



Access to Healthy Foods Subcommittee

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2008

5:30pm – 7:00pm

Marysville City Hall

1049 State Ave.

SEPT. 17, 2008 MINUTES

City Councilmember John Soriano, Wendy Bart, Doug Buell, Marielle Harrington, Colin Rehm, Maryke Burgess, Deb Loughrey-Johnson, Eric Owl, Colleen Fullmer, Jim Ballew, Tara Mizell, Gail Miller

Introductions and Welcome |

Informational Items |

- **Report – Healthy Communities promotion at Homegrown Festival**

Doug Buell shared with Committee members that Healthy Communities was promoted at the City's Information Booth as part of the Homegrown Street Festival downtown on Aug. 8-9. Booth volunteers passed out fruit and healthy snack bars to visitors, and maps and surveys were displayed that identified bike routes and trails – some proposed – around the city.

- **Business – Community Garden Tour in Monroe/Sky Valley Food Bank**

The Committee reviewed photos and information from a tour of a Community Garden in Monroe that in part grows food for donation to the nearby Sky Valley Food Bank. Layout of the garden included raised beds and large planter boxes, and volunteers emphasized that you need to find the right harmony among the plants you choose to grow. The garden is essentially staffed by an elderly gentleman who dutifully does much of the volunteer work, and volunteers from the WSU Extension Master Gardeners Program. The location is good. It is across the parking lot from a Boys and Girls Club, and within eyesight of the senior center.

Deb Loughrey-Johnson asked about liability for when a person falls, for example. Parks and Recreation Director Jim Ballew referenced the state Recreation Immunity Act. The act is in effect in such a facility when a person enters knowing that it is a public area, and it is a free place to enter.

Colleen Fullmer spoke to the question of where you find volunteers to build the infrastructure for a community garden. She mentioned that Eagle Scout projects have been used to build fencing, then the work has drawn donations from other groups to, for example, donate cement. She mentioned an outstanding community garden built in the Salishan housing project in Tacoma's East Side, which has drawn pride of ownership.

- **Business – Community Garden Proposal for Doleshel Tree Farm**

Jim Ballew gave a report on the Community Garden Proposal for Doleshel Tree Farm. Over the summer, the City contracted with Horticulturalist and Committee Member Eric Owl to develop a Feasibility Study for the community garden proposal on the tree farm property. Details won't be shared here, but copies are available. The tree farm property is about a 2-acre /3-acre split between usable land and wetlands.

Ballew said that from the educational standpoint for students, the Principal at adjacent Kellogg-Marsh Elementary is very enthusiastic about the project. It was suggested that as the project evolves, it would be good to get buy-in from the local PTSA, too.

There are groups who are at the ready to prepare the site for a community garden. Ballew referenced using Department of Corrections crews to remove blackberry brambles and trees, which have been areas used by partiers and vagrants. The Eagle Scouts are willing to rebuild a bridge on the property. Among issues he mentioned are the need for concrete walkways and gravel that provide ADA access, and the need to map out the general pros and cons of the tree farm site. Committee member Theresa Ramey mentioned the NJROTC as a good source for volunteers.

Ballew said he talked with the Master Gardeners at the Demonstration garden in Jennings Memorial Park. They were not real confident that the Master Gardeners could be counted upon to help run a new community garden because they are overextended as it is.

What's next? Going forward with the tree farm site would likely require an administrative Conditional Use Permit that would stipulate how the property could be used in reference to stream buffers, etc. And of course, started project costs are a factor. The exact amount cannot be estimated until more evaluation is done.

There was also discussion about who the clientele accessing the community garden would be, and who would be the benefactors – signed up families? The food bank? Other?

Colin Rehm talked about the Community Garden questionnaire that we be a tool used to gauge the community's interest in having a Community Garden, and if so, where might the best location serve the most needy groups? Rehm passed out the questionnaire and invited revisions or additions. The survey, which is not specific to Doleshel Tree Farm, asks such questions as level of interest in growing food at a community garden, how much residents are willing to pay for a plot, interest in donating some produce to the food bank, and interest in volunteering to build and maintain the community garden. Committee members were also interested in knowing how much time or distance a person was willing to travel to access the community garden.

The survey is primarily an online survey that will be available on the Marysville Healthy Communities website starting in mid-October (www.marysvillehealthycommunitiesproject.com/gardensurvey). The city newsletter and

school district communiqués will be used draw people to the website to complete the brief questionnaire.

Discussion turned toward who the target groups are that will benefit from the community garden – focus on the community at large vs. low-income families in an immediate area to the community garden vs. the food bank, etc.

Committee member Maryke Burgess reminded about doing some of the little things that the subcommittee can do in the shorter term to help promote the Healthy Communities brand in the community. For example, promoting HC and certain healthy food ideas and recipes at a table at the entrance of local interested grocery stores. Not to single out specific products, but to help educate the public on what the Healthy Communities Initiative is about.

There was further discussion about pulling together some recipes that can be used on cards that are translated into Russian and Spanish, for example, then made available in the Healthy Communities rack at the food bank. Other ideas included a healthy recipe of the month to feature, asking Committee Member Vicki Mattson to write some occasionally Healthy Communities articles in her food column in the North County Outlook newspaper, purchasing canvas bags emblazoned with the HC logo, and hosting a healthy lunch for seniors sometime at The Schoolhouse Café at Totem Middle School, which uses the school's student culinary arts program.

Co-Chair Wendy Bart offered to donate some of the YMCA Nutritionist's time to help.

Bart then introduced the “Energize Your Meetings” program offered through the state Department of Health for committee consideration. The program is a way to encourage businesses and other groups to incorporate healthy foods and beverages, and fitness, into their meetings to keep participants energized. The program uses a 5-star rating system. Bart believes that promoting this to local businesses will help meet the Subcommittee's priority to encourage more eating of health-promoting foods community-wide, such as fruits and vegetables, and is another way to change the culture of eating in Marysville, including within the business sector. She would like to take the program one step further to incorporate the 5-star rating system to be based not just on the eating side of things, but also how the business meets the Healthy Communities objectives for taking advantage or using free and low-cost recreational opportunities, and making the most of the urban environmental changes that are being deployed, such as bike lanes and walking trails. The program, customized for Healthy Communities, would work more as a recognition program.

The Subcommittee mentioned that with the slowdown in activity over the summer, they would like to get a better ongoing sense of the work that is being done by the other two Subcommittees.

The Subcommittee decided to meet next from 5:30-7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 7 at City Hall.

Summary/Wrap-up |

Topics on the table not currently on agenda:

- Farms to Schools (*further research*)

- Farms to Food Banks (*further research*)
- Menu labeling (*on hold pending discussions at the health district administration level*)
- Program to showcase healthy food samples/recipes/Healthy Communities in local grocers (*preliminary*)

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Reminder of Healthy Communities “Access to Healthy Foods” Objectives

- Objective 1A – Increase the amounts of fruits and vegetables consumed by Marysville Food Bank participants.
- Objective 1C – Establish new community gardens to make fresh, local produce more readily available.

Following is a second tier of priorities referenced in “Priority No. 2 – Access to Health-Promoting Foods,” that were discussed:

- Objective 2A – Menu labeling: ensure restaurants provide nutrition labeling on all menus.
- Objective 1D – Establish a congregate meal site for older adults.