

Washtenaw County Food Policy Council By-laws

Mission:

The Washtenaw County Food Policy Council increases and preserves access to safe, local and healthy food for all residents of Washtenaw County.

Vision:

To have a healthy community and thriving local food system that:

- Provides access to healthy and culturally appropriate food for all residents;
- Values and preserves community land for food production;
- Maximizes the use of local, regional and seasonal foods;
- Meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations.
- Promote a food system that promotes economic development and a local economy within and around the Food System.

Strategies: *The Washtenaw County Food Policy Council supports a viable, economical and sustainable local food system through multiple strategies including:*

- Strengthening the connections between food, health, natural resource protection, economic development and the agricultural community;
- Researching, analyzing and reporting on information about the local food system;
- Advocating for and advising on food system and food policy implementation;
- Promoting and providing education on food system issues.

Background:

The idea for a Washtenaw County Food Policy Council originally came out of discussions had during meetings of the Food System Economic Partnership's Policy Committee meetings. After seeing the rise of Food Policy Councils around the country, committee members saw a growing need for the same sort of unifying structure here in Washtenaw County. What was originally an idea gained further traction after Washtenaw County Public Health was able to secure grant funding for the development of a food policy council. With this support the Policy Committee was able to move this idea further, hiring a part-time council coordinator and applying for recognition by Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners in the winter of 2012.

Section 1: Purpose

The Council is formed to:

- Establish and maintain a comprehensive dialogue and assessment of the current food system throughout Washtenaw County;
- Provide a forum for people involved in different parts of our community food system and government to meet and learn about how each other's actions impact our food system;

- Identify and prioritize issues and make recommendations that promote, support and strengthen access to healthy food for citizens in our community.
- Promote economic development and job creation through improvements in the local food system.

Section 2: Council Membership

Membership:

The Council will be comprised of a minimum of 15 members representing as many of the following professions and/or viewpoints as possible:

1. agriculture
2. nutrition
3. education
4. emergency food systems
5. health care
6. food services
7. food manufacturers and distributors
8. waste management
9. planning or transportation
10. at large community member
11. retail, business or economic development
12. human services (DHS)
13. faith based organizations
14. local governments (Board of Commissioner)
15. public health

Members must live or work in Washtenaw County and will serve without compensation. The Membership Committee will be responsible for submit applicants/candidates for a council vote of approval.

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (BOC) will appoint a member to the council. The BOC member will have the same rights and responsibilities as other council members, including voting. The appointee will work as a liaison, keeping the BOC informed of FPC activities and providing a link for BOC support, as requested by the council.

Council members are appointed for two-year terms and may be reappointed for an 2 additional term with rotations that ensure continuity with new members joining experienced members. The membership selection process shall strive to consider racial, socioeconomic, ethnic and geographic diversity.

Section 3: Committees

The Council shall establish standing committees and/or issues committees to perform the work of the Council and to include additional stakeholders. As circumstances arise, the Council can alter, change or disband these committees.

Membership Committee: The membership committee is responsible for recruiting new council members, ensuring that council members are representative of the local food system, receiving and reviewing at-large candidates and submitting candidates/applicants to the full council for a vote.

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee is responsible for maintaining organizational records, recording council member attendance, maintaining finances and generally coordinating council actions. The Executive Committee will consist of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.

Duties of Officers

Chairperson- The Chairperson shall preside at meetings and perform other duties as prescribed by these bylaws. The Chairperson shall be the principal spokesperson for the FPC and shall sign official communications from the Council. The Chairperson, from time to time, may appoint committees to perform specific duties related to the Council's purpose.

Vice-Chairperson- The Vice-Chairperson shall preside in the absence of the Chairperson and may perform other duties of the Chairperson when empowered to do so by the Chairperson .

Treasurer- The Treasurer is the point person for all fiduciary issues on the FPC. Additionally, they are required to present the financial information of the FPC at every meeting.

Secretary- The Secretary shall be responsible for ensuring that the minutes are accurate prior to distribution to the membership and will oversee the maintenance of the official records of the organization, including tracking attendance at meetings and reporting to the Membership Committee if a member is eligible for dismissal for non-attendance.

Officer Elections

Officers shall be elected by a majority of vote of the Council. Officers will serve for a term of one year or until their successors are elected.

Grounds for Removal from Council:

Council members are expected to attend all meetings to assure full community representation on the Council at all times. Excused absences (sickness, death in family, business trips or emergencies) will not affect a member's status. However, missing three consecutive meetings and/or more than three unexcused absences in a 12-month period shall constitute cause to recommend resignation and replacement of the position.

Section 4: Meetings

The Council shall hold regularly scheduled meetings that are publicly announced in advance. All regularly scheduled meetings will include 2 weeks for community to provide input.

The officers of the Council may call special meetings. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated. Except in cases of emergency, at least five (5) days notice shall be given.

Support for meeting organization, minute taking and distribution is provided by staff.

Meetings are open to all community members but only the Council members will vote and/or take action on recommendations and work activities for the Council. Meeting will also be made available to the public.

Section 5: Parliamentary Authority

The Council will be generally ruled by consensus but if needed the rules contained in the current edition of “Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised” shall govern the Council in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the Council may adopt.

Section 6: Ground Rules

Council members agree to-

- Start and end meetings on time.
- Turn cell phones to vibrate or off.
- Read minutes when a meeting has been missed.
- Build trust by meeting commitments to one another.
- Fully participate, actively listen and use open communication methods.
- Value each others’ opinions.
- Maintain a focus on vision, mission and strategies.
- Work toward progress.
- Uphold decisions made by the Council (speak with a unified voice).

Ground Rules will be revisited annually to maintain healthy group dynamics and Council efficiency.

Section 7: Duties of FPC Coordinator

A food policy coordinator will be employed by the FPC to the extent funding allows. The Coordinator will have the following duties:

- Set monthly meeting agendas
- Advocate on the part of the FPC
- Meeting Planning
 - Receive requests from membership for agenda items prior to within a week of each meeting.
 - Meet with co-chairs to prioritize items and assist Chair in developing agendas for next meeting.
- Meeting Setup and Support:
 - Set up meeting space.
 - Assure note taker and meeting leaders are present.
 - Assist with flow and time keeping during meeting.
 - Provide technical assistance as necessary
 - Review minutes with co-chairs for completeness/accuracy.
 - Send minutes, next agenda and any attachments to council 1-2 weeks prior to the next meeting.
- General Support

- Be an active participant in the workings of the Council.
- Receive and distribute appropriate information e-mails to membership.
- Assist in seeking resources for council work.
- Assist council in connecting with other boards, committees and community groups and elected officials.
- Assist sub committees and task forces, as needed.

Section 8: Decision Making

The FPC will make decisions by voting. If a consensus is not reached amongst the members present then a motion will be accepted with a simple majority.

For each Council member, the standard for agreement is that they feel their support will further mission of the FPC.

The FPC will check consensus by a voice of approval, 'yea,' or disapproval, 'nay.' No abstentions.

If a Council member disagrees; s/he should clearly articulate concerns and try to offer an alternative solution.

Everyone should understand whether the issue being discussed is time-sensitive. This should be made clear by the chair.

A Council member who must miss a meeting and has strong opinions about an issue that will be discussed should find a way to convey their opinions to the group. Email will be accepted.

A quorum of Council members, which will consist of one-half of council plus one, need to be present for decisions to occur, with either the Chair or Vice chair also present.

Council members need to be present to participate in a decision (no proxies, but as stated above, email votes will be accepted).

Council work tasked to committees or task forces that require timely attention may be approved via e-mail. A deadline for members to respond will be established and lack of response will be determined as consensus to move the issue forward.

The FPC can change bylaws through this voting process as deemed necessary by both the executive council and the council at large.

Section 9: Criteria for Addressing Issues

In accordance with its mission and purpose, the FPC will consider the following criteria when addressing issues:

- Is there a direct connection between the issue and the vision, mission and strategies?
- Is it an immediate issue that will have a major impact on the food system?
- Is the issue urgent or time sensitive?
- Does the issue build or sustain an existing effort?

- Can the FPC make a difference or influence the issue?
- What community or affiliation are we trying to influence?
- Does the FPC have the resources to commit to the issue?
- Do we know enough to decide?
- What are the basic pieces of information we need to take this on?
- Who else is working on the issue?