

Notes Food Justice Committee – March 6, 2019

Attendees: Eric, Caitlyn, Suzanna, Andrea, Jon, Dina, Jack, Chaone, Jeannine, Norman, Sarah, Emme Seth

Eric opened the meeting and the attendees each introduced themselves.

Eric reminded everyone of the new format for the meetings – 1st half education program/topic; 2nd half focus specific topics to address for action by the committee

Education Component

The group watched a video of a Ted Talk given by Ron Finley – Guerilla Gardner of South Central Los Angeles.

After the viewing the group discussed the message Ron Finley was conveying and how it might apply to our work and presence in Philadelphia. Jeannine explained her inspiration for selecting the video is a current effort underway to establish a community garden at the Pleasant Playground (Chew Avenue). It was explained that a petition for the community garden was submitted to the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation.

Some of the issues, ideas, and opportunities discussed by the group:

- Idea that community gardens provide food, jobs, stress reduction
- Work with other organization or collect existing lists and directories of existing community gardens to distribute by email or other means
- Difficulty in community gardens finding funding – limited funds with lots of competition raises potential issues for sustainability of the efforts
- Are there opportunities for connection with Philadelphia Food Forest – “free food” concept like Finley’s efforts (neighborhood food gardens free for people to pick food)
- What opportunities might exist to establish relationships with other people and organizations (e.g. chefs, restaurants, etc...) to get food to communities and individuals in need. For example, Eat Café – concept of “pay what you can” eatery – everyone at the table. Gourmet meals being made for the food hungry.
- Potential to build on efforts of last year’s presence at the Germantown Farmers Market – expand what is being sold by Coop without “intruding” on others at the market?
- Potential to work with St. Lukes to develop vacant lot into a community garden. Use of support from Philadelphia Water Dep’t. which has a program to help convert impervious areas to pervious areas. Will need to discuss with Diocese to assess feasibility.
- Invite the Playground Garden folks to speak to the committee – Jeannine agreed to reach out/
- Have a conversation about other lots that might be available for conversion.
- Some other groups mentioned that might be helpful to talk with or serve as models included
 - Tree Group (Katherine Sweed?) – work with prisoners in San Francisco;
 - Bertram Garden, Soil Generation (working on policy and on-ground urban gardening)
 - Norris Square Project (has existing urban gardening plots)
- Potential to combine food preparation/cooking with urban garden programs?

- Promote Food For All effort with other groups as we move forward in developing connection with other groups
- The role of growing as a way of helping to create more than food – helps develop sense of place
- Was mentioned that seeds and starts (plants for growing) are available to purchase with SNAP funds
- It was agreed it would be good to continue this conversation – invite community gardeners for future meetings to help us figure out how to move forward and ways our committee might help and fit in with the effort

2nd half of meeting

Eric gave an update on the Food For All efforts. The “Top Off” and “Opt Out” programs were both discussed. Eric explained he has talked with leadership about these ideas generated by the task force. Eric stated that there was enthusiasm and strong support for the implementation of the programs. John R. has even suggested exceeding the task force’s goal of 20% increase in discount to 25%. Eric stated he said it might be more prudent to see how the programs are doing and we can always increase the goal based on response.

It was also noted that there are some concerns about the roll out of the programs and potential impact on existing programs. For example, it is already difficult to get members to participate in the “working hours” and will the “opt out” program further exacerbate this? Eric indicated that he emphasized our programs are voluntary and we are not looking to take away participation in other programs. At this point gauging interest and working to engage members in active participation in program.

The only issue for implementing the “Top Off” program is IT related. There is a roughly 6 month lead time before the IT department can get the necessary changes/information entered into the system. Eric has requested that our request be put on the schedule for updating. An alternate name option for “Top Off” was suggested – “Step Up”. Eric encouraged people to send in other ideas for names if they have any.

It was restated that these programs may also generate additional business or increase the bottom line for the Coop. By increasing the discount it may encourage more shopping at the stores. It was also noted that the Opt Out program is similar to the “High 5” program, which the Coop is looking to expand. The two may work in complement?

In an effort to assess membership interest in the task force’s programs the Committee will take implement some concrete efforts:

- Use Shuttle – articles or stories – personalize the food need issues (FFA members, for example) – get story(ies) in May issue
- Distribute Survey to membership – draft google survey has been created – 7 questions. Explains a bit about the committee, the programs, and the intentions of the effort. Eric showed the group the draft version.
 - The group felt that the information and question about the ice cream social should be reworded and presented a bit differently so that it is clear this is a Social

gathering. Rather than asking a question about attending just include a blurb about the event.

- Plan for June gathering. Need to ensure it does not conflict with the Food Drive efforts. Discussion about where to hold – near one of the stores (e.g. in front of Mt Airy, backyard at Chestnut Hill, The Mercantile. Decision needs to be made by April 13.
- It was suggested that all FFA member should get a personal invitation to the event.
- Survey will likely be sent out separately from the annual member survey that goes out in May. Will probably be on the FJC website as well for people to complete.
- Once we get approval for the survey it will be sent out.

It was indicated that we are still waiting for concrete numbers – how much needs to be “raised” – for the programs to work.

It was agreed that March 20, 2019 is the date for the next FFA meeting.

Quinoa Question – question was raised by working member if the Coop should continue to sell quinoa. Concerns that sales of quinoa are raising prices for indigenous populations that rely on the grain as a staple.

- Jeannine noted that this question was raised before and that she will re-share the information with leadership.
- Is this something that we want to take up as a Committee?
- Are there ways to continue to sell without “causing harm”?
- Is selling the grain actually causing harm?
- Maybe a topic we can use for a future educational portion of a meeting.

Food Drive Update – Jon updated the group on the status.

- Drive is planned for June – still working to finalize a date. Need to avoid conflict with Sunday Sundaes social event.
- Jon asked that people tell him if they did not get the survey that he sent out
- Overall Food Drive Plan
- Last year Ambler had very few to no volunteers and little food was collected. Hope is to have greater participation at this location this year.
- All three stores will be set up to collect food – need to have volunteers at table and to have site coordinators.
- Need to have people volunteer to transport food to central storage location (folks with larger vehicles – trucks, SUVs, etc...)
- Perhaps set up “local” collection sites to store food – ask people with homes or apartments near the stores?
- Volunteers are needed to help with coordinating and developing advertisements/flyers for the drive.
- Will be working with the same pantries as last year – Holy Cross, St. Lukes, Matie N. Dixon Pantry)

Announcements:

- General elections – begin in April – Eric asked if we want to give the candidates an opportunity to come to a meeting to talk to us? Jeannine said she has already booked someone to speak. The group agreed it would be a good idea, and that for those that can't make a meeting maybe we set up a way for them to respond digitally.
- Jeannine has asked the director of the Food Moxie group to come to our next meeting – will be part of the next educational presentation.
- The film showing and committee convergence planned for April 11 has been cancelled