

From: Cynthia Torres
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 9:38 PM
Subject: New FAPC in Boulder, CO Seeks Advice

Dear All,

I am the chair of the Boulder County [Colorado] Food and Agriculture Policy Council. Although an informal version of the Council has existed here for some time, it was only this year that the Boulder County Commissioners officially established the Council as an advisory group.

Our members are now immersed in considering the daunting task of recommending changes to county-wide policies which impact food and agriculture. It occurred to us that we could well benefit from the experience of similar councils around the country which have been in existence longer and which have already grappled with the same issues we are now confronting.

To that end, we would greatly appreciate it if someone on your Council could take five minutes and give us some basic information about how your Council initially approached making policy recommendations to the governmental entity you advise, and from the benefit of your hindsight make any suggestions to us.

Thanks very much for your time and please let me know if we can return the favor in any way.

1. What initial policy recommendations did your Council present, and how long did it take you to formulate them?
2. What reactions did your recommendations receive?
3. In hindsight, do you think you were initially too ambitious or too cautious in your initial policy recommendations? Also in hindsight, do you now wish you had done anything differently in formulating or presenting those initial recommendations?
4. Any other advice you can offer to us in confronting our recommendations debut?
5. How generally did your Council divide its efforts in its first year or so between formulating policy recommendations, conducting or gathering research on local food and agriculture issues, and performing community education and outreach?

Sincerely,

Cindy Torres
Boulder County Farmers' Market/
Food & Society Policy Fellow

From: Drake, Linda
Sent: Thu, 3 Jul 2008 10:21 am
Subject: RE: New FAPC in Boulder, CO Seeks Advice

Hi, Cindy. Congratulations on the formation of an official food policy council in Boulder County! My son and his family live in Longmont.

I was involved in the discussions about the formulation of a CT Food Policy Council and worked on some of the early food security reports, but I was not a member of the council or an active participant during the first year. I asked Mark Winne, who was the instigator of the process and now lives in Santa Fe, to get back to you with some of his thoughts. He wrote back to me to say he's had several discussions with you already, so that's great.

Ours is a state group, as we don't have county government in Connecticut. We address state agency issues as well as legislative policy. Members of the council include representatives of the state agencies that have involvement with food – including the Departments of Agriculture, Administrative Services (handles food buying for many state agencies), Education (school nutrition programs), Public Health, Social Services (Food Stamps), Transportation and the University's Cooperative Extension (that would be me). We also have members, appointed by legislative leadership as specified in the public act, who represent food producers, wholesalers, retailers, and anti-hunger organizations. (See web site at www.foodpc.state.ct.us – several publications are also there)

Since I've been involved, deciding on what policies or actions to work on has been more of an evolutionary process. All the members participate in discussing issues... usually somebody comes up with an issue they've been facing and brings it to the council for discussion and ideas. This has led to some administrative advocacy such as making the application for Food Stamps much shorter; facilitating the access to EBT equipment so folks can redeem food stamps at farmers markets; streamlining the application for free school lunch and breakfast so that those folks on Food Stamps are automatically eligible; the creation of a CT Farm Map to help consumers locate various agricultural products; getting state agencies and schools to purchase more local foods ...etc. We've also been involved in testifying for legislation that member organizations initiate, such as farmland preservation efforts; school food policies, etc. And we write to the governor.

We've held conferences that bring people together who have an interest on an issue. One of the first was on farmland preservation, where environmental groups as well as farmers and consumers got together to openly discuss the topic and figure out ways to address it. This led to the formation of the CT Working Lands Alliance, which has been a force that has helped increase funding for farmland and open space preservation among other things.

Other conferences have been on nutrition education and the use of local foods by institutions. The latter led to the formation of the CT Meat and Poultry Producers' Association in an effort to explore the issue of having USDA inspected meat slaughter and processing facilities more available to CT farmers so they could sell their products

to schools, colleges, state agencies, etc.

I think the key is involving those who will be impacted by your policy recommendations into the process as soon as possible. You will get more buy in from them if they feel that their ideas and concerns are being addressed. This should include those from the public and private sectors, as well as key decision-makers and county government leaders. This would work better than coming up with a list of recommendations and presenting it cold to the powers that be. It also eliminates the element of surprise and negative reactions. The tasks of research, education and policy formulation need to work together, sometimes simultaneously, for successful policy implementation.

I would imagine that many of the issues are really state level...not sure what "power" the county has... Much of our work in CT has been dealing with federal level policies that are administered at the state and local level ...where they come face to face with the people. Some of the issues we can't address, such as hiring more food stamp eligibility workers when the state budget is frozen, or changing some of the attitudes of the workers.

Not sure if this answers your questions, but feel free to get back to me if you like.
Good luck and have fun!

Linda T. Drake, M.S.
Nutritionist and Program Director
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)