



RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes – July 18, 2017

Members Present:

Linda Blair	Orange County Representative
Michelle Edwards	Chair and RRRC Liaison Member
Kenner Love	Rappahannock County Representative
Jessica Palmer	Farmland Preservation & Conservation Technical Adv. Member
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County Representative
Rebecca Sheffield	Culpeper County Representative

Members Absent:

Kirsten Dueck	Health Sector Technical Advisory Member
Clyde Firman	Consumption Sector Technical Advisory Member
Taylor Richardson	Education Sector Technical Advisory Member
Ken Smith	Production Sector Technical Advisory Member
Susan Vidal	Madison County Representative

Vacant:

Processing and Distribution Technical Advisory Member

Guests:

Steve Cook	Virginia Department of Health
Tom McDougall	4P Foods
Michael Sands	Rappahannock County Farmer

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Michelle Edwards, Chair, and introductions were made. Ms. Edwards noted that a quorum was present.

Food Port Feasibility Study

Tom McDougall, 4P Foods

Tom McDougall of 4P Foods delivered a presentation on a proposed Mid-Atlantic Food Port, which would aggregate products from smaller aggregators/food hubs and be able to sell to larger buyers such as Sysco (see attached).

In 2014, Mr. McDougall launched 4P Foods, an online CSA for the Washington D.C. metro area. The business primarily sources its products from Virginia's Northern Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley, but expands to the eastern seaboard in order to address issues with the seasonality of produce. Kenner Love asked how 4P Foods deals with changes in what consumers order versus what the company anticipated and told the farmer. Mr. McDougall replied that the difference is typically only 5-10% and the farmers they work with can handle it with a few days' notice.

4P Foods currently operates using a business-to-business strategy. Staff cold call businesses, deliver a presentation to employees, then drop off orders at the office building. They also deliver to residences for an additional fee, but home delivery is a small percentage of their business. Mike Sands asked if 4P Foods is breaking even, to which Mr. McDougall answered they are very close.

Phase 2 of Mr. McDougall's business model is to expand from direct-to-consumer to regional wholesale in 2019-2021. This would build upon the networked supply chain of food hubs that 4P has developed, and work to address unmet demand at restaurants and small retailers. Phase 3 would expand distribution further to be able serve food service providers and institutions in 2021-2030, through a networked supply chain of food hubs. The proposed Mid-Atlantic Food Port could include typical food hub activities (e.g. aggregation, distribution, storage), plus related activities, such as processing, a community kitchen, retail, farming and recycling.

Mr. Love asked how the Shenandoah Produce Auction could fit with the food port. Mr. McDougall responded that it is a great opportunity to source from the auction and enhance what the auction is already doing for the region's local food network. Mr. Love noted that 4P may also be able to offer farmer-friendly prices.

4P foods held stakeholder engagement sessions for the food port project in Washington D.C. in June 2016 and in Vint Hill, VA in February 2017. Further project plans are as follows:

- Phase 1: Feasibility study, including a market gap analysis.
 - Estimated Cost = \$150,000
 - Completion in 2018
- Phase 2: Program design, site analysis
 - Estimated Cost = \$750,000
 - Completion by mid-2019
- Phase 3: Food port build-out
 - Estimated Cost = 20,000,000+
 - Break ground in 2020

Mr. McDougall noted that funding for the feasibility study has been secured from Fauquier and Loudoun Counties and also from the US Department of Agriculture through a Rural Business Development Grant (Fauquier County was the applicant), and the Virginia Department of

Agriculture and Consumer Services through an Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development grant. Mr. Love asked whether the food port's location is limited to Loudoun and Fauquier Counties. Mr. McDougall replied no, the counties understand it could be located elsewhere in Virginia or Maryland, depending on the results of the study.

Mr. Love asked who is conducting the feasibility study, to which Ray Pickering responded that the job would have to go out to bid through Fauquier County's RFP process. Tom added that the consultant that 4P Foods has been working with intends to put in a bid.

Regional Food Marketing Update

Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)

Ms. Edwards stated that she contacted the State Corporation Commission, and was told that to pursue a trademark for the Purely Piedmont brand, evidence of the brand in use on the category of product being applied for must accompany the application. Therefore, the next step is to roll out the label program, so the brand can be used in marketing the region's local food products.

Ms. Edwards reviewed the components of the regional foods label program that the Council adopted at the previous meeting, to be refined during the July meeting:

1. The label covers food and beverages within the five-county region within RRRC's jurisdiction, with the option to later expand to the larger food system as defined by the 2015 Farm and Food Plan.
2. To use the label, food and beverages must be grown and/or processed within the region.
3. Participation in the program will be free, if funds to print and distribute the labels can be provided by the Regional Commission.

She stated that RRRC will pay to print and mail the labels out of its marketing budget. As program participation and costs expand, however, additional funding sources may eventually need to be explored. In order to receive the labels and digital version of the logo for use in marketing, producers will have to sign a license agreement. Example agreements from Virginia Grown, Appalachian Grown, and North Carolina's Piedmont Grown were provided to attendees (see attached).

The example agreements include terms of use, as well as a form for the applicant to enter basic contact and farm information, and their signature. The Purely Piedmont agreement would contain similar components. Ms. Edwards pointed out that the Appalachian Grown and Piedmont Grown examples also incorporate standards for several classes of products. She recommended that the council consider inclusion of a similar standard for processed foods bearing the Purely Piedmont label, to ensure that the majority of the product's contents are grown in the region. Council members also expressed interest in adopting the Appalachian Grown and Piedmont Grown programs' standard for meat products.

After discussion, Mr. Love made a motion to adopt the following standards from the Appalachian Grown and Piedmont Grown programs as part of the Purely Piedmont terms of use:

- Fruit and vegetable products must be grown within the region.

- For meat products, the animal must have spent 75% of its life after weaning within the region.
- For processed (i.e. value-added) products, total product by weight must be 75% ingredients grown within the region, excluding water, flour, sugar, oil and salt.

Furthermore, Nursery plants, trees, and freshly prepared foods (i.e. deli and restaurant foods) will not be included in the Purely Piedmont label program at this time. Rebecca Sheffield seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Edwards stated that she would also like to poll applicants regarding their interest in other types of Purely Piedmont marketing materials, if they were provided to producers at cost. Mr. Sands agreed that farmers should be expected to pay for the items. Other members supported the idea as well, and felt the application process was a good opportunity to gather such feedback. Examples from Virginia Grown, Appalachian Grown, and Piedmont Grown were distributed (see attached), and attendees were asked for recommendations on products that should be included in the poll. Attendees recommended that 2” stickers, plastic produce bags, wax boxes, 4’x3’ banners, and tote bags be included.

Additionally, Ms. Edwards provided an update on the status of the Purely Piedmont marketing materials. Following the Food Policy Council’s approval of the text during the previous meeting, she has been working on the design for the double-sided rack cards with the contracted graphic artist. The Gilley Family of Heaven’s Hollow Farm at the Madison/Orange County border were selected to appear on the cover of the farmer-focused rack card. These fourth-generation farmers, who raise cattle and hogs, were recommended by Council member Clyde Firman. Mr. Gilley is a member of the Homegrown by Heroes program administered by the Veteran Farmer Coalition.

Copies of the most recent drafts were passed around the room. Both versions of the rack cards should be available by the Council’s next meeting. The cards will be placed at local visitor centers and distributed at public events and farmers markets, as well as provided to partner organizations for distribution at their events. Other planned marketing materials will be based on the text and graphics used on the rack cards.

Chair and Vice-Chair Nominations

As discussed during the previous meeting, Ms. Edwards is seeking nominations for a new Council Chair and Vice-Chair. After checking the bylaws, she determined that the new officers’ terms do not start until the beginning of the calendar year. While this provides the Council more time than anticipated to elect new officers, she requested members submit nominations before the next meeting, since there are only two more Council meetings in 2017.

She reminded the Council that the new Chair and Vice-Chair will serve for one year, with the Vice-Chair automatically becoming the Chair the following year. The main task of the Chair is to preside over Council meetings. The Vice-Chair fulfills this duty in the Chair’s absence. Ms. Edwards will continue to provide staff support to the Council, as well as serve as a council member.

Ms. Edwards stated that she would take any nominations now or any time before the next meeting. Council members interested in the positions can also nominate themselves. No one had any nominations. Council members should submit nominations to Ms. Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or medwards@rrregion.org. Voting will be conducted during the next Council meeting.

Future Meeting Scheduling and Agenda Development

After discussion, Ms. Edwards stated that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 13, 2017, at 6:30 pm in the George Washington Carver School. Rebecca Sheffield will provide a tour of the facility, including plans for the food enterprise center. The school is located at 9432 James Madison Hwy, Rapidan, Virginia.

Food Policy Council meeting materials will be available on RRRC's food system webpage at www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html.