

MEETING NOTES

RI Interagency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) Q1 Meeting

Chair, Terry Gray

Tuesday March 21st | 10:00 - 11:30am

RI Commerce Corporation

315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101 (Narragansett Room)

Council members are required to attend in person per RI's Open Meeting Act requirements.

Members of the general public are welcome to attend in person or via the zoom link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81765729936?pwd=MDAvbjNtSEozL3pTNUhOVIR6UmRBQT09>

Meeting ID: 817 6572 9936

Passcode: 249214

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,81765729936#,,,,*249214# US (Washington DC)

IFNPAC was established by the general assembly in 2012 to serve as a coordinating body between 7 state agencies to examine regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. Since the launch of the 2017 State Food Strategy, [Relish Rhody](#), the Council has served as a coordinating council to drive outcomes toward the Strategy which include: preserving and growing agriculture and fisheries; enhancing the climate for food and beverage businesses; ensuring food security for all Rhode Islanders and minimizing food waste in the waste stream.

Pre-reading:

- Proposed IFNPAC Structure & Duties for 2023
- Draft 2022 Annual IFNPAC Report to the General Assembly
- Q1 meeting minutes

Council Members

Q1 Meeting Minutes

Date: March 21, 2022

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

COUNCIL MEMBERS (present): Terry Gray (RIDEM), Ken Ayars (RIDEM), Julianne Stelmaszyk (RICC), Jessica Patrolia (RIDE), Aleatha Dickerson (OHA), Jenna Simeone (DHS), Randi Belhumeur (RIDOH), Terry McNamara (DOC), Libby Kimzey (DOA)

Other attendees: Caitlyn Mandel, Jack Sisson, Alison Macbeth, Nessa Richman, Hilary Rainey, Sarah Burde, Andrew Schiff, Kate Baelstracci, Porschia Davis, Diane Lynch, Silvana Mercado, Jeannine Cassleman, Kerri Connolly, Tommy Lemoine, Max De Faria, Rebecca Kislak, Shelby Doggett, Christina Mathews, Leo Pollock, Ann Barone, Teresa Tanzi, Doris Blanchard, Silvana Mercado

Welcome & Introductions

Terry: Welcome - for any new attendees, a bit of background on the Council. The IFNPAC was established by the general assembly in 2012 to operate as a coordinating body between 7 state agencies to examine regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. Since the launch of the 2017 State Food Strategy, Relish Rhody, the Council has served as a coordinating council to drive outcomes toward the Strategy which include:

- *preserving and growing agriculture and fisheries*
- *enhancing the climate for food and beverage businesses*
- *ensuring food security for all Rhode Islanders and*
- *minimizing food waste in the waste stream.*

Approve Q4 Meeting Minutes

Terry seconds motion to approve minutes. Dec 13th meeting minutes approved unanimously by the council.

Finish discussion on 2023 priorities & duties

Juli: The Council's mandate is to examine issues and identify solutions to regulatory and policy barriers towards developing a strong sustainable and healthy food system. We are also meant to collaborate with and serve as a resource to food policy councils. In order to maximize our effectiveness towards this goal, we would like to propose a way of organizing ourselves going forward which focuses on a few food system issues each year which we agree upon by Q4. We left off in December agreeing on the new structure but not the 2023 focuses.

As a reminder, this is what we agreed on in terms of setting priorities (see pre-reading "Proposed IFNPAC Structure & Duties for 2023")

Council Members will establish 1-3 strategic focus areas each to examine and ultimately to make recommendations to State Agency Leadership and the General Assembly regarding the identification and development of solutions to regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices.

During the last quarterly meeting of the year (Q4), IFNPAC members will propose and agree on 1-3 strategic focus areas which IFNPAC will examine and make recommendations on throughout the year to IFNPAC Agency leadership and in the annual report to the General Assembly. Each IFNPAC Member can propose a focus area that would benefit from interagency coordination and solutions which will be voted on and requires full consensus.

- *The focus areas provide an opportunity for each member agency to communicate to and educate the public and state leadership about how the issue and/or proposed changes would impact the current goals and activities of their organization, as well as the RI residents these activities are serving.*
- *The areas will focus efforts to develop solutions to regulatory and policy barriers to developing a more resilient and sustainable food system in Rhode Island.*

Throughout the year, the council will focus energy on these few topics and how council can work across agencies to provide solutions. Juli proposed voting on 2 topic areas to focus on this year.

- Approving food waste diversion and composting infrastructure. Touches on the 3 pillars of food strategy. Economic incentives, greenhouse gases, and opportunity to capture rescued food for food recovery for obvious benefits for food insecurity.
- Increasing healthy food for schools. Convene stakeholders across institutional markets to help increase local foods. An example of this is skup, how can we encourage a market for this.
- Relish Rhody 2.0 planning.
- Examining the connections between food systems and climate change. How climate change is affecting agriculture, aquaculture and agriculture.
- Terry shared that he is on the council for climate change council. This could be a priority and principle for informing other topics on this list. There is much overlap between food and
- Randi – could it be a cross cutting theme?
 - Terry: Yes, it could be a cross cutting theme.
 - Jessica: All of these are cross cutting. We should make it a priority as a council to highlight how these interact.
 - Terry: Emphasized the first topic. We should inform the benefits and technical assistance to large institutions. There is a lack of compacity in the state. But that may not be the priority for this Council. It may be something DEM and Commerce figure out.
 - Juli: We should find issues that most of the agencies have programs in.
 - Ken: We should think about how the council can move things forward. Relish Rhody is on its way, but other issues may need more support from IFNPAC.
 - Juli: The Relish Rhody Steering Committee will need to present.
 - Jessica: Again, things are cross cutting. What IFNPAC choses should be in align with Relish Rhody. We should consider the Council’s output.
 - Juli: Some of the topics are considerations, but not actually things we can tackle.
 - Randi: Agrees with Ken about Relish Rhody 2.0 that we are doing that already and it is not really an issue area. For 2023, we don’t have 2.0 as a guiding principle we would need to use 1.0
 - ---: Unsure of how the 2.0 is conducting the assessment,
 - **Juli:**
- **If IFNPAC is part of supporting Relish Rhody, we can be using that as a guiding line.**
- Learn more about food waste in relation to climate change and food waste. There is much to learn about in relation to seniors.
- Terry: seems like there is consensus on the first two priorities: Food Waste and Increasing Healthy Foods. This seems to be in the wheelhouse of this group. We can look at the two other suggested priorities as guiding principles. We can use those principles to ground our dialogue.
 - Juli: Relish Rhody 2.0 and Climate 2025 are aligning efforts. Juli agrees.
 - Jessica makes motion to approve the first two priorities as focus area. Juli seconds. All of council approves.

Approve IFNPAC Report to General Assembly

- Terry: Still a work in progress. We will have an updated report circulated soon. We will provide final edits and approve by the end of the month.
 - Juli thanks everyone for their contributions. This year is different with more actionable items.
- Terry: The IFNPAC has policy recommendations that we think should be looked at. The timing is interesting since the legislative session is occurring as we speak. We are starting the dialogue for next legislative session for 2024.
 - --- Member agencies did a great job highlighting the work of agencies. Thank you.

- Terry: Stay tuned. Watch your email inbox. It is an important milestone. We will need feedback and a signal of approval to be completed by the end of the month.

Legislative update from RI Food Policy Council

- Nessa: You will find alignment between priorities and the uses of the IFNPAC report. Reminder of RIFPC mission to build a more equitable, accessible, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable food system in Rhode Island. When we think about policy, we think about all these things with equity as a lens.
 - 135 bills categorized as relevant to food systems. You can see the RI Food System Bill tracker via the [RIFPC website](#).
 - HB5171/SB201 – expansion of food waste ban, 15 miles expanded to 30 miles. There is a very active waste food solutions group.
 - HB5803/SB517 – provide a tax credit for food donation. Showing how this would support business and individuals experience food insecurity. It is not the same as proposed in the Gov budget.
 - HB6007/SB71: Universal School Meals has not yet had hearings.
 - HJR6018/SJR560: Appropriate \$5 million to DEM for farmland preservation, protection and conservation
 - Coordinated action is channeled through working groups that are open to the public.
- Juli: You mentioned 135 bills this year. Are you seeing an increase in food system policy over the last few years?
 - Diane Lynch: Not really. There was an increase with the bill on climate change, but tracking the same as last year.

Overview of Relish Rhody 2.0 Update

- Juli is excited to share about this work. Had a food strategy in 2016 established to look at a systems approach around food issues knowing that they are intersectional. Sue AnderBois worked with the 2017 food plan. There are 3 pillars/guiding principles – environmental resiliency, economic development, & health and access. The Director of Food Strategy position moved from DEM to Commerce. The historic funders are happy to see pilot model now hosted by the state. The Food Summit has been held for 7 years with URI. HEFT has been going strong since 2018 thanks to RIFPC and RIDOH.
- Reflecting on the last 5.5 years. There has been a lot of progress. We are more collected, working collaboratively between the state government, non-profits and stakeholders. There have been regulatory changes and growth in the economy. The strategy has directly and indirectly made positive contributions to the food economy.
- Coming out of COVID, there is still much to learn and build on that momentum. A lot has happened in 5 years. The needle has moved. We need to set on new targets and priorities. Learn what worked and what didn't. Strong interest among stakeholders to assess and develop new roadmap.
- Aligns with Climate Strategy for 2025, RI Farm to School Network from the USDA to create an action plan, Gov RI2030 plan, New England Feeding New England moving towards 30% local food by 2030, RIDOHs Healthy and Active Living Program. It is opportune timing.
- The steering committee has been meeting since the fall. This committee oversees the entire process including fundraising, communication and accountability. Meeting regularly to assess cost, planning and process.
- We will have an advisory board made up of 15-20 people who will come from different sectors who will provide input and keep on the committee on track.
- A few folks from IFNPAC could sit on the Advisory board.

- Juli thanks Diane and Nessa for their support in food system planning. Only 18 states have food system plans. MSU Center for Sustainable Food Systems use strategic planning model. Particularly inspired by the VT Farm to Plate. They recently updated food plan. We would like to follow a similar process in developing priority areas. They looked at products, markets, and issues through a brief format. Looked at current conditions, why it matters, gaps and opportunities, and recommendations. They had stipends for co-authors. I liked this method because it creates buy-in and allows people to feel like they are part of the state plan. They used advisory board and steering committee evaluate.
- Landed Activities: Phase 0 is complete. Working with Northbound Ventures to complete the 5 year impact report. Using key informants. In the fall have a statewide summit to share drafts.
- Parallel efforts are taking place at the same time: using an EDA funding stream Commerce will be conducting a Local Food Counts. Vermont established a methodology that they have been using about 8 years. Will take about 6 months to complete.
 - RI Farm to School Network Action Plan in Fall 2023
 - Study on second stage food businesses
 - RIFPC will conduct a LASA Grant Program Impact Evaluation
 - RI Emergency Food Plan partially funded by RI Foundation via RIFPC

Kerri Connolly asked via chat on applying to the advisory board. Juli said to email directly.

- Thinking regionally. Center Equity. Strategies that building markets regionally because RI does not have all producing capacity to feed all Rhode Islanders.
- Need to establish advisory board in April, meet in May, conduct stakeholder engagement, publish draft in October and launch plan in Feb/March.
- Caitlin: state doesn't have definition on local food. How will that impact local food counts?
 - Juli: VT has local food definition in statute. The way the local food counts is RI raised and grown that is sold in RI.
 - Nessa: definition for local food counts is not the same as the statute. That's a separate matter that would need to be proposed in the next legislative session. There are groups interested in passing similar definitions in other states.
 - Rachel: In the city of Providence, raised, grown or landed in tiers for city, state and region.
 - Juli: The dilemma is around manufactured products.
- Terry: Is there an overarching goal for the plan?
 - Juli: we will determine that. For the 2017 plan there were several goals. Would love for us to have a few that people can rally around. Makes sense to have more focused goals. In the VT plan, they had specific targets within each strategy areas.
 - Terry: thinking about this in a climate perspective. We have to align action areas to meet those goals. Having a goal in the future for everyone to shoot for.
 - Juli: We talk a lot about NEFNE goal (30 by 30). It's not the only way of aligning, but a unifying goal and its about resilience.
 - Terry: The Feds also have a similar metric, but it's a goal to work towards.
- Nessa: How does the Relish Rhody 2.0 process align with other state plans, and how will it move forward in parallel with the 'RI Food Security Plan' being planned (which was funded through the RI Foundation ARPA funding)? Other state plans.
 - Juli: we have talked about RI Emergency Food Plan being part of the food plan. But it is a large issue. The Emergency food plan could be a large addendum or a standalone.
 - Terry: Is that the same steering committee?

- Juli: RIFPC will be the partner on this. There may be a subcommittee in the advisory committee that would possibly look at this.
- Ken: How do you view our plan in alignment with the Farm Bill?
 - Juli: The White House conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health occurred this past fall and hasn't occurred in the last 50 years. Working to align Federal agencies and streamline activities. If healthy school meals passes at a federal level it could allow things to be easier on the state level.
 - Ken: DEM is putting together written comments. The Farm Bill has changed a lot to be more reflective of a broad based engagement of food and not just commodity crops. It is a bit of dance between what we do.
- Shelby Dogget: Why would food produced in RI NOT be included in the impact of local food?
 - Juli: VT local food definition looks at manufactured food with 50% locally grown food processed in VT. Supporting local jobs and business ownership, independent. We want to follow what other states do and get the NE Food Vision baseline.
 - Diane Lynch: Mentioned the issue of soft drinks being part of the local food count.
- Randi: It is important to do a crosswalk between other state plans. Thinking about formative research with DOH and DEM plans.
- Jessica: Thinking about IFNPAC role to support the Strategy, we've talked about the different workstreams but could our agencies take chunks independently. It legitimizes all our plans to work together.
- --- When you codify one piece with another piece, than it makes it that much more challenging to change the needle later with labor. Could potentially create a conflict.
- Terry: All moving with different goals, stakeholder groups and timelines. There is a lot of alignment with DEM but a different timeline.
- Juli: It all depends on the timeline. Food system change takes a long time. Maybe it is case by case.

Overview of State Physical Activity & Nutrition Grant workplan

- Randi: Thanks everyone who supported the development of the workplan, proposal and letters of support. A lot of the strategies that the CDC set forth align with the work already happening in RI. In 2018, the 5 year cooperative agreement allows states and organizations to apply. Much of what is in the agreement is in alignment with the conference last October. RIDOH's approach has taken a lot of fact finding and data research the past few months. RIDOH wants to build off the work that has already been taking place: Nutrition – procurement and access to fruits and vegetables, Early Care and Education, Physical Activity, Breastfeeding.
- RIDOH will be focusing on priorities of IFNPAC, specifically procurement. It is a broad strategy. In the 2018 application a lot of the work was rooted in state agencies procurement. In this strategy, institutions were defined as places where food is provided to high priority populations (hospitals, state agencies, the emergency food systems). Looking at how to make changes with procurement systems.
- Need to conduct a feasibility study and analysis to increase healthy and local food procurement. It is one thing to provide healthy local food, but it is another thing for people to eat it. We will capturing current programs like FFRI to foster enthusiasm. This grant will allow us to further leverage that work.
- In the CDC NOFO, 1) coordinate uptake and expansion of 1) existing fruit and vegetable voucher incentive and 2) produce prescription programs. Looking to state partners to continue to move the needle on long term sustainability and impact.
- Developing a policy brief and implementing the next steps of that policy brief. Farm Fresh RI and the RI Public Health Institute would lead these efforts. The RIFPC is conducting research on Veggie Rx programs. This funding will further leverage this research. Early Care and Education Strategies: Farm to Early

Education follow the lead and great work of Farm to School. Build capacity to and strategy of ECE. Working on regulations around ECE. Partnering with Brown, Snap Ed, and Health School Coalition. This is due the 28th.

- Juli: Thank you for all the work you have been doing Randi.
- Randi: Start date would be August 30th.

Public Comment

- Juli points out that there are many upcoming RI Food System Events. Will be shared out via email.
- Terry mentioned that [RI Quahog week](#) is April 23-29th!

Terry motion to adjourned. Jessica seconds. Meeting adjourned.