



Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council

Introduction

This document was created in response to the numerous inquiries made by groups across globe to learn from the experience of North America's first food policy council. It is intended to serve as a resource to other communities seeking to establish their own food policy councils, and to food policy researchers. It also serves as a historical document for the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council. The narrative was compiled by Michael Tyler Dinwiddie, sociology intern from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. It includes a summary of information gathered from historical papers and documents, as well as from interviews with past and present Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council members.

Background and Goals

The Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council exists as a forum for representatives of the local food system to gather and address problems found within food production, consumption, processing, distribution, and waste disposal. The primary focus of the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council is on innovative solutions to problems that will promote sustainability, economic development, and social justice within the local food system. This is accomplished through education of government officials about issues of the food system, policy recommendations, policy writing, research, fostering of cooperation among private, public, and non-profit interests, and submitting reports to the Knoxville City Council and Knox County Commission. The Food Policy Council operates under a body of bylaws which dictate the goals, purposes, number of members, appointment procedures, officers, meeting format, committees, amendment procedures, and parliamentary authority.

The goals of the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council are listed below:

- Minimize food-related activities that degrade the natural environment; limit wasteful resources needed for future food production and distribution
- Strengthen the economic vitality of the private food industry
- Improve the quality of food available to all citizens
- Encourage citizens to accept and consume nutritious foods
- Ensure that an adequate and nutritious food supply is available to all citizens

History of the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council

In 1981, a deep recession exacerbated inequities within Knoxville's food supply system. This was disproportionately affecting citizens of low socioeconomic status who were relying on government programs which were facing substantial cutbacks such as food stamps, WIC, and school lunch programs. Among these issues was an increased awareness of the role of food in health and nutrition, as well as dieting. A 1977 report conducted by Robert L Wilson's "Synthesis" class at the University of Tennessee Graduate School of Planning had previously found issues with urban food equity, supply, and cost, and recommended in its conclusion the formation of a city-wide council which would address such issues. Such a council had not existed in any form beforehand in Knoxville, yet the Knoxville Community Action Committee (CAC), born from President Johnson's War on Poverty; however, the CAC been working for years to combat inequalities within the city. The CAC provided staff and was a significant entity in assisting the establishment of the Food Policy Council.

In October of 1981, the Knoxville City Council adopted Resolution R-202-81, calling attention to the issues of Knoxville's food policy system. Specifically, the resolution called for the creation of an inter-agency task force composed of members from various city agencies which would "continually monitor Knoxville's food supply system and recommend appropriate actions to improve the system as needed". The plan for the Food Policy Council was presented at a City Council workshop on April 11, 1982 and The Knoxville Food Policy Council was created on July 1, 1982.

Choosing members for the Food Policy Council followed three criteria: ties to government, working knowledge of the food industry, and experience in neighborhood and consumer advocacy. Other qualities under consideration were a particular person's awareness of food issues, their will to participate and inspire confidence in others, and their objective thought process. Diversity was especially important

as the city mayor at the time, Randy Tyree, desired a sample of various perspectives within the food system, be they consumer/neighborhood advocates, businessmen and women, those from social service agencies, farmers, consumers, and those involved in nutrition and health. Mayor Tyree appointed the first members to one, two, and three year terms, thereafter appointing all members for 3 year terms. This assured continuous change in the composition of the FPC. Mayor Tyree also appointed the first Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, thereafter allowing the FPC to appoint its own leaders.

In addition to the 7 members of the FPC, inter-agency task forces of staff resources were provided to assist in the start-up of the FPC. These resources were provided by:

- The Community Action Committee's (CAC) Food Supply Project for logistical and administrative support as well as coordination of the inter-agency task force.
- The Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) for demographic research, analysis of food distribution patterns, transportation routes, agricultural land use, and locational patterns of food facilities.
- Department of Community and Economic Development (CED) for providing technical understanding of food-related economic development, information and analysis concerning public transportation, and counsel on integrating good system goals into overall development plans.

The FPC also appointed several advisory committees to allow various parties a way to be involved in the work of the FPC, such as providing a range of technical viewpoints that were otherwise not available. These advisory committees consisted of: existing food-oriented organizations which would be asked to cooperate as Food Policy Council affiliates, representatives of inner-city neighborhood organizations and civic clubs, and technical advisory groups of specialists with technical competence such as chain store managers, food technologists, etc.

First Food Policy Council



Left to Right:
Ed McMillan, Mary Nelle Traylor, Fred Pickett, Mayor Randy Tyree,
Doug Coulter, Ruth Bletner, Hoyle McNeil, Lucius Churchill

In order to further address county-wide food issues, the Food Policy Council was expanded by Knox County resolution in 2002 to 11 members, creating the format that is seen today.

Staff and Funding

The Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council consists entirely of volunteers from the various segments of the food system. There are no permanent staff members, although during the early stages of the council in the early eighties there were staff from the MPC and CED who devoted a handful of hours of their work week to FPC business. Appointed members receive no pay for their involvement with the FPC and the council is entirely unfunded. However, at times in the past there have been spurts of funding made available for programming.

Organizational Structure

Since its inception, the composition of the Food Policy Council has maintained a diverse set of backgrounds. These include, but are not limited to: consumers, government officials, farmers, businesspeople, chefs, social justice advocates, and educators. Currently, the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council consists of 11 members, of which 5 are appointed by the City Mayor and 6 appointed by the County Mayor. The members are appointed to three year terms, and no appointee may serve more than two consecutive

terms. Terms are staggered so no more than four appointees' terms expire in a given year. If a vacancy becomes available, the appointment may only be for the length of the current term that has not expired. The council meets once a month. As demanded by the bylaws, there are three officers: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and a Secretary.

Among the duties performed by the officers are:

Chairperson:

- Preside at meetings
- Function as the principal spokesperson for the council
- Sign official communications from the council
- May appoint committees to perform specific duties related to the council's purpose

Vice-Chairperson:

- Preside over meetings, should the Chairperson be absent
- May perform other duties of the Chairperson when empowered by the Chairperson to do so

Secretary:

- Ensure minutes are accurate prior to distribution to FPC members

Officers are elected during the October meeting, when nominations are made from the floor. If an office is contested, it is decided by voting by secret ballot. Officers' terms begin at the start of the calendar year and continue for one year until a successor assumes office. No person may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. If an officer resigns or is unable to serve, the Nominating Committee will place names in nomination for the election of a replacement at the next regular meeting. An officer may be recalled by a majority vote of the full membership at a regular or called meeting of the Food Policy Council.

Notable Food Policy Council Accomplishments

- Cooperation with the Knoxville Transit Authority to establish and promote a grocery bus which provided transportation for citizens to local food markets for a price of \$1 round trip. FPC involvement included establishing contact with the KTA to start the bus, creating and distributing flyers to promote the project, and contacting

community leaders who represented areas that had a need and/or interest in using the bus.

- Maintaining regular contact with the City Council and County Commission over food issues through regularly published reports and newsletters.
- Conducted a 2006 study on Food Insecurity in Knox County. The study provided valuable data which revealed: barriers to participation in Mobile Meals, increased food stamp usage, and an increasing number of uninsured individuals due to TennCare modifications.
- Encouraged policy makers in the Tennessee State Senate Education Committee to support the Tennessee School Nutrition Law which would expand school nutrition programs. This was done by corresponding with the Tennessee Senate Education Committee in 1983.
- Sent requests to the Knoxville Transportation Authority Board that bus lines be extended so that riders from impoverished areas would have access to grocery stores. The bus routes were subsequently altered in favor of the FPC's recommended changes in 1983.
- Conducted the Inner City Store Survey in 1991, which found a significant decrease in the number of grocery stores serving inner city residents
- Formed a report in 1996 which recommended to the Knoxville City Council that they respond to increasing population and land pressures which were having a significant impact on the production and distribution of food in the community
- Conducted public hearings in 1994 with Citizens at Risk Due to an Inadequate Diet. These hearings found that the emergency food system in Knoxville was under alarming stress
- Established the Calorie Conscious Consumer Award program which recognized restaurants and food stores that actively support low calorie food choices.
- Creation of the Tenn. K.A.R.E.T (Knoxville Area Recognition of Excellence Today) Awards which recognized exceptional individuals or programs within the Knox County food system.

- Developed a policy statement on food distribution to be proposed to the City Council as an addition to the General Development Policy, the City's general plan.
- Issued a position paper in support of a Nutrition Education Specialist for the Knox County School System in 1993. The duties defined in the description of the position involved: "developing and implementing a nutrition education curriculum, coordinating nutrition education with other curricula, providing in-service education and consultation for all school staff, and educating and working with community/parent groups to gain their support for improved nutrition. "
- Partnered with the University of Tennessee Department of Nutrition, graduate public health nutrition program, to conduct community assessments. In a 2008 assessment, students used standardized methods to gather food price information in each of the twelve Knoxville-Knox County planning sectors, and found that the price of the standard "market basket" of food in the lowest income sector was \$20 higher than the price in the highest income sector. The findings were published in the Knoxville News Sentinel and shared with policy makers.
- Convened a series of community meetings in 2010 to explore the feasibility and barriers to expanding Knoxville's network of community gardens. The council subsequently enlisted assistance from a University of Tennessee public health intern to publish a comprehensive toolkit and guide for community gardeners in Knoxville and Knox County. Community input also encouraged the City of Knoxville to examine policies and ordinances regarding community gardens.
- Partnered with the Knox County Health Department in 2012 to host "Eat, Play, Live Knoxville." 352 community members participated in Eat, Play Live 2012, beginning with a leadership breakfast for elected officials and community leaders which included a celebration of the FPC's 30th anniversary. Eat, Play, Live 2012 also included a movie screening and a day of hands on workshops and learning sessions. This culminated in 200 community members taking pledges to engage in activities to improve their personal health and the health of the community.

The following section contains the information obtained during the interview process for this case study. Five interviewees were selected based on length of time and period of time served on the council. Diversity of background in government, business, non-profit, or education was also considered. The interviews have been condensed in order to better examine the various themes which appeared during the interview process. The names and biographical sketches of the interviewees can be found at the end of the section.

Motivation for involvement.

The various interviewees revealed a wealth of reasons for their involvement with the Food Policy Council. Concern for marginalized people through the avenue of food, desiring a sustainable food system, wanting a healthier population and serving the community were a few reasons provided. The scope of the Food Policy Council was also an attractive aspect of the organization, as it brought to light issues of food equity and sustainability that are normally not "on the radar" with politicians or agency leaders. Prior knowledge and experience with the committees, functions and objectives of the Food Policy Council was also a contributor to the desire to become involved for some of the members.

Desired outcomes of involvement.

The desired outcomes of participation within the Food Policy Council were the bringing of people together from various sectors of the food system to work toward a goal, increasing the access to transportation for disadvantaged people who needed food, the sustainability of the Food Policy Council itself as well as its objectives, being able to know what resources were available and where the gaps within the community were, and overall a more equitable food system in which barriers to food access, sustainability, and viability of local producers were all eliminated or reduced.

Understanding of the Food Policy Council's approaches to public policy.

The Food Policy Council uses a cooperative approach to determining which policies to support and how the city leaders would be encouraged or advised on particular policies. This involves a process of identifying an issue, having discussion about issue and policies that affect it, and then advocating or discouraging a policy through community forums or letters to government officials. Political feasibility does play an issue in determining what can be supported by the council or not, depending on the perspective of those in power. Having

consultants or members with an understanding of the policy process is always helpful, and working toward results that a common person could look at and understand is very important.

Key Planning and Development Steps for the FPC.

The key steps for planning and development are: gathering information about needs from people, garnering support from community agencies, publicizing community meetings, and helping to transport people to the meetings. Maintaining a good working relationship with the government is also important.

Organizational structure and membership.

When the council was formed, 7 members were appointed as it was a nice, manageable number. Later, 11 members were appointed after the council was expanded into the county, as it was a solid, balanced number that lessened the risks of not enough interests being represented due to appointing too few members and of subgroups forming due to appointing too many members. It is also important to note that there is no limit to adding associate members for additional advice and assistance on projects.

The Food Policy Council's Biggest Successes.

- The formation of the Food Policy Council itself to address the need for an equal and nutritious food supply.
- Expansion of KAT bus routes
- Expansion of school breakfast and lunch programs
- Support of the hen ordinance, which overturned the illegality of hens within the City of Knoxville
- Encouragement of community gardening and local food producing
- Establishment of the Calorie Conscious Consumer Project
- Establishment of a food monitoring system
- Hosting of community meetings which gave the council information on what was important to the community
- Formation of a mapping project with the Metropolitan Planning Commission to examine locations of grocery stores and farmland

The Food Policy Council's Biggest Failures, Frustrations, and/or Challenges.

- Failure to effectively assist in the establishment of a 5 Points grocery store during the 1980s
- Failure of getting people to buy better food
- Inability to sustain the Calorie Conscious Consumer Project or food monitoring system

- Continuously having people on the food policy council who understand the objectives of the council and the concepts of food equity and sustainability involved
- Challenge in trying to decide which focused direction to go in, given the diverse makeup of members on board

Importance of Diversity within the membership and lack of representation from particular interests.

Diversity is one of the most critical pillars of any Food Policy Council. The most important segment of the population to include are those who are disadvantaged in terms of their ability to participate within the food system. Also, connections to businesses, both small and large, government, and health care organizations are critical. It is important to foster open relationships in which everyone is respected and in which there is a sense of working toward a shared goal. Some diversity issues the council has experienced is low African-American representation, low Hispanic representation, historically low farmer participation (in part due to the initial focus of the council on the city only), and businesspeople from small community convenience stores.

Most Effective Ways to Encourage Participation and Attendance

The most effective way to encourage attendance is the annual retreat. These offer valuable opportunities to plan projects and workshops which help identify what and who is going to be involved in a particular project, what their objectives are going to be, and who is going to benefit. These give members a sense of knowing about their community and the issues confronting them, as well as a sense of responsibility. Promoting meetings or hearings within organizations like businesses or schools helped as well. It is important to have issues on the agenda that matter to people. Finding people to become involved within the council who have the will to volunteer and who considering being a member on the Food Policy Council a unique honor and opportunity is essential.

Advice to Other Communities Hoping to Establish a Food Policy Council.

It is extremely important to have cooperation between agencies from nonprofit, government, and private sectors as well as including people who experience issues of food access, equity, or nutrition. Changing with the times and having a clear set of written goals is critical. Recruit healthy, balanced people who have a heart for your particular community, and know what your mission is. Have the legislative mandate to form the food policy council, as having one will allow it to stay in existence. Maintain diverse geographic and sector

representation among members, and have staff help and make good use of who the council is advisory to and how the council advises them. A healthy turnover in leadership is also helpful, in that it provides fresh insights on food system issues. It is good to narrow your focus, but be careful not to lose sight of other problems that may be present that need to be addressed.

The Future of the Food Policy Council

The members interviewed had various hopes for the future of the council. Among these was a hope to see a further emphasis on locally grown foods and local farmers market, as well as educating children more during their early pre-school and grade school years on nutrition. There is also a desire that the council does not leave behind the people with the greatest need and that it is able to be forward thinking so it may properly prepare for a time when enough federal funds may not be available to support the affected populations. There is also the hope to see people attracted to the council with the knowledge and insight to work towards adequately addressing the needs of the community.

The following individuals were interviewed for this project:

Dixie Petrey

Lead staff from 1982-1992

Biographical Background

Mrs. Petrey is the eldest of four, and was raised in many locations throughout the United States. She obtained her degree in elementary education at the University of Redlands in Southern California. After arriving in Knoxville in the 1970s, she continued her active community involvement as a community organizer and later a full time staff member at the Community Action Committee. During her 13 year tenure at the CAC, Mrs. Petrey functioned as lead staff for the Knoxville Food Policy Council and was instrumental in advocating for its creation. She continues her community involvement to this day near her home outside of Knoxville.



Susan Rothchild

Member: 1988-1991

Biographical Background

Mrs. Rothchild currently owns and operates Rothchild Catering in West Knoxville. She began her tenure on the FPC in the late 1980s after responding to a request from Mayor Victor Ashe that she be appointed. During her time on the FPC, she brought a valuable small-business perspective, and has contributed to food equity and sustainability by donating materials to Beardsley Community Farm as well as having her business grow some of their own herbs used for cooking.



Betsy Haughton
Member: 1990-1999

Biographical Background

Dr. Haughton is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Tennessee's Department of Nutrition in Knoxville, Tennessee. Prior to her arrival to Knoxville in 1983, Dr. Haughton held various positions related to public health nutrition in Vermont, New York, and New Jersey. In addition to these, Dr. Haughton has authored and co-authored a wealth of publications in the nutrition field. She first became familiar with the Knoxville Food Policy council during the eighties by attending meetings and working closely with then-member Mary Nelle Traylor. After becoming an appointed member in 1990, Dr. Haughton served twice as Chairperson before leaving the council in 1999.



Carolyn Perry-Burst
Member: 1996-2007

Biographical Background

Mrs. Perry-Burst is currently a nutrition supervisor for Knox County Schools and works extensively in nutrition education, wellness, dietary guidelines, and regulation. She obtained her MS in Nutrition Science with a minor in Public Health from the University of Tennessee, and thereafter worked at Knox County Health Department for 24 years. She was very involved with the FPC during her time at the health department, and prior to her involvement as an official member she worked extensively with the council's Health Committee.



Robert Hodge
Member: 2010-Present

Biographical Background

Robert Hodge is the director of the local non-profit organization El Puente, which performs development and advocacy work for Latino immigrants. After graduating high school, Robert spent time in El Salvador as well as Honduras working with the impoverished people of those nations. Robert works with Latino immigrants particular in gardening and small business development for those who seek to return to their home country.



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Health Department
 Every Person, A Healthy Person