



Detroit Black Community Food Security Network's Recommendations on the Establishment, Structure and Functioning of the Detroit Food Policy Council

Background– In June of 2006 the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) spoke before the Neighborhood and Community Service Standing Committee of the Detroit City Council Chaired by Council Member JoAnn Watson. It was pointed out that Detroit does not have a comprehensive food security policy, and discussed with the committee the benefits of developing such a policy. We were appointed to head a task force to develop a food security policy for the City of Detroit.

Over the next 18 months, the DBCFSN's Public Policy Committee researched, wrote and revised several drafts of a food security policy for the City of Detroit. The committee's work was presented at a public review session held as part of our September 2007 Harvest Festival in Detroit. The Public Policy committee incorporated much of the feedback received at the session and sent the draft to Wayne State University professor, and nationally recognized food policy expert, Dr. Kami Pothukuchi for her review and critique. Dr. Pothukuchi made several recommendations that were incorporated into the final draft. The draft was presented to the Neighborhood and Community Service Standing Committee of the Detroit City Council and placed on the agenda by Council Member Watson's committee for approval. The policy was subsequently voted on by the entire City Council which unanimously passed on March 25, 2008.

In furthering the establishment of a more food secure Detroit we have continued to work with Council Member Watson's committee on the development of a Detroit Food Policy Council. For the past several months The DBCFSN Public Policy Committee has conducted research on Food Policy Councils throughout North America. DBCFSN held a public discussion, on the proposed food policy council, at our Harvest Festival on October 4, 2008.

We have compiled our initial recommendations, for establishing and operating the Detroit Food Policy Council for your critique. Please come prepared to offer your comments and suggestions at the listening session on November 14, 2008. We will consider the feedback we receive at the hearing, before presenting our recommendations to Council Member Watson's committee on December 2, 2008.

Our initial recommendations appear below.

Vision - We envision a City of Detroit with a healthy, vibrant, hunger-free populace that has easy access to fresh produce and other healthy food choices; a city in which the residents are educated about healthy food choices, and understand their relationship to the food system; a city in which urban agriculture and other sustainable practices contribute to its economic vitality; and a city in which all of its residents, workers, guests and visitors are treated with respect, justice and dignity by those from whom they obtain food.

Mission – The Detroit Food Policy Council is committed to nurturing the development and maintenance of a food-secure City of Detroit in which all of its residents are hunger-free, healthy and benefit economically from the food system that impacts their lives.

Goals

We propose that the DFPC have the following goals.

- 1) Advocate for urban agriculture being included as part of the strategic development of the City of Detroit.
- 2) Review the City of Detroit Food Security Policy and develop an implementation and monitoring plan.
- 3) Produce and disseminate an annual City of Detroit Food System Report that quantifies and analyzes data on:

- Retail and Wholesale Food Outlets
- Restaurants
- Workers in the Food System
- Urban Gardening and Farming
- WIC Participants
- Food Assistance Program Participants
- School Lunch Program Participants
- Emergency Food Program Participants
- Environmental Impact on the Food System
- Health and the Food System
- Economic Impact of the Food System

- 4) Recommend new food related policy as the need arises.

Relationships and Functions

We propose a uniquely balanced Food Policy Council by making it quasi attached to local government. We recognize the City governments' importance in local policy formation and we recognize the need for the community to have an independent voice and the ability to hold City government accountable to the broad-based needs of Detroit residents.

We therefore propose that the DFPC be initially seated by the Detroit City Council, but after the expiration of the initial terms, the members of the DFPC recommend and seat new members as needed.

The DFPC is an advisory, monitoring and implementation body. It will issue an annual report making recommendations to the Detroit City Council and various other public and private entities about how to improve the food system impacting the lives of Detroiters.

The DFPC will undertake initiatives designed to educate the populace and to make improvements in the food system

Designated seats

We propose that the DFPC have 21 seats.

We propose that the Detroit City Council appoint two seats from their body, the Mayor of the City of Detroit appoint two seats, and the Director of the City of Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion or her/his designee hold a seat.

We propose that twelve seats be designated to represent the following sectors:

Sustainable Agriculture
Retail Food Stores
Wholesale Food Distributors
Farmers Markets
Environmental Justice
Nutrition and Wellbeing
Restaurants Owners
Restaurant Workers
Colleges and Universities
K-12 Schools
Emergency Food Providers
Urban Planning

We propose that there be four at-large seats.

Diversity

We propose that membership of DFPC be a culturally and generationally diverse representation of Detroit's population. All members of the DFPC must be either residents of Detroit or part of Detroit based businesses/institutions.

The DFPC will communicate and liaise with county, state and regional agencies regarding the food system and its impact on Detroiters. As needed, the DFPC will assemble a team of advisors from those agencies.

Initial Appointments

We recommend that Council Member Watson designate a convening committee to receive and review names and qualifications of possible initial DFPC members. The convening committee will recommend to the Neighborhood and Community Services Standing Committee, the names of people to fill the designated seats on the DFPC. Once accepted, Council Member Watson will prepare the formal appointment resolution for the DFPC.

Terms of Office

We propose that eight of the 16 designated sector and at-large positions be appointed to an initial term of two years, and that the other eight be appointed to an initial term of three years. After the initial terms expire, the DFPC will receive and review names and qualifications of potential candidates to fill positions, and will select new members from those potential candidates. After the expiration of the initial terms, all reappointed or new members will serve three year terms.

The DFPC members appointed to the five seats reserved for the Mayor, City Council and Director of Health and Wellness shall serve at the pleasure of those whom they represent, and will serve three year terms.

Officers and Committees

The members of the DFPC will elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson at the first regular meeting of each year.

We propose the creation of a Food Policy Office staffed by a full-time Food Policy Coordinator and a part-time secretary to be funded by a combination of public and private dollars for the first five years of the Council's existence.

The DFPC will set up various working groups as are necessary to accomplish its mission.

Meeting Schedule

Beginning in January 2009, the DFPC will meet in January, March, May, July, September, and November of each year.