, and membership dues. The budget is currently \$7.4 million, up from \$6.4 million three years ago. Visit Tucson has a smaller budget than many similarly situated promotional organizations, but is able to compete due to the excellent staff and Visit Tucson's emphasis on collaboration. Visit Tucson partners with the Metro Chamber, the Hispanic Chamber, Sun Corridor Inc., the Southern Arizona Home Builders Association, the Tucson Association of Realtors, etc.

Visit Tucson also is active at the local and state levels, weighing in on issues that affect tourism.

Mr. DeRaad also stated that the region has approximately 4 million overnight visitors a years, which bring in \$2.2 billion into the region. The current emphasis has moved away from business travel and toward leisure travel. As such, the organization does research on feeder markets and conducts targeting marketing. Peak season for Tucson tourism is January through April. The Visit Tucson brand is "Free Yourself," which can mean many things.

Of note to this Commission is that ALL customers that have visited the region cite locally owned restaurants as an attraction, and the #1 tourist activity is dining out.

Dan Gibson presented on the outreach efforts of Visit Tucson. Mr. Gibson stated that the potential UNESCO City of Gastronomy Designation would be a significant point of attraction, should the City be awarded the honor, particularly among the international culinary media. He also said that he is focused on moving Tucson into the top ten “top of mind” destinations for culinary travelers.

Mr. Gibson then conducted a presentation, which can be found on the CFSHE website.

Felipe Garcia discussed Visit Tucson’s Mexico program, stating that Arizona receives over 23 million visits a year from Mexicans, generating close to \$1 billion in revenue for Pima County, consisting of 5% of taxable sales in the county. Mr. Garcia said this large market is growing, and that Mexican tourists are now beginning to seek out local restaurants as well.

Mr. Garcia also discussed his efforts to link producers in Arizona and Mexico. Recently, he invited Mezcal producers to participate in Agave Fest. He also outlined his work with Mexican media.

Discussion included the following:

- The feasibility of families hosting tourists in their homes for traditional meals, as they do in Italy. Commissioners discussed implicated health safety laws.
- Dan Gibson discussed “soft adventure” being a pull for the region as well.
- Doug Taren spoke about the strong international cuisine in the region that should not be overlooked.

No action was taken.

## **5. Future Agenda Items/Committee Business**

*Action:* Robert Ojeda made a motion to invite Leslie Ethen to discuss Plan Tucson and how the CFSHE can use the plan as a framework for action. Doug Taren seconded, and the motion passed with 12 votes. Vanessa Bechtol, Gary P. Nabhan, Maribel Alvarez, Kris Vrolijk, and Cie’na Schaepli were absent.

*Action:* Chet Phillips made a motion to invite David Ludwig to discuss the proposed health code changes with the CFSHE. Kara Jones seconded, and the motion passed with 12 votes. Vanessa Bechtol, Gary P. Nabhan, Maribel Alvarez, Kris Vrolijk, and Cie’na Schaepli were absent.

## **6. Announcements**

Jesus Garcia mentioned a Ethnobotany Conference, with an emphasis on Native American foods, in March.

Erika Mitnik-White mentioned the International Traditional Knowledge Conference in October.

## **7. Call to Audience**

None.

## **8. Adjournment**

*Action:* Robert Ojeda made a motion to adjourn, which Kara Jones seconded. The motion passed with 12 votes. Vanessa Bechtol, Gary P. Nabhan, Maribel Alvarez, Kris Vrolijk, and Cie’na Schaepli were absent. The meeting adjourned at 9:31 a.m.