Teton Food and Farm Coalition Meeting

Feb 24, 2025 Minutes

Noon via Zoom

1. **Welcome & Introductions-** Jen Werlin, UI Extension Educator; Tammy Sachse, Extension Assistant; Hayes Swinney, Mountain Roots; Ken Michael, Teton Full Circle Farm; Bobby Lane, Wyoming Farm-to-school Coordinator; Jamie Meyers, Nutrition Director with Teton School District; Rob Sqroi, Teton Conservation District; Sue Miller, Snowdrift Farms; Erik, Easy Acres; Rafe Rivers, Cane Water Farms; Angela Daft, Teton Valley Food Pantry.

Quick recap

The meeting focused on increasing locally grown produce in school cafeterias, with discussions on procurement processes, the potential for a farm-to-school grant, and the challenges of engaging middle school students in the program. The team also explored the idea of creating a directory for producers to share information and resources, and the potential for local produce to reduce waste and improve meal flavors. Lastly, they discussed the possibility of donating produce to the food pantry and the need for better communication between schools and producers.

Next steps

• Hayes to connect everyone on email and start a spreadsheet to capture what produce farmers have available and when.
• Jamie to compile a list of desired produce items, quantities, price points, and timelines for the entire school year and share with the group.
• Jennifer to explore expanding the existing Food and Farm Coalition directory to include more producers and farm-related services.
• Hayes to share all participants' contact information with Jamie.
• Jamie to update the school district's micro-purchasing policy threshold to $10,000, pending board approval.
• Hayes to submit a grant to Whole Kids Foundation for middle school garden programming.
• Mountain Roots to continue efforts to engage Rendezvous Elementary in starting a garden program, potentially beginning with their existing hydroponic system.
• Hayes to coordinate with Brian Ashton about getting middle schoolers involved in the garden program.
• Jennifer to consider applying for a Western SARE mini-grant to support directory expansion efforts.
• Hayes to assist with picking up and delivering produce donations from farms to schools as needed.

Summary

Mountain Roots Education Meeting Introduction

The meeting began with Hayes introducing the participants and asking them to introduce themselves. The attendees included Hayes, the executive director at Mountain Roots Education; Ken, who teaches at Full Circle Farm; Bobby, the Wyoming Farm to School Coordinator; Tammy, the extension educator assistant; Jamie, the Channel nutrition director for Teton School District; Erik, from Easy Acres; Rafe, from Cane Water Farm; Sue, from Snowdrift Farms; and Jennifer, the extension educator for Teton County on sabbatical in Costa Rica. Robert, a land resources specialist with Teton Conservation district, joined the meeting late due to a search and rescue call. The conversation ended with Hayes expressing her appreciation for the participants' attendance.

Idaho Schools Seek More Local Produce

Hayes led the meeting in Jen's absence, discussing efforts to increase locally grown produce in school cafeterias, particularly in Idaho. He also opened the floor for farmers and producers to share their needs and ideas for support from the Extension Office. Rafe, a new participant, shared his positive experience selling food to school systems in Georgia and expressed interest in doing the same in Idaho. Bobby also contributed to the discussion. Jami then outlined the district's main goal of providing more fresh fruits and vegetables in their school program.

School Fruit Choices and Procurement

Jami discussed the school's fruit choices and the procurement process for local produce. She mentioned that they are part of a co-op and purchase produce from Grazmic. Jami also expressed interest in organizing a "Made in Teton Valley Day" for the middle and high school students, featuring locally sourced fruits and vegetables. She noted that they need to adhere to the National School Lunch program guidelines and the district's procurement policy. Jami also mentioned that she orders produce two weeks in advance and it is delivered the following week. The team also discussed the possibility of storing crops for later use, but Jami clarified that they lack the storage space. Bobby asked if Jami worked with Danny Reid, the food service director from Teton, but Jami confirmed that they were not connected. The team ended the conversation with Bobby offering to share their experiences in Wyoming.

School District Procurement and Local Produce

Bobby, from the Department of Education, discussed the procurement process for school districts in the state, mentioning a $10,000 threshold and the ability to bypass formal bidding for local produce. He highlighted the challenges of sourcing local produce, particularly in the Jackson Hole area, and mentioned the growth of the farm-to-school program. Bobby also shared his recent national news win in a food competition and his role in promoting local food systems. Erik and Jami discussed the need for produce to be washed before delivery, which Bobby confirmed was not a requirement as the schools have state-certified kitchens for processing. Rafe from Cane Water Farm expressed interest in supplying produce to the districts, despite being based out of state.

Connecting Farmers With School Produce

Rafe, Bobby, and Jami discussed the possibility of connecting local farmers with Bobby's school for fresh produce. Rafe suggested that the farmers could be part of the school's food procurement system. Bobby

expressed interest in this arrangement, and Jami agreed to get Rafe's contact information from Hayes. Erik and Ken also participated in the discussion, with Erik offering early greens and Ken inquiring about a verbal commitment for produce delivery. Jami confirmed that they would need a verbal contract and would be able to use the produce for their six schools.

School Garden Produce and Equipment
Jami discussed the possibility of sourcing produce from school gardens, specifically green onions, tomatoes, and greens for salads. She also mentioned the need for cucumbers, peppers, and cilantro. Ken suggested Jami send an email detailing their typical orders. Hayes proposed a spreadsheet to capture what produce is available and when, and Jami agreed to this. Hayes also mentioned applying for a farm-to-school grant. Jennifer asked about the availability of equipment for preparing local food at the schools, to which Jami responded that currently, everything is chopped by hand. Rafe assured Jami that their produce is thoroughly washed and dried before delivery. Angela, the operations manager at the food pantry, expressed interest in the conversation and offered to connect with Jami later.

Connecting Farms With Schools for Nutrition
The team discussed their ongoing efforts to connect local farms with schools to improve nutrition and education. They highlighted the success of their school garden program, which currently has 5.5 gardens, with plans to expand and increase food production. The team also discussed the potential for integrating school garden produce into school lunches and the challenges of engaging middle school students in the program. They also touched on the idea of a farm-to-school grant to support these efforts. The team also discussed the potential for a high school garden and the challenges of engaging with Ruse Elementary School. The conversation ended with a discussion on food waste prevention and the potential for local food to reduce waste.

Local Produce and Agritourism Collaboration
Hayes discussed the potential for local produce to reduce waste and improve the flavor of meals. Angela agreed, suggesting that local produce could elevate the flavor of meals without having to be the whole meal. The group then discussed the idea of creating a directory for producers to share information and resources, with Jennifer suggesting that this could be done within the existing agritourism directory. Ken emphasized the need for a directory that includes all types of farmers, not just those focused on agritourism. Jennifer proposed expanding the existing directory and applying for a mini grant to assist with this. The group also discussed the potential for sharing price points and quantities with producers, with Bobby suggesting that producers could work together to meet the needs of schools. Jami agreed to gather this information and share it with the group.

Donations and Food Pantry Process
Rafe raised a question about the process of donating to the food pantry, specifically asking if a two-week notice was required. Jami confirmed that they would accept donations and could adjust their menu to accommodate them, though it would involve some changes in production records and communication with schools. Hayes offered to pick up donations from farms and bring them to the schools, which Jami appreciated. The team also discussed the need for Bobby's contact information for future communication.

2. **Next Meeting:** December 18, 2024, Noon-via Zoom. Register at www.tetonfoodfarmcoalition.org on the homepage.