

NORTH CAROLINA SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES FOR THE FEBRUARY 2, 2010 MEETING

The first meeting of the North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council was held from 2-4:15p.m. on Feb. 2, 2010 in the Martin Building at the N.C. State Fairgrounds.

Members in attendance include: Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco, Dr. Jeffery Engel, Commissioner Steve Troxler, Mr. Jamie Ager, Dr. Alice Ammerman, Mr. Uli Bennewitz, Mr. Andrew Branan, Dr. Nancy Creamer, Ms. Dania Davy, Mr. John Day, Mr. Billy Ray Hall, Ms. Debbie Hamrick, Ms. Linda Harris, Dr. Lynn Harvey, Mr. Phil Hudson, Mr. Charlie Jackson, Ms. Mary James, Mr. Mac Legerton, Mr. Roland McReynolds, Ms. Earline Middleton, Mr. Barry Nash, Mr. Randall Patterson, Mr. Willy Phillips, Mr. Tommy Porter, Jr. and Mr. Ed Jones, who was in attendance for Dr. Jon Ort.

Absent members include: Mr. Ted Burch and Dr. Jon Ort.

Commissioner Steve Troxler called the meeting to order at 2 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture

Commissioner Troxler welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council, stating he was looking forward to what this Council can accomplish to expand North Carolina's local food economy. He said he was proud of the work that the Department of Agriculture has done to increase public awareness of the local foods in the State, but acknowledged there is more to be done. He said keeping people on the farm and preserving farm land is of vital importance.

Commissioner Troxler recognized Rep. Ray Rapp who was in attendance and expressed his thanks to Rep. Rapp and Sen. Charlie Albertson for their work in helping to create this Council. He invited Rep. Rapp to offer comments.

Representative Rapp thanked the members of the Council for agreeing to serve. He said he was excited Council members were here, particularly in light of all the negotiations, controversy and concerns voiced during the Council's conception.

Rep. Rapp said he felt it was important that so many segments were represented on the Council. He said there were many who wanted to serve, but the number of members was limited to only 27. He expressed his hope that others will have an opportunity to provide their input through committees and subcommittees.

He said the Legislature was behind the Council 100 percent and looks forward to their recommendations on how the Legislature can support local sustainable initiatives.

Commissioner Troxler thanked Rep. Rapp for his comments.

Commissioner Troxler recognized Dan Gerlach with the Golden LEAF Foundation.

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At Commissioner Troxler's request each member introduced themselves and explained how their experience related to the Council.

Commissioner Troxler introduced Assistant Commissioner Dr. Richard Reich to give background and history on local foods councils.

LOCAL FOOD:

N.C. Highlights – Dr. Richard Reich, Assistant Commissioner for Agricultural Services

Dr. Reich provided an overview of the history of local food initiatives. He shared information taken from the report, Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned, that explained the various functions and structures of food policy councils and what was needed to ensure the Council receives the support necessary to move forward.

North Carolina had a State Food Policy Council from 2001-2003; however, for various reasons this effort stopped. Dr. Reich said this Council has an extraordinary opportunity to succeed.

Dr. Reich reviewed a number of organizations, activities, and resources in North Carolina that help to address the Council's goals to promote local foods and to improve nutrition. He said this list was incomplete, but included helpful resources to reflect on as potential partners.

Commissioner Troxler thanked Dr. Reich and said there were two things that he picked up from this presentation that he felt are important to this Council and the State.

- 1) How can an advisory board influence government decisions? He said you would think that the weather would be the defining point for agriculture to determine its success or failure, but that could not be further from the truth. Weather is a short-term issue. In reality long-term success or failure would be determined by government policy.
- 2) The many resources available in N.C. to help the Council direct government to find the best help for our farmers.

Commissioner Troxler introduced Mr. John Vollmer to share his perspective on the importance of the Local Food Policy Council.

A Farmer's Perspective – John Vollmer, Vollmer Farm

Mr. Vollmer said that a pep talk was unnecessary for this impressive group. Each Council member has a vision of what the future of agriculture and our communities should be like, much of which is shared in a common vision.

Mr. Vollmer shared his experiences visiting New England and seeing local food initiatives in action. He said he visited farms and ate foods from those farms at local restaurants. He said this showed what could be done when we put our minds together for a common goal. Mr. Vollmer said unlike most states, the number of farms is increasing in the state of Vermont.

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Mr. Vollmer read an on-line article written by Tom Stearns of High Mowing Seed Company in Vermont, titled Building a Model for the World. According to the article, Vermont is 30 years ahead of most areas, having more farmers markets, organic farms and CSAs per capita than almost anywhere in the world. He said Vermont can feed itself year-round and that all eyes were on Vermont for the comprehensive healthy food system it has created.

Mr. Vollmer said we may not be where Vermont is, but we have the same infrastructure and mindset. He said we have goodness in the core of what we want to accomplish and that just as plants need nourishment and TLC in order to grow, so would this Council. In closing, he wished the Council Godspeed in their efforts.

Commissioner Troxler thanked Mr. Vollmer for his comments. Commissioner Troxler introduced Joy Hicks and Ray Starling to talk about the Council's duties and purpose.

COUNCIL'S PURPOSE AND DUTIES – Joy Hicks and Ray Starling

Joy Hicks, Policy Development Analyst, NCDA&CS

Ms. Hicks reviewed the contents of the Council members' packets, requesting the completion of the Contact Information Sheet and, if necessary, Oath of Office form. (Exhibits 1 & 2)

Ms. Hicks highlighted the following information from Senate Bill 1057. (Exhibit 3) Two definitions are given for the Council's use "sustainable food" and "local food." The Council's purpose is to contribute to building a local food economy by creating jobs in N.C., stimulating economic development, preserving open space, protecting the natural environment, decreasing the use of fossil fuels, increasing consumer access to fresh and nutritious food, and providing greater food security for all of North Carolina.

According to General Statute 106-830, there are four broad areas the Council may consider developing policy around: 1. Health and wellness 2. Hunger and food access 3. Economic development 4. Preservation of farmland and water resources. Also included was a comprehensive list covering a wide range of topics that the Council has the option to study.

The Council will decide the best actions to achieve the purposes of the group. It serves as an advisory council not a policy making council and only has one mandate. The Council must report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly, Governor and Commissioner of Agriculture each year by October 1.

Ray Starling, General Counsel, NCDA&CS

Mr. Starling presented a PowerPoint (Exhibit 6) that reviewed legal requirements and information including a highlight of the Oath of Office, State Ethics Act as guidelines, Executive Order No. 34, Ethics in Attendance Standards, Open Meetings Law and Public Records Act, an explanation of members' positions and terms, per diem, lodging, travel reimbursement and procedures.

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Ms. Debbie Hamrick questioned if members had to take the per diem. Answer: No you don't.

Mr. Starling reviewed the instructions according to GS 106-831 stating the Council will vote one chair—every other year. The Chair's duties include calling meetings as often as necessary but not less than four times a year. A quorum for the Council is 13 members. If a meeting starts with a quorum, it can continue regardless of whether anyone leaves.

Mr. Roland McReynolds questioned the Open Meetings Law. He said some members work for private agencies that deal with sustainable local food issues, would it be possible to discuss where members can draw the line on what is a record for the Council verses just normal business of their particular agency. Mr. Starling said he would follow up on this, but generally the question to ask is: Does it deal specifically with the work of the Council?

Mr. Starling said a question had been raised on the process to allow public comment and input to the Council and explained this would be up to the Council to decide.

Mr. Starling opened the floor for nominations for Chair.

Mr. Bill Ray Hall nominated Commissioner Troxler to the position of Chair of the Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Keith Crisco.

Mr. Starling explained voting would be by a show of hands unless the Council requested otherwise. Mr. Starling asked for discussion on the nomination of Commissioner Troxler as Chair.

Ms. Dania Davy said she realized the general statute said the Council must have a Chair, but wondered if there were ways to have a broader representation. She said the Council's strength is in the variety of voices around the table. Mr. Starling invited any nominees to speak to Ms. Davy's questions and asked for additional comments.

Commissioner Troxler accepted the nomination. Mr. Starling asked if there were any other questions or nominations.

Mr. Charlie Jackson questioned the roles and responsibilities of the Chair. Mr. Starling said members of the Council would decide. According to the General Statute, the Council must elect a chair, but no other duties were included.

Mr. McReynolds questioned Commission Troxler on his approach for ensuring that the variety of experience and expertise of the members could be heard and asked him to elaborate on how he would engage the Council to find a common ground.

Commissioner Troxler said he recommended having a committee or an executive committee structure. He said the members of the Council would need to give their thoughts on how to set up a full committee structure between now and the next meeting.

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Mr. McReynolds concurred and asked for Commissioner Troxler's thoughts on how the next meeting's agenda would be developed. Commissioner Troxler said he thought the first order of business would be to come up with a strategic plan and develop the organization of the Council.

Mr. Starling asked if there were any other questions. Mr. Crisco called for the vote, which was seconded by Ms. Earline Middleton. Mr. Starling said unless requested otherwise, the Council would vote by simple majority.

Commissioner Troxler was unanimously elected as the Chair.

Commissioner Troxler recommended and called for a motion to elect a Vice Chair. Upon a motion by Mr. McReynolds, seconded by Ms. Hamrick, the decision to elect a Vice Chair was unanimously approved.

Ms. Mary James made a motion to nominate Dr. Nancy Creamer as Vice Chair; the motion was seconded by Ms. Hamrick. Dr. Creamer accepted the nomination.

Mr. Crisco called for nominations to be closed, seconded by Mr. Hall with a unanimous vote.

Dr. Creamer was unanimously elected as Vice Chair.

Commissioner Troxler asked for any burning issues before the close of the meeting.

Mr. Hall requested information sent in an official capacity be circulated to the entire membership. Commissioner Troxler agreed.

Ms. Hamrick questioned if the work between Committee Chairs and the Chair would be done by email or conference call.

Commissioner Troxler asked that recommendations be forwarded to Ms. Hicks, who will compile and distribute the information to everyone for review before the next meeting. He asked members to consider the number of committees to be established and what committee they would like to serve on. Commissioner Troxler said communication would be key to building consensus.

Mr. John Day recommended that documents to be shared with other committee members be posted on the Council's website and he would like for the website to be set up to receive public comments. In response to Mr. Day's suggestions, Ms. Hicks said she would be taking direction from the Council as to what information was posted online and that a "Comment Box" was already being set up. Additionally, she said a calendar was being created to post other local food dates and items of interest for the Council.

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Commission Troxler said the Council could consider webcasting meetings to allow interested parties to view meetings without having to travel.

Commission Troxler called for a motion to adjourn if there was no other business. Ms. Hamrick made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Crisco seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn passed by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Troxler adjourned the meeting at 4:15pm.

Prepared by:
Connie Strickland
Administrative Assistant
NCDA&CS

Adopted by the Council this _____ day
of _____, 2010

Commissioner Steven Troxler, Chair
Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council

Dr. Nancy Creamer, Vice Chair
Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council