

Agriculture Work Group Meeting Minutes
May 22nd, 2018
4pm - 5:30pm; Martin Hall Conference Room

Introductions and Garden Updates

- Eva Sumano, Anthony (Tony) Medina- Organizers at Unity Square (Catholic Charities)
 - Landers and Feaster Park Gardens
 - Both full- have waiting list
 - Interested in building more beds, but space in the gardens to expand is limited
- Clara Haynes
 - NBCFM Garden and Promise Garden
 - New raised beds at Promise Garden are installed (via Home Depot work day), but might need further modification to be fully accessible
- Josh Gilens
 - MD student with RU RWJMS
 - Interested in health and the food system; this summer, researching collaborations between healthcare providers and gardens
 - New volunteer with the Rutgers Student Farm and gardener with the NBCFM community garden
- Meredith Taylor
 - Research Associate- Office of Agriculture and Urban Programs
 - Cook Organic Garden Coordinator
 - A few garden plots are still available
 - COG collaborates with urban farm initiatives including Promise Agriculture and La Cooperativa/TUF Farms, both of whom lease high tunnel space at the COG for agricultural production of leafy greens/herbs and marigold flowers respectively
 - COG gardeners are interested in re-establishing a type of “grow a row” donation program, where fresh produce can be shared with food insecure residents
 - Meredith uses a “Sakai” project management site to coordinate gardener sign-ups, participation, etc.
- Johnny Malpica
 - Program Coordinator with the Rutgers Collaborative Center
 - Co-chair of the NBCFA Advocacy and Policy Workgroup
 - Serves on the Environmental Commission
 - Former CGC member; interested in collaborative events between the workgroups
- Lauren Errickson
 - Senior Program Coordinator with Rutgers Cooperative Extension
 - New Brunswick Community Farmers Market & Gardens
 - NBCFM gardens are nearly full, but additional raised bed construction has allowed for increased gardener participation
 - Recreation Park raised beds should be available soon, pending final approval of a cooperative management agreement between the City and the NBCFM by Mayor Cahill

- 26 raised beds will be available and advertised to the neighboring communities, including Unity Square waitlist gardeners

Intro to the NBCFA

The three “pillars” on which the NBCFA will move forward through action items include increased

- Healthy food access
- Food affordability
- Community engagement

Workgroups are tasked with determining strategies for how they will effectively contribute to the overarching goals of the NBCFA noted above, and for determining metrics and milestones to evaluate workgroup and overall NBCFA progress toward meeting their goals.

Focus of the Ag Work Group To Date

The Ag Work group has focused extensively on developing, delivering, and promoting programming, including educational workshops and events hosted by collaborating organizations, throughout the growing season. Topics have included orchard trees, composting, beekeeping, etc.

The Community Garden Coalition served as a collective networking group for community garden members and leadership throughout the City of New Brunswick to share resources, skills, etc. as needed.

The CGC and Ag Workgroup combined in 2017 to form one agriculturally-focused group under the umbrella of the NBCFA to allow for increased and targeted focus by all involved.

Future Ag Work Group Goals and Direction: Strategies, Metrics, and Milestones

1. Urban agriculture promotion and networking to increase community engagement around agricultural initiatives
 - a. Reach out to community garden leaders to reinvigorate Ag workgroup (May meeting)
 - b. Continue to promote/organize events
 - i. Advocacy and Policy & Agriculture Work Group “Policy Potluck”
 1. April 2019
 2. Johnny will coordinate with NBCFM and Unity Square to develop local route for garden walking tour followed by a potluck
 - ii. Web promotion of events/programs through new NBCFA web site (about 2 months out from launch)
 - c. Include farmers/growers in the food system conversation with the NBCFA/AgWG

- i. Invite farmers to participate in the AgWG
 - ii. Connect with home gardeners/growers who are not affiliated with a community garden
 - d. Offer educational resources to gardeners
 - i. Soil testing (for lead, specifically)
 - 1. Unity Square and Rutgers Cooperative Extension have partnered through the CGC to do this in the past; the Ag WG should continue to offer this service/information
 - a. Lauren and Meredith will coordinate with Michelle Backas of RCE to see what continuing resources are available
- 2. Building agricultural capacity (infrastructure and organizational)
 - a. Physical infrastructure
 - i. Greenhouses
 - ii. Cold storage
 - b. Organizational capacity
 - i. Updated map of community gardens with contact information for garden leadership
 - ii. Shared resources
 - 1. Registration forms
 - 2. Document templates
 - 3. Signage templates/ideas
 - 4. Materials sources (for soil, plants, etc.)
 - 5. Skill share via online platform and/or in-person meetings
 - 6. Project organization platform (Google or other) to coordinate shared resources, gardener conversations, etc.

Metrics/Milestones for the above strategies might include

- Documentation of development/establishment of resources and events
- Numbers of gardeners participating/growing food/etc.
- Yield of food related to AgWG activities
- Diversity of crops available in New Brunswick
 - The Food Plan includes some of this information already, along with information about specific herbs/produce not yet available in New Brunswick
- Identification/cataloging of existing infrastructure (greenhouses, land, cold storage, etc.)
 - Determining of need for additional infrastructure among gardens, organizations, residents, etc.

Measurement might include

- Survey research
- Attendee feedback
- Number of new gardens/expected yield increases/etc. as a result of workshops/events
- Actual and intended changes in behavior relating to food consumption, purchase, growing, etc. as a result of activities

- Agricultural yield reporting and/or estimate calculation
 - Meredith has an example that she will share from a project that measured community garden output/produce yield in Trenton
 - To operationalize this goal:
 - Identify/select a measurement strategy
 - Pilot the process with one or two community gardens for the initial season
 - Adjust as needed and enroll additional gardens for subsequent seasons

Nominations for Open Co-Chair Position

There is a vacancy open for Co-Chair (with Lauren Errickson) of the Agriculture Work Group. Anyone interested in filling this position should submit a brief personal statement (a few sentences) explaining their interest in the Ag Work Group, their vision for agriculture in the City and how they might help support the NBCFA as a whole in achieving the goals of affordable, accessible, healthy food and increased community engagement with the food system to Lauren via email: lauren.errickson@rutgers.edu by **June 1st**. Lauren will circulate the statements to Ag workgroup members for review, and then pass recommendations on to the Operations Committee to approve a new Co-Chair. Any questions can be directed to either Lauren or Luisa Reyes at nbfoodalliance@gmail.com.

Next meeting

The next agriculture workgroup meeting will be held:

July 24th, 2018

4pm - 5:30pm

NBCFM Market Pavilion & Gardens at 178 Jones Avenue, New Brunswick