



RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes – May 23, 2017

Members Present:

Linda Blair	Orange County Representative
Danielle Castellano	Alternate for Jessica Palmer, Farmland Preservation & Conservation Technical Adv. Member
Michelle Edwards	Chair and RRRC Liaison Member
Clyde Firman	Consumption Sector Technical Advisory Member
Rebecca Sheffield	Culpeper County Representative
Susan Vidal	Madison County Representative

Members Absent:

Kirsten Dueck	Health Sector Technical Advisory Member
Kenner Love	Rappahannock County Representative
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County Representative
Taylor Richardson	Education Sector Technical Advisory Member
Ken Smith	Production Sector Technical Advisory Member

Vacant:

Processing and Distribution Technical Advisory Member

Guests:

Steve Cook Virginia Department of Health

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.

Regional Food Branding Next Steps

Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)

Ms. Edwards restated the results of the Food Policy Council's vote on a logo for the region's Purely Piedmont local foods brand, and distributed a spreadsheet of members' votes (see attached). The chosen logo was previously announced via email to the Council's distribution list

on May 3, 2017, and also via RRRC's Facebook page and a news release to the local newspapers. The logo will be used in the regional marketing campaign being funded through RRRC's Farmers Market Promotion Program grant from the US Department of Agriculture.

Ms. Edwards apologized to members for the omission of Technical Advisory members' names in the list of Food Policy Council members included in the Purely Piedmont article printed in the Culpeper Star-Exponent. The list was not included in RRRC's news release and was an addition by the reporter. Members present agreed that requesting a correction be published was not necessary.

While the newspaper articles clearly stated the Purely Piedmont logo would be used for general regional marketing of local foods rather than marketing of individual farms or products, Ms. Edwards received several calls and email inquiries from farmers interested in participating in a label program. Therefore, she suggested the Council not wait until the end of the marketing campaign to consider development of such a program as previously planned, but instead capitalize on the publicity gained from the campaign. A handout on the Virginia Grown Trademark was distributed (see attached).

Members present discussed adoption of a regional foods label program, and agreed on the following components:

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.

Members chose not to require products be grown "and" processed in the region, because there is no large-scale slaughter facility in the region, and many beverage and value-added processors cannot source all ingredients from local growers (e.g. hops and sugar). Attendees decided against charging a fee for labels, because according to Ms. Edwards' earlier conversation with Ray Pickering (administrator of Fauquier Home Grown label), the administrative costs to collect the fee would be higher than the cost of the labels.

Ms. Edwards made a motion to adopt a label program with the three components noted above, with the option to refine at the next meeting based on further research of the Virginia Grown label program. Rebecca Sheffield seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. Ms. Edwards agreed to request funds for the label program from the Commission, and pursue a trademark for the Purely Piedmont brand from the State Corporation Commission.

Ms. Sheffield suggested focusing marketing efforts on one farmers market per month. Other attendees suggested advertising on the Culpeper trolley and a banner hung in downtown Culpeper.

Review of Purely Piedmont Marketing Text

Ms. Edwards distributed handouts containing the draft text for the two-sided rack cards to be used in the Purely Piedmont campaign (see attached), and asked for attendees' feedback. She developed two versions to target the two groups of local food customers that arose from the branding process:

1. Those motivated primarily by a desire to support their local community/economy and small family farms
2. Those motivated primarily by taste and quality

An example design of both versions was presented digitally, strictly to give attendees a sense of space limitations. A local graphic designer is being contracted to develop all of the major marketing materials, so the fonts, graphics and layout will change. Ms. Edwards noted the quotes on the "Cow Version" were taken from the consumer survey.

Upon review and discussion, attendees made the following suggestions:

- Reduce the number of quotes on the Cow Version and/or shorten the longer two.
 - The first two and last should be kept as is.
 - The third should be one of the ones removed.
 - The longer two could also be replaced with others from consumer survey, if better alternatives exist.
- On the Farmer Version, delete the second bullet on the farm stats, which is redundant with the third.
- Add a location map of the region if space allows.
- Place the logo or a header at the top of both versions, so it can be seen when placed in a rack card holder.
- Add the farmers market in Little Washington, if run by a public or non-profit entity or farmers cooperative. Do not add it if privately run, since others are not included.

Ms. Edwards agreed to address attendees' comments prior to sending the text to the graphic designer. She also stated that she needs a picture of a farmer for the front of the Farmer Version, and requested that attendees send her pictures and/or suggestions for farmers that would be willing to be photographed (medwards@rrregion.org). Members suggested that having a picture of a farmer with his or her family would be ideal.

Consumer Survey Results In-depth

Michelle Edwards, RRRC

Ms. Edwards presented the full results of the consumer survey conducted by RRRC in February (see attached report). A brief overview was provided by the branding consultant during the previous meeting.

RRRC distributed the link to the online survey via email to the 531 individuals on the Commission's newsletter distribution list, as well as through a paid Facebook advertisement targeting residents of the five-county region. Respondents were given 15 days to respond anonymously, and 186 responses were received. The results report is available on the Council's webpage at www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html.

Chair and Vice-Chair Nominations

Ms. Edwards reminded Council members that her term as Council Chair was coming to end, and the Council needs to vote on a new Chair and Vice-Chair. According to Article IV, Section 1 of the Council Bylaws, the new Chair and Vice-Chair will serve for one year, with the Vice-Chair automatically becoming the Chair the following year. She explained that main task of the Chair is to preside over Council meetings. The Vice-Chair fulfills this duty in the Chair's absence.

The question was raised whether Ms. Edwards would still deliver presentations, to which she replied yes, she would continue to provide staff support to the Council, as well as serve as a council member. The new chair will be mainly taking over the facilitation duties.

Ms. Edwards state 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 Tuesday, July 18, 2017, at 6:30 pm in the RRRC Conference Room. Tom McDougall, 4P Foods, will be presenting on the plans for a proposed Food Port that would aggregate products from smaller aggregators/food hubs and be able to sell to larger buyers such as Sysco.

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