



Policy Task Force Meeting Notes

Fairfax Food Council

June 18, 2024, from 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Introductions:

Kerri introduced Matthew Carlos, a George Mason University Higher Education Ph.D. student who will serve as a Co-Chair on the FFC Policy Task Force. Matthew is studying food insecurity among college students, with a focus on food policy.

Review of Last Meeting

Kerri LaCharite, FFC Policy Task Force Co-Chair

Kerri summarized the last Policy Task Force meeting.

Review of where groups left off

Access

SNAP enrollment/eligibility gap, addressing barriers to retailers, increasing the size & magnitude of benefits, and supplementing SNAP benefits

Agriculture/ Food Production & Waste

Zoning changes for commercial & residential agriculture and tax incentives for growing

Procurement/ Business/ Labor

Permitting & licensing of new food businesses, local purchasing for county

Group Discussion

Breakout Rooms

Kerri shared the following videos and Policy Databases for groups to watch/explore.

Videos

- <https://youtu.be/qQ7MP2e7Bqk?feature=shared> (11:02 mins)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6K-e9PUGfyQ> (9:42 min)

Policy Databases

- Healthy Food Policy Project
 - <https://healthyfoodpolicyproject.org/policy-database>
- A Legal Toolkit from the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic
 - https://chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/good-food-good-laws_toolkit-10.23.2017.pdf
- Healthy Food Access
 - <https://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/take-action-now-policy-efforts-impacts>

Group Discussion

Big Group

Each breakout group reported to the large group what they discussed.

Access

Background:

The group expanded on its previous discussions about SNAP enrollment, the size of benefits, and the potential to target/reserve a portion of benefits for healthy foods (which is similar to how veggie vouchers work).

Proposed Policy:

Therefore, this group is considering proceeding with a SNAP Navigators Policy. This policy would advocate for the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to require the Department of Family Services (DFS) to create SNAP Enrollment Trainers. Those trainers would recruit and then train volunteer navigators within the community, faith-based organizations, non-profits, schools, etc., to teach them how to enroll their fellow neighbors/community members in SNAP. Ultimately, the goal is to make the SNAP enrollment process more efficient.

The group also acknowledged that this policy may not require BOS involvement, especially if vacant SNAP enrollment positions already exist within DFS. However, the BOS' involvement could motivate DFS to undertake or investigate such a program.

Remaining Questions:

The group identified several remaining questions:

- What would a navigator's role be?
- What is the effectiveness and feasibility of such a program?
- How many and what are the vacant positions at DFS?
- How many trainers and navigators would we need, and in what regions would they be based?
- Who will be a navigator? County employees? Non-profit employees/volunteers? Volunteers in the faith community? Librarians? Community members?
- What bureaucratic steps need to be taken to get on BOS' agenda?

Next Steps:

The group plans to take the following next steps:

- Invite Wes Garrit of DFS to discuss DFS's challenges with SNAP outreach and enrollment.
- Research the number of SNAP navigators similar counties require per region/population.

Agriculture/ Food Production & Waste

Next steps:

The group will research and explore Fairfax County's zoning codes, Use Tables, and regulations that prevent people from growing food on their land. Also, the group plans to research barriers to special use permits (e.g., cost), as zoning codes can be difficult to change. Tax credits for agriculture/food production businesses are also under consideration. Lastly, the group plans to chat with Cassandra Lawson (Co-Chair of the FFC Urban Agriculture Work Group) and Austin Gastrell (Senior Planner at the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development – Zoning Administration Division), both of whom are knowledgeable about county zoning codes.

Institutional Procurement/ Business/Labor

Next Steps:

The group watched the video Kerri provided. However, the policy implemented in that video may not be as applicable in Fairfax County. Therefore, the group wants to research permitting for small food businesses. They plan to seek guidance from people who are experienced and well-versed in food business regulations, permitting, etc.

Next Policy Task Force Meeting: July 16, 2024, at 10:00 am