

Stakeholder Meeting Notes
November 12, 2014

This meeting included two presenting organizations and was otherwise relatively short. A breakdown of the two presenting organizations and the information they presented is included below. Also included are some notes on other subjects that were discussed towards the end of the meeting.

LEAP for Local Food

Presenter: Maureen McNamara-Best, the Executive Director

Background: Organization is a 501(c)3 nonprofit focused on developing/supporting/maintaining the local food system to nourish the community/improve access/support producers (within 100 mile radius). Why local? LEAP says local food support creates economic development and community building. Focused on trying to meet the needs of the community. Started in 2009.

Projects:

- Runs Grandin and West End markets, now moving into other projects. LEAP also supports Lick Run Farm.
- The organization is in the process of doing a lot of strategic planning. Working to provide year-round supply and also works with consumers to educate on what is available, on the fact you can have supply year round (at the West End market, primarily)
- Double EBT program – funding for that is through Carilion – processed \$7k in EBT and doubled \$6.8k
- Work with VT Cooperative Extension to have cooking demonstrations at the markets, monthly during the winter and every week in the summer (West End market)
- Mobile Market – instead of going in and setting up one location, they are going to have a mobile market so that they can go to consumers. Upcoming project w TAP Headstart/Healthy Start/Happy Healthy Cooks
- Community Kitchen – final design revealed 11/12 (day of meeting) Working with Freedom First and West End Center to build a commercial kitchen. Got an initial grant to plan the kitchen but are looking for funding to build out the kitchen next. The idea is for this to become a food incubator – start small business, develop product, move elsewhere once established. Hot and cold kitchen. Can also be used for community cooking classes and demonstrations. Tenants pay a fee (average price nationally is \$20/hr for this service), LEAP manages it, pays rent to West End Center. Will play an active part in building collaborations to support entrepreneurs. Will not be USDA certified for wholesale meat handling, only for produce and direct retail production. (USDA requires fulltime staff inspector for certification of meat handling). Will not be certified for any specialty diets.
- Fruit and Veggie Rx program with Healthy RV. If people have obesity, doctors prescribe fruit and vegetables, prescription can be redeemed for produce at the market - \$1 a day per family member. Hope to adapt this model to Roanoke – coming out in spring.

Feeding America Southwest Virginia (FASWVA)

Presenter: John Shoulders – Vice President of Business Affairs, Kitty Tabor – Procurement Specialist

Background: LEAP and FASWVA must come at the same goals from a different direction/different strategies. FASWVA – 1 of 200 food banks across the country. Food distributor/wholesaler. Bring in tons of food and distribute out to 360 partner agencies – distribute to persons in need of food. Model built on food insecurity and provisioning people who need food. Numbers are high in the Roanoke Valley, but some of the most difficult places are in the very rural places (hollows). Using a variety of approaches to reach people who need food. Agencies are generally faith based or 501(c)3. Have limited volunteer staff and limited distribution dates. Some distribute once per month, some twice a month, a few twice a week, a very few daily. Have freezers and dry storage space, but not generally refrigeration. Food comes in through donations. Produce that is donated is generally produce about to go bad, so how do you get those items through and out to a human in time? A lot of times agencies won't even take these items because they don't have the ability to distribute in time/don't have storage/etc. It is also harder to find healthy food for donation. FASWVA is trying to shift to more healthy/nutritious foods. Also trying to improve partnering with other groups.

Projects:

- FASWVA has a mobile produce unit – refrigerated van they take out to deliver fruits and vegetables. They purchase fresh product, so it isn't sustainable for them. Right now it is being paid for by a grant for the first year (started in fall). That means they can buy from local sources to support the local food economy. They go to a given partner's distribution space, they augment that site. They also have partnered with Carilion to do some studies of their clients at the mobile site. They can also use the space for educational purposes (partnered with Bank on Roanoke about financial planning etc). They will have to bring in more grant money to pay for this right now. **Looking for partners for the Veggie Mobile.** They are interested in people who might need to reach out to that population as partners.

- Some distributions feed 150 people, but some feed 20-30. They are working on trying to come up with more consistent sources. The easiest food to distribute is Little Debbies, but they are cutting down on those to try to be healthier. Coverage area – 26 counties from Alleghany to Cumberland Gap. Distribute 20 billion lbs of food a year. That's less than 50% of what is actually delivered every year, since the partner agencies buy and supplement what they get from FASWVA.

- Mobile food distribution in Grayson and Carroll County.

Other information:

- The answer to reducing this problem is economic development. The population who takes this food is predominately middle-aged working class families out of work (30-50) used to have three jobs and are now down to 1 part time job. Unless these people are employed, they are going to be unable to support themselves. They are seeing a big shift towards direct pickup at the store by the agencies. Everyone is looking for greater efficiency. Grocery stores are managing shrinkage

better, putting more on manager specials, selling lower quality things instead of donating. They are doing more to make the meat last longer for sale as well through packaging and treatment. There is also increased demand for free goods. A lot of companies don't make as many mistakes in processing that would have resulted in donations, and stores have increased their ability to nail down orders, so they are not over-ordering.

- How many children and adults are hungry in this region? 65% of children in Roanoke City, 48,000 in SWVA. There are hunger stats available on the website.

Other Discussion Points

Ideas for FASWVA:

- Community kitchen or food hub to process donated fresh food that cannot be distributed quickly enough into something more durable. Or to compost them, etc. (They have to pay for anything they throw away in cents by the pound.)

- Plant a row for the hungry programs, in partnership with backyard gardeners, Master Gardeners, or a similar organization.

- Gleaning in the city as volunteering – could pick a lot of different native fruits or planted fruits in parks, etc, as a partnership program with the city.

Conversations about future meetings:

- We are thinking about finding a different location for future meetings that might be larger. This would enable us to have more people at the meetings. FASWVA has offered a location. We are also open to other offers. Please let us know if you would be interested in hosting these meetings or know of a good location which would be centrally located and accessible to all members of the group.

- Next meeting will include the following presenters:

Anna Erwin – the Healthy Corner Store

Martha Walker from Cooperative Extension – Economic impact of local foods planning: examples from other regions around the state

The meeting will be held on January 21st at 10 am to accommodate travel time for our presenters. We look forward to seeing you there.

- Rachael has offered to attempt a grant that would allow us to bring in VT Engage facilitators for a 3 hr discussion to move the group to a more cohesive vision. This would potentially take place in March or April, at a larger location, and be an all day event. The goal of this day would be to further develop the group's vision and allow broader public input.

VT Office of Economic Development:

- The VT Office of Economic Development is working on a regional food assessment for the area. Those interested in this project should contact their offices in Blacksburg, or Leann Budzevski, their liaison at the November meeting.