

BRIEFING NOTES

Advanced public notice of the Planning Commission briefing was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website.

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, August 9, 2023, 12:30 p.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Lorenzo Ball, Dick Campbell, Maribel Cruz, Gloria Eddins, Tracy Edgerton, Cristy Joy, Rich Rodenburg and Cindy Ryman Yost; (Tracy Corr absent).

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: David Cary, Paul Barnes, Collin Christopher and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Kim Morrow, Tim Rinne, Meghan McGuffey and other interested parties.

STATED PURPOSE: Briefing on “**Local Food Master Plan**”

Chair Edgerton called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the back of the room.

Andrew Thierolf stated this will appear before Planning Commission for public hearing in two weeks.

Kim Morrow is excited to be at this point in the process. The project has been underway for over one year. It was officially announced about two weeks ago. She played a news clip that ran on KOLN/KGIN news. She continued that the Local Food Master Plan is a document that outlines how to strengthen the local food system. Lincoln Public Schools and the University of Nebraska define local as food grown within a 250 mile radius. That includes parts of Kansas, Missouri and Iowa. They want to expand local entrepreneurial opportunities, support local farms and foster a sense of pride in the Lincoln community. They also want to improve food security, climate resilience and access to nutritious food. Another goal is to reduce food waste, expand knowledge of gardening, cooking and nutrition and protect the environment. The process started in early 2022. The Mayor formed a community committee on local food in June of 2022. This was part of an EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) brownfields grant. Community engagement began in fall/winter 2022/2023. Focus groups were held and surveys were conducted. In spring 2023, they gathered the information and started to craft a plan. A consultant was hired for assistance with developing the plan. Another round of community engagement was done. July 17, 2023, a news conference was held to launch the plan. The plan includes four main goals: increase and ensure access to healthy food, invest in the local food and farm community to increase local food production, promote food production methods that protect the environment, and reduce food waste. There are four key metrics: double the number of acres in Lancaster County that are growing edible food by 2035, triple the number of institutions who are sourcing local food, triple the number of community gardens in Lancaster County, and reduce by half the

number of people in census tracts that have low or very low healthy food access. There is a group connected with the University who track healthy food access every year by census tracts. One of the priority action steps that emerged is the desire to connect the dots between local institutions and local food. There needs to be better connectivity. They see the need for a kitchen incubator/food processing center that will function as the middle piece. There also needs to be access to local food aggregation, processing and distribution. We want to look at economic development incentives, support farm to school efforts and public/private partnerships. They also want to explore opportunities for commercial food production. Once this plan is hopefully adopted, they will move into the implementation phase. They are also interested in exploring a partnership with Community Crops to manage the implementation of this plan. We want to do more networking to bring together farmers and institutional buyers. We want to support development of a local food processing center.

Tim Rinne thanked everyone for their interest in this. We are starting to see this finally come to fruition. In 1948 when the City adopted their first Comprehensive Plan, Lincoln and Lancaster County were food secure. 90 percent of food was locally sourced. Within 25 years, the entire planet moved into a global food system. We have gone from local to absolutely reliant on a global food system. There are some downsides. The first one is that we are losing all our food dollars. 90 percent of the money we spend on food leaves the state. We grow animal feed and fuel, not food anymore. We have the capability to feed ourselves. Everyone needs to eat. Everyone is a stakeholder in this process. We have a chance now to build a food system that is resilient. The Climate Action Plan called for building a resilient food system. There is no downside to this. This is a way to grow the local economy. The downside is not doing it. We are compounding our food insecurity the longer we wait to get started on this. Right now, the City of Lincoln needs 1.5 million pounds of food shipped in every single day. The average grocery store only stocks three days of inventory. That is problematic. We saw with the Covid pandemic that the food system can suffer issues. According to an article in the Lincoln Journal Star this morning, July was the hottest month on record. This isn't an environment where it is easy to grow food. Anything we can do to rebuild the food supply is an opportunity.

Meghan McGuffey wanted to express her thanks for considering this plan. This was an exciting process. Most areas are low to moderate income for community gardens. She has been working on this for about ten years. She believes it shows that Lincoln can have leadership on these issues. This is a jumping off point. A plan like this gets people to talk and you can really see some transformation.

Edgerton asked if there were any downsides to this. Morrow replied no, she doesn't believe so.

Campbell noted that most community gardens are for individual use, not sell to a market. His church also has a program. They put out different kinds of products throughout the growing season. He sees this as an addition, especially to larger acres where there can be some growing for the community. There is another avenue that someone in the community might be able to rent some ground for growing. Morrow believes it should be simple. We have some amazing ground in this state. It would be advantageous to sell produce to a local grocery store. Campbell suggested she might want to connect with churches as well, for land to grow on. Morrow offered her thanks for the suggestions.

Rodenburg inquired if this was modeled after any other communities who have had success with this type of proposal. Morrow replied yes and no. There was a consultant who helped with this plan. Rodenburg met a couple in Montana and they had a produce farm that their sole customer was the school system in the community. He thought that was brilliant. He would like to see that around here. Morrow stated that universities and schools could be a huge market. She believes there is a nice feedback loop there.

Ryman-Yost thanked everyone for the plan. The Planning Commission recently considered a project in northeast Lincoln that will have a community garden. This is exciting.

Edgerton looks forward to seeing this implemented.

There being no further questions, the briefing was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.