

CFSC Urban Agriculture Committee call notes
March 12, 2009

On the call: Betsy Johnson (call moderator, committee co-chair), Cynthia Price (notetaker, committee co-chair), Margie Roswell, Dayna Burtness, Martin Bailkey, Aleta Dunne (CFSC staff liaison), Sarah Franklin, Barb Harrison, Andrea Nelson, Young Kim (CFSC board liaison), Valentine Doyle, Jonna McKone.

Those new to the call (or who had not been on in a long time) introduced themselves briefly. Barb Harrison said she is originally from Queens, now looking for employment, living in Virginia; Margie Roswell – is in Baltimore, seeing an explosion of UA activity, and created a web site, baltimoreurbanag.org, has invited Chesapeake Sustainable Business Alliance to help in producing 500 jobs in UA; Dayna Burtness is an Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) program associate with the local foods area, including working with Homegrown Minneapolis. Sarah Franklin is the new capacity building coordinator at World Hunger year, has background in public health and African-American history, and has been farming for 2 years outside Boston; Jonna McKone is working in community food security at City Harvest; Andrea Nelson, from Denver Colorado, is a research associate for Cornell Univ. studying sustainability. She is a LEED-Accredited Professional.

POLICY WORK: Betsy noted that, regarding a potential Cedar Tree Foundation grant to CFSC: in the past this committee had been working with Alan Hunt who was with the North East Mid West Institute to identify what legislation related to UA had been proposed, and actually came up with legislative language. The process bogged down when Alan Hunt left for the Wallace Center for Sustainable Agriculture, but we have means to follow up. As far as the Farm Bill reauthorization, it focused on Community Food Project grants, and only about 1/3 of CFP has gone to UA. We're investigating what were programs we'd want to reinstate, and what else to support. Our survey work contributed to this. Young announced that CFSC had just hired someone to fill the Washington DC position left by Steph Larsen; she will start the first week of April. We hoped that there might be interns to help us move the federal policy forward, both in terms of the proposal and actual legislation.

METROAG ALLIANCE: After giving background about MetroAg and its relationship to the Urban Ag Committee, Martin reported that MetroAg is developing a number of MOUs, with such orgs as ACGA and the American Planning Association. MetroAg is developing a digital Internet clearing house, which would be a portal for both new and pre-existing urban ag work/web sites, incl. Cityfarmer.org and World Hunger Year. We have never settled on the exact relationship of UAC to MetroAg. One place where it has been differentiated a little is in the policy area, which founders felt MetroAg should not engage in to any great degree. There may be a model developing thru Food Secure Canada's committee, but that is still unresolved.

As a member of the APA, Andrea asked what the process is. Martin said that MetroAg coordinators hope there would be some roadmap by which future collaborations would move forward. He said he would send the MOU template to Betsy and Cynthia to review.

There was a lot of discussion of the MetroAg Alliance web site, for which they are still raising funds. A lot of good ideas surfaced.

POTENTIAL POLICY/CEDAR TREE LETTER OF INTENT: A common approach to getting legislation is to get a champion in Congress who will introduce a “marker bill” – which is a proposal with the intention that it will later get included in the larger omnibus bills, such as the Farm Bill. CFSC is working on the Childhood Nutrition Act currently.

Barb: Regarding food security, by tying this in to health issues, as well as transportation issues, as well as physical education, all tremendous concerns right now, we can position UA well.

Valentine: It’s clear that it’s beneficial to those who get fresh produce from it, but how significant is that? What should be part of this proposal is funding for a research component. She knows of some current research and will keep us apprised, but more is needed. She added that despite food security advocates, often there is not a lot of urban ag taking place. Research could help make the case that, for ex., if there are only enough gardens in a city to make urban produce available to 400 people, that might mean twice that will be inspired the following year, and twice THAT for the following, etc. We discussed potential yield, and the allotment gardens in Britain. Culturally, US citizens may respond better to the sense that UA is less vulnerable to attack.

We also discussed “locally processed” as a companion component, and the sense of barriers facing low-income and minority growers in urban settings. Other ideas: a compendium of the different rules and regulations in different cities; model policies (one just out per Cynthia, from California); concentrating on food desert communities; working with inner-city churches.

Betsy asked that people with additional ideas should e-mail them to Cynthia or to her.