



Urban Ag Work Group Meeting Notes

Fairfax Food Council

January 22, 2024 from 10:00 am – 11:00 am

Introductions:

Participants individually introduced themselves and their urban agriculture backgrounds and interests.

Status Report on School Composting Pilot Program:

Elisa Solomon, Fairfax Food Council Project Coordinator

Elisa discussed the purpose of this project and the progress that has been made. This pilot program aims to help schools reduce food waste by teaching students how to repurpose trash-bound scraps. Using grant funds from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, the Fairfax Food Council will provide participating schools with tools and resources (e.g., collection bins, composting tumbler(s), educational resources) necessary to implement this small pilot program. Participating schools will use these tools and resources to create hands-on experiences and educate students about food waste, composting, edible gardening, and healthy eating. In collaboration with Get 2 Green (the arm of Fairfax County Public Schools focused on environmental initiatives), an application to participate in this program has been created and emailed to schools. This pilot program is vital to our efforts to cultivate an appreciation for healthy eating and environmental stewardship!

Following the report, the group provided great ideas and suggestions to optimize the program.

Review of 2023 Priorities Survey and Discussion on 2024 Priorities

Led by Work Group Co-Chairs

Work group members discussed work group plans for 2024 (e.g., issues to be prioritized, goals to be set, experiences to be planned). The group expressed a desire to:

- Focus on composting
- Stay abreast of the County's long-term urban agriculture plans
- Expand work group network/membership
- Plan in-person meetings/field trips
- Visit commercial operators located within the county
- Visit community gardens located within the county

Member Updates

- **Casandra** – As Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture is developing a community garden, they are seeking community partners. If you have any recommendations, please email them to Casandra Lawson (casandra@arcadiafood.org).
- **Juan Pablo** - Juan Pablo's term as Co-Chair of this work group is nearing an end. Those interested in becoming the next Co-Chair should contact either Juan Pablo Echeverria (juanpablo@arcadiafood.org), Casandra Lawson (casandra@arcadiafood.org), or Elisa Solomon (elisa.solomon@fairfaxcounty.gov).
- **Juan Pablo** – Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture will host a Farmer-Chef Speed Sourcing Happy Hour on [February 19th from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm](#). Enjoy a drink and snacks, and connect with local farmers and chefs. [Click here to register](#).
- **Elisa** – The Fairfax Food Council's Community Voice Task Force is hosting a networking event on [Tuesday, January 30, 2024, at 6225 Brandon Avenue, Springfield, VA 22150](#). There, food Growers, Makers, & Recyclers get to meet, establish relationships, and make real deals while making their voices heard. If you are interested in attending, [Use this link to register](#). Registration is **capped at 50 people**, so register now! **The registration deadline was extended to Thursday, January 25, 2024.**
- **Jennliz** – Food For Others is looking for volunteers to start seedlings for them. Food For Others will provide volunteers with the seeds and pots/containers; however, they do not have the space or indoor lighting to support plants of 50 varieties this year. Plants include varieties of tomatoes and peppers that can grow indoors with growing lights and in small containers.
 - Hands on Harvests has seed starter volunteers
 - George Mason University and Green Spring Gardens may have extra seedlings available
- **Stacey** – Hands on Harvests has its annual Seed Swap on [Saturday, 1/27 at 2:00 pm at Burke Center Library](#). There, they will discuss seed saving and upcoming garden education programs. Kids are welcome, and you do not have to bring seeds to attend and participate.
- **Diane** – Work group member, Janelle Welch, is moving to western New York. While there, she plans to remain involved in the conservation and agriculture community, as she plans to start a small urban garden that offers boutique vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers. Janelle expresses her deepest appreciation for this group and is excited to bring with her some of the grassroots knowledge she has learned from everyone here. This work group and the entire Fairfax Food Council benefitted from Janelle's graphic design expertise. Among her many contributions to the Food Council, designing the [Care To Share](#) and [Real Food 4 Real Change](#) Toolkits were big projects. Wishing you the best, Janelle!
- **Cory** – LambMowers.com has six ewes (pregnant sheep)! Also, LambMowers.com has excess compost, so if anyone needs herbivore-based compost, contact Cory Suter (corysuter@gmail.com).

Field Trip Ideas

Group Discussion

Work group members discussed places they would like to visit this year. Locations included:

- Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture's new community garden
- Hidden Gems Farm
- Fairfax County Park Authority's new community gardens in Hogge Park and Lorton.
- Composting site at I-66 Transfer Station
- Suters Glen Permaculture Farm

Next Urban Ag Work Group Meeting: February 26, 2024 at 10:00 am