**Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council Meeting Minutes**

Date & Location: City County Meeting

Type of Meeting: Educational Meeting and Field Trip to Nourish Knoxville’s Wednesday Farmers’ Market

Recorder: Kimberly Pettigrew, staff support UWGK

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Attending Appointed (Voting) Members | Sara Keel, Lauren WoodsRoss Jones, Marisa Moazen |
| Attending Associated (Non-voting) Members  | Kimberly Pettigrew, Fiona McAnally, Beth Brown, Travis Henderson, Wade Seifert, Marsha Spence, Caesar Stair, Jessie Hillman |
| Other Attendees | Mayor Kincannon, Brian Blackmon (Sustainability COK), Mackenzie Read (Waste COK), Hailey Lewis, Sarah DeWitt (Knoxville Botanical Gardens), Megan Rhyne (UTK Nutrition), Kaitlyn Reeves (UTK Nutrition), Asha Nshimerimana (UTK), Lily Loveday (UTK), Nick Natour (UTK Nutrition), Kat Bike (Nourish Knoxville), Liliana Burbano (UTMC), Courtney Liles (Second Harvest) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. | **Welcome:** City of Knoxville welcomes us for our July meeting. The City was integral in the founding of the Council and still plays a huge supporting role in our work – both providing 5 mayoral nominations to the Council and using the council as advisory support to issues of planning and those related to the food system. |
| 2. | **Organizational Updates and Announcements:** * Youth Symposium was held at UT for teachers and school gardens and it went really well. UT Gardens did a great job with the programming.
* United Way’s Upward Summit is on September 27. It’s free and open to all nonprofits. Please save the date because we’ll be presenting on the Community Food Security Assessment and will allow for opportunities to break out as a food system for some specific trainings.
* Please keep working with clients around Free and Reduced Lunch sign-ups to ensure we’re able to get as many schools CEP eligible as possible.
* Dr. Spence will have an intern from E Carolina University and is interested in the intersection of policy, nutrition, and public health and is interested in community partnerships for their time here.
 |
| 3. | **Brian Blackmon, Director of Sustainability, City of Knoxville:** Background in Ag Sustainability. Was recruited to work with Beardsley at Americorp and assisted with Emergency Food Helpers. The City reached out to Brian to learn more about vacant lots and urban agriculture although he does significantly less of that day. The City’s main focus on Sustainability is focused on internal consulting to the City. The City has a policy and operational side, and we are on the policy side – we align resources and determine how to improve things over time. * *Urban Ag Policy for 2014*: There was no framework for urban agriculture – community gardens, personal gardens, or farms. The lack of definitions (anything over 12 inches is a code violation) for examples, made it difficult to know if it was a garden or a nuisance for code inspectors. The did public outreach as well as research on best practices to create the policy. By in large, there was a lot of pushback – so they started with gardens and then moved to some other more, controversial areas like goats, bees, etc. They used the model in Austin to adopt our own regulations. It passed unanimously. These were the main focus for 6 years. As the economy stabilized coming out of the great recession, people became less concerned about some of the land use work. So, we’ve recently moved more to decarbonization, which has shifted to be our major focus.
* *Hen Ordinance*: You had to have a building inspector to inspect your coop to be under legal appliance – so they removed that and created rules that were more applicable. They require permits so that tracks hens mostly for alerts around hen health, such as the avian flu outbreak.
* *Goats, Sheep, and Kudzu control* – City is created specific rules and regulations around that.
* *De-Carbonization*: The Mayor is a Member of the Climate Council. The Office of Sustainbility is now focused on just and equitable transition to de-carbonization efforts on an individual and systems level (materials harvesting).
 |
| 4. | **Mayor Kincannon:** Extends the appreciation for the food policy council members and their service. The Food Policy Council is one of the longest running boards for the City. Unlike most committees, it isn’t ad hoc, and so we’ll always need you. I believe in food issues around health, access, and opportunity. The past few years have taught us that food insecurity is fundamental, and we appreciate you all for your work during the pandemic and after. We realized that most people were getting food through institutions and those things were stopped. The Food Policy Council helped the community with a holistic response to the immediate need. Whether it is an acute emergency, like the global pandemic, or ongoing issues, how can we continue to address food deserts and other areas to make a better community for all. SEED has been building energy efficient homes that train youth in skill-building, provide access to wealth building and home ownership, and strengthening the overall system. The Mayor appreciates long-term partners like Second Harvest, especially the backpack program, and Nourish Knoxville for 20 years of farmers’ markets. Continued to making progress on walkable neighborhoods where you can walk or bike to get easy access to services, including food. Liliana: what has inspired you across the country that we could bring back here in this community? Mayor: Community gardens and reconnecting community to traditional cuisine of our grandmothers. Other models where we bring things to people rather than making them come to you for services. It was a partnership with Kroger and other cities had stretched that and made it more permanent. Parks and Rec. The Mayor and Community Members are ready to help. Traditionally, food access programs have all been centered on emergencies. The Mayor is excited to see the results and strategies. She’s excited to see the partnership with Western Heights for the HUD Choice Neighborhoods work. It’s a $49 million dollar grant and the city is putting in an additional $25 million. Private sector investment will be more than $200 million dollars. The mayor hopes it’s a neighborhood that can move people out of generational property and that as they move to self-sufficiency that they can stay and thrive in the community with mixed use housing and access to food and other basic needs.  |
| 5. | **MacKenzie Read, Waste and Resource Manager, City of Knoxville:** mostly works in recycling and trash. Her office serves as the middle man between the residents and the contractors.* **USDA Compost Grant:** In 2018 and 2019, Chad Hellwinkel a UT professor and former Food Policy Chair, was working on a composting project in Nashville. The model had a large compost digester, rather than at community centers. We didn’t have a compost program, so we were excited because we’ve had a lot of barriers to getting programs up and running. So, they created a pilot on February 14, 2022 to have a food scrap drop-off in the Old City recycling center and the food scraps were taken to Battlefield Farm where a solar compost interceptor was installed. The pilot gauged interest, served to troubleshoot issues, and build partnerships. When the USDA grant came open, MacKenzie’s predecessor Patience Melnik, wrote the grant and it was awarded at $80,000+, a UT group around Dr. Hellwinkel’s contribution is donating more than $30,000. The grant is two years and extends the number of drop offs (South Knoxville, East Knoxville, Nourish Knoxville Farmers’ Market), more three-bin (7 community gardens arranged by the Community Garden and Growers Alliance, Battlefield Farm, and Beardsley Farm) and compost interceptors (Beardsley Farm, Payne Ave Baptist Church, Botanical Gardens). Right now compost goes to the farms and they use the finished compost on their own gardens and they are growing food for their community. The compost might be available to community using the channels that are hosting them. So Beardsley or Battlefield could give out compost. Community members take a quiz on what they can compost and then receive a one-time code to use the composter. They’ve also been hosting backyard composting workshops. You get a free kitchen collection bin and an outdoor composter. Dr. Neal Denton and Dr. Hellwinkel are teaching the classes. There are about 10 over the full grant year.Since the pilot started they’ve collected 16,972 pounds of food scraps. They haven’t done a lot of communication because they really want to get community trained on how to avoid contamination. So, they are really sticking with the backyard compost rules.The workshops are selling out quickly and so they might be working on video forms. Sarah from the Botanical Gardens thinks it might be a good idea to work with UT Master Gardeners on videos.
* **What is the biggest barrier to scaling the program to an industrial level?** Compost permitting is on the same scale as a landfill, and that makes it difficult to do composting on an industrial level. Public perception is also a big issue. Washington state has a great program and NYC. Nashville may also be introducing curbside recycling.
* **What are some strategies on changing public perception?** Education and getting folks to do it. The most sustainable way is to do it in your back yard. Showing the value for plants and for the environment. Trash and recycling are second nature, how can we also get the composting at that level.
* **The ultimate is goal** is for a curbside recycling program, but the logistics are tough. They are looking into using the yard waste contractor who is piloting the strategy in Texas. Overall curbside programs aren’t expensive, but the hauling is, so they are hoping to use a model where the costs are mitigated on that.
* **Are there any examples of Cities that are working with industry on compost initiatives?** MacKenzie isn’t aware of any, but Kimberly mentioned some emerging models in New York based on a large-scale system in S. Korea. Green Heron now picks up scraps from 5 restaurants in the downtown area. It’s helped people to be aware of the options that exist through the private program run by Kat at Green Heron.
 |
| 6.  | **Legislative Updates:**Fiona McAnally is the Director of Legislative Affairs and works on federal and state level delegation. Fiona can help us to figure out the effects of the legislature on the food system. Fiona can also assist with LOS for grants tied to state and federal funds.  |
| 9. | **Meeting adjourned.**  |