

Interagency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC)
Zoom Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2021

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Carol Hall-Walker (RIDOH on behalf of Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott), DEM Director Janet Coit, Ken Ayars and Makeba Hardy Thomas (DEM), Julianne Stelmaszyk (COMMERCE/DEM/RIDOH), Steve Carey (RIDE), Paul Gonsalves (DOA), Elizabeth Winangun (GOV), Laurie Cote (DHS), Maria Cimini (DHS), Ann Barone (RIDOH)

Other ATTENDEES: Nessa Richman and Diane Lynch, and Nina Wolff Landau (RIFPC), David Dadekian (Eat Drink RI), Sara Amin (URI SNAP-Ed), Kate Balestracci (URI SNAP-Ed), Andrew Schiff and Amanda Clark, (RICFB), Alethea Dickerson and Dana McCants Derisier (OHA), Lorenzo Macaluso (CET), Jesse Rye and Cara Mitchell (FFRI), Margaret Read (No Kid Hungry), Kerri Connolly (RIPHI), Karin Wetherill (RIHSC), Jessica Petrolia (RIDE), Erin Bertoldi, Nancy Sutton, Randi Belhumeur, Dr. Samuel Zwetchkenbaum (RIDOH), Porschia Davis (ME Relief), Chelsea Gazillo (American Farmland Trust)

PRESENTERS:

Dr. Amy Nunn, RI Public Health Institute
Samantha Levy, American Farmland Trust

Call to order – Carol Hall-Walker called the meeting to order at 9:02am

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Carol Hall-Walker welcomed the group and announced that Ernie Julian, Chief, Center for Food Protection, RIDOH, recently retired from state service and Cathy Feeney, Chief, who oversees this program area at RIDOH, will attend future IFNPAC meetings. She also welcomed Governor McKee's office, represented by Elizabeth Winangun, Policy Director.

2. Review and approve February 2021 Minutes

- Director Janet Coit and Steve Carey approved the minutes.

3. RI Food Strategy Implementation

- a. Director of Food Strategy Introduction - Julianne Stelmaszyk
 - Juli has now been in the position for 2 months. This position is split amongst 3 agencies, Commerce, RIDOH, and DEM. She resides within Commerce with a big part of this position focusing on economic development. She has met with many of the people within the group and looks forward to meeting others and learn more about the important work being done in the state and collaborate accordingly.

- b. Relish Rhody progress metrics – 2017 vs. **2020**
 - Juli reviewed the Relish Rhody state food strategy document with the group. She discussed approaches to update the measures. Juli will meet with members of IFNPAC, RIFPC and other partners across the state to reassess, update and align measures with work that is underway. Reviewed the metrics and discussed approaches to updating the measures. Juli will meet with members of IFNPAC, RIFPC and other partners to assess the 60+ measures and they will be consolidated and updated with collective input. The RI Food Policy Council is measuring trends, and some are challenging to track. Some of these metrics are broad and it makes sense to pare the measures down to the metrics that are trackable and

measurable. The state wants to show progress and identify potential gaps. Some of the data that is available is outdated and might not fully reflect impact.

- Questions posed to the group:
 - o Are focus areas still priority post-pandemic?
 - o Should we establish a baseline?
 - o What data do we have readily available?
 - o Which metrics are most important for measuring economic, social and health impacts? Social?
 - o What resources are available to track metrics?
 - Ken Ayars noted the challenge of relying on federal government data for the metrics. Census is not a real time measurement. Knowledge and awareness and are difficult to measure the impact. There is a resurgence in local agriculture; lots of interest in local food, but we can't track that well. There is a need to create demand for farmers to sell locally on a large-scale basis. We need to build a robust local food system.
 - Sara Amin agreed that solid, reliable, data is so important. Some of these focus areas are so diverse that researchers at URI and Brown might be able to come up with creative solutions and indicators to show progress.
 - Director Janet Coit suggested this be included in Governor McKee's 2030 plan for RI. It aligns and will raise awareness for the food economy and food security issues/concerns. Juli to follow up with Elizabeth Winangun of the Governor's Office. Juli to follow up with Elizabeth.
 - Lorenzo Macaluso from CET shared that their organization has a high emphasis on tracking impact to reduce food waste. He will set up a follow up meeting with Juli to discuss more.
 - The group all agreed that metrics matter in this work and it makes sense to align this work with the Governor's 2030 plan and with the RIFPC/Hunger Elimination Task Force efforts.
- c. Updates from each integrated focus area:
- o Sustain & Create Markets from Rhode Island Food, Beverage Products
 - o Preserve & Grow Agriculture, Fisheries Industries in Rhode Island
 - o Ken Ayars shared that the markets are emerging out slowly from Covid-19 crisis/emergency mode and the agriculture industry responded. People now think differently about where their food comes from and want to procure locally. The goal is to sustain this and consider what long term structural changes are needed in the food system.
 - o Ensure Food Security for all Rhode Islanders
 - o Carol Hall-Walker shared that RIDOH Center for Chronic Disease is applying for a 1-year grant from CDC to address food security and built environment in Pawtucket/Central Falls, primarily focusing on the Latinx population. The Center for Chronic Disease will be partnering with the HEZ in Pawtucket and Central Falls for this particular work. She thanked the RI Community Food Bank for their annual report, which has current data that will help support the grants strategies and goals to address food insecurity and promote physical activity within those particular communities. The grant is due in July 2021. To sustain this position, should additional federal funds from CDC become available to address physical activity and nutrition, obesity prevention, this position would become a fulltime equivalent within the RIDOH. Kate Balestracci (URI-

SNAP-Ed) offered support in preparing the CDC Chronic Disease grant proposal.

- Maria Cimini provided an update from DHS. Director Courtney Hawkins recently resigned, and the Acting Director is Celia Blue. She provided an update on P-EBT: Starting in May 2021 with a change recently approved by the federal government, all children under age 6 who also receive SNAP benefits are now eligible for P-EBT. Eligibility for this benefit is based on the operating status of the schools nearby to the child's residence. The first payment to SNAP children under age 6 will be issued on or about May 20, 2021. This will be a retroactive payment for October 2020 to March 2021. The next payment (for April 2021) will be issued on or about May 28, 2021. Going forward, monthly P-EBT payments will be distributed during the third week of each month for the previous month's benefit. Benefits will be placed on their existing SNAP EBT card each month. Eligible school-age P-EBT recipients will continue to get their monthly benefits during the second week of the month for the previous month. Using RIDE's monthly list, DHS issued the April P-EBT benefits for eligible school age children on May 13, 2021. Everyone on RIDE's April list received their benefits.
- Steve Carey (RIDE) shared that public schools pivoted to the Summer Food Service Program, which continues right now. School Meal providers worked very hard this last year and were essential works to meet children's food secure needs. Their efforts and dedication are very much appreciated. In combination with the P-EBT program, families have had many opportunities to ensure there is food available. Steve shared that he is retiring end of June 2021 and Jessica Petrolia will take on responsibilities until the position is filled.
- Enhance the Climate for Food & Beverage Businesses
 - Diane Lynch, (RIFPC) Food businesses adapted to changes in consumer behavior, such as online purchasing and buying local. There is a need to increase advertising for these efforts and build stronger advertising and marketing campaigns to promote these changes.
 - Juli Stelmaszyk shared that there is a new website on Commerce that provides guidance on how to open a restaurant in RI.
<https://openarestaurant.commerceri.com/en/>
- Minimize Food Waste & Divert it from the Waste Stream
 - Lorenzo Macaluso from CET shared that they are continuing to work closely with DEM on a variety of projects and efforts in RI. They participated in the URI Food Summit. Juli and CET to schedule a meeting.

4. Hunger Elimination Task Force Update: Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council

- Nessa Richman reported that the 2nd quarter Hunger Elimination Task Force meeting took place on 5/12. There were 65 individuals in attendance. Presenters included Andrew Schiff from RICFB and Maria Cimini from DHS. There were community led discussions focused on food justice. The group is proposing emergency food delivery and creating an open access tool for emergency supplemental food delivery service. This tool could serve to help providers get information, and

help stakeholders make decisions. The RIFPC will continue to work closely with United Way 211 and Age Friendly RI to ensure there are not duplicated efforts.

5. Presentations:

- Dr. Amy Nunn, RI Public Health Institute: Sugary drink tax legislation as a funding mechanism for the Retail SNAP Incentive Program. Please refer to the PPT presentation attached for details.
- Samantha Levy, American Farmland Trust: January 2020 Report on state school purchasing incentive program, please refer to the New York Model Program, PPT presentation attached.

6. Open Discussion/Closing of the Meeting:

- Carol Hall-Walker shared that this will be her last IFNPAC meeting, representing Dr. Alexander-Scott. She is retiring and her last day at RIDOH will be June 30, 2021. Randi Belhumeur, MS, RD LDN CDOE, Health Systems Transformation Administrator/Policy Liaison at RIDOH, will represent RIDOH moving forward. Juli Stelmaszyk and Erin Bertoldi, RIDOH's Statewide Breastfeeding Coordinator will assist Randi and Juli in the IFNPAC work as she has done with Carol all along. The group wished Carol well and expressed gratitude for her passion and service.

Next virtual meetings: August 25: 1:00pm-2:30pm and November 16: 9:30am-11:00am, details to follow.