

**Solano Local Food System Alliance
Meeting Minutes**

August 5, 2021 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Live and in person, outdoors!

Morningsun Herb Farm: 6137 Pleasants Valley Road, Vacaville, CA 95688

Attending:

- Stephanie Oelsigle Jordan, Sustainable Solano
- Allison Nagel, Sustainable Solano
- Lisa Nuñez-Hancock, U R What U Eat
- Kimber Smith, Rotary Feeds Families
- Paula Schnese, Cultivate Community Food Co-op
- Robin Cox, Solano Public Health/Vibe Solano
- William Henpenn, Umble Roots Farm
- Tom Inners, Umble Roots Farm

Mission: Create an environmentally sustainable, economically viable, socially just and equitable local food system in Solano County.

Objectives for this meeting: updates & discuss next steps for 2021 goals; brainstorm Alliance “Charter”

I. Welcome / introductions: Stephanie Jordan / Allison Nagel, Sustainable Solano & Alliance members

- Introducing & Thanking Rose Loveall, Morningsun Herb Farm
- Introducing Farmers William Henpenn & Tom Inners, Umbel Roots Farm

Umbel Roots Farm is on 20 acres on the back half of Backroad Vines in Suisun Valley. The farm grows organic vegetables for Solano, Sonoma and Napa through pick-up points and local deliveries of weekly CSA boxes and caters to local restaurants. What is planted is niche and chef-driven, aiming for flavor and nutrition.

The farm is a no-till market garden working on CCOF certification and using biodynamics, interplanting and other sustainable methods. Produce is planted seasonally, and the farm is expanding to plant fruit trees for an orchard.

Learn more (and find updates and their weekly playlist) at umbelroots.com

II. Alliance Goals and Strategies

2021 goals agreed upon at the last meeting (refresher):

- *Relationships with the Board of Supervisors*
 - *Summarize priority issues, findings, policy gaps to support significant issues memo*
 - *Arrange individual meetings with county supervisors*
 - *Work toward a larger presentation on local food system issues to the Board of Supervisors*
- *Draft a white paper on issues/solutions that can be used in city general plan discussions*
- *Educational speakers*
 - *Prioritize topics by interest*
 - *Schedule at least one speaker this year and make it open to the public*
- *Charter (the name TBD)*
 - *Outline benefits and responsibilities/commitments of being on Alliance*
- *Countywide food rescue program*
 - *Responding to SB 1383*
 - *Determine relationship with food access organizations*
- *Plan to meet every other month starting after the August meeting*
- *Plan for August meeting to be outdoors and in-person and allow more time to meet*
- *Keep Local Food Bites quarterly*

a) Board of Supervisors' Significant Issues Memo – Robin Cox

A significant issues memo on fast food that highlighted issues around the local food system in Solano County is currently going through the administrative process to be put before the Board of Supervisors.

This is the first step toward the Alliance's goal of making a presentation to the board. The board needs to hear the data that has come out of the work of the Alliance and its members. The draft letter was distributed to the Alliance members.

Background:

Need to make strong connections between local farmers and communities.

Some approaches have included

- Public Health piloting a small program with Sustainable Solano trying to bring fresh produce from a local farm to Solano Community College preschoolers.

Looking at how can get more local produce into institutional customers, schools, preschools.

- Another farm-to-institution pilot involved pairing a local farmer with Kaiser Vallejo, though COVID closures drew that to a halt.
- Healthy store makeovers (we live in an agricultural county, but many communities only have access to convenience stores without any produce). Some of these healthy store makeovers were a success, but there was a large amount of work that went into them for limited return.

Solano's local food system is broken, there is a disconnect. Have to figure out how to get political support for the food system.

Supervisor John Vasquez asked about fast food density in Solano County, creating an opportunity to explore the whole need in the county.

Findings included in the significant issues memo:

- Solano County's fast food density is not the highest, however, the county has the highest reported adult fast food intake in the area
- Likely people who commute out of the county are looking for fast, convenient and relatively inexpensive dinners when they return home

Looking at the greater local food system, these recommendations were included in the draft memo (see draft memo for more details):

- Address the shortfall of available fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Support entrepreneurship to help restaurants in Solano County adopt the "farm-to-table" trend by offering incentives to restaurants and farmers for making locally grown foods available to eat in restaurants.
- Decrease reliance on the "traditional" food charity models by incorporating food access into a local food system.
- Invest and promote locally grown and regionally grown foods from small farms by consolidating marketing and distribution under the Solano Grown brand and "focusing on supporting collaboration among small- and medium-scale farmers and providing services that strengthens market access for these farmers."
- Support farm to local food procurement to schools.
- Support programs for Medically Tailored Meals.

The next step is preparing for a presentation on these issues and the relevant data to the Board of Supervisors, getting some direction on what the Board sees as top priorities. To do that, the Alliance needs to be ready for when the Board might want a presentation (see Executive Committee notes under item c). This feels like the tip of the iceberg — the main thing is to get some discussion going and move to action.

b) Update on PVAA efforts with Board of Supervisors – Rose Loveall

As the Alliance approaches the Board of Supervisors about the local food system, it's important to know the conversations already going on with the Pleasants Valley Agriculture Association and the Board. Keeping communication open can help with collaborating and supporting both efforts.

The Pleasants Valley Agriculture Association started about four years ago, with the desire to emphasize Pleasants Valley agritourism.

Three years ago, the PVAA met with Vazquez, but there was no movement on their proposal until recently. About 3-4 months ago, had Zoom meetings with him, shared the vision and will meet with his staff the second week of August.

PVAA plans to flesh out what it wants with zoning — including more farmer-friendly types of events — and getting guidance on what that entails, with transparency on what the events can be, how often they can be and what the costs will be. Farmers need to share their expectations for what the Valley could look like and have expectations for the zoning so they can determine what activities to do on the farm and know how much it is going to cost.

Until now, farmers have been affected by surprise fees and limitations that make certain types of events, like farm-to-table dinners, unrealistic and too expensive for the farmer and the customers. A farmer could do a class on regenerative farming, but if they add a lunch, the permit fees become prohibitive. Food cannot be prepared on-site, but has to be prepared in a commercial kitchen.

Suisun Valley has a specific plan in the general plan, which allows special areas for wineries and tasting rooms. This means there are not equitable fee structures for farms throughout the county. That limits farm stands, events, farm stays — even selling produce from a neighboring farm at your farm stand.

Pleasants Valley's plan is to do a strategic plan (which can be done in 6-9 months) as opposed to a specific plan (which can take 2-3 years). The organization will work with Vazquez's staff, which is working with Ag Innovations.

Environmental Health should be involved in the discussion with Vasquez's office so that when the issues of multiple permits and departments is addressed, they are at the table and involved from the beginning.

c) Creation of Executive Committee – All Alliance

- White paper for City level stakeholders (general plans)
- Presentation to Board of Supervisors

Elena will reach out to members of the Alliance who expressed an interest or had

specific knowledge that would support the committee's work. Additional Alliance members may be called upon to review certain topics for the committee where they can share their expertise.

Any Alliance member interested in serving on the executive committee should reach out to Elena at elena@sustainablesolano.org

d) "Charter" for Alliance – All Alliance

- Brainstorm benefits & responsibilities of membership

This is a start list from the discussion at the meeting. Please send additional insight to add to the list.

Long-term/Overarching benefits of the Alliance's work:

- Improved quality of life
- Preserving open space, ag land and supporting farmers
- Better nutrition and health outcomes
- Better environment and economy

Benefits of serving on the Alliance:

- Networking
- Expanding knowledge
- Connection with the issues and others involved in the local food system
- Being part of the solution — working as a group to fix the local food system
- Being part of a coalition to effect systems change
- Playing a role in achieving long-term benefits

Responsibilities of serving on the Alliance:

- Sharing data/knowledge/insight
- Participating in a feedback loop to bring information back to the Alliance
- Bringing what you've learned from the Alliance back to your organization
- Challenging the status quo, being bold
- Recruiting (especially to fill knowledge gaps on the Alliance)
- Reading and contributing to the Local Food Bites
- Attending meetings
- Persistence

e) Educational Speakers – Allison Nagel

- Valley Vision's Managing Director (regional partnership)

Valley Vision is working on a Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan with a focus on creating a viable food and ag economy, more locally grown food, increasing access to

healthy foods and ag innovation. The regional food system investment strategy now in discussion will set priorities and financing strategies to support the food system. We hope to have the managing director join the Alliance's October or December meeting to discuss Valley Vision's work and potential for partnership when it comes to the regional food system.

*** Items below will be discussed, only if time allows. ***

III. Community Awareness & Support (general public):

- [Cooking classes](#) continue under Sustainable Solano's CDFA "specialty crop block program grant," with 1-2 classes per month featuring fruit, vegetables, nuts and culinary herbs. Classes are led by guest chefs and Stephanie Jordan.
- [Bounty of the County](#) is being planned for September – October 2021. Instead of zoom presentations, there will be tastings at restaurants made from local specialty crops, cooking class videos by restaurant chefs and special farm profile videos highlighting our local farmers and their offerings. The event will be promoted via traditional and social media, along with postcards distributed to restaurant customers, CSA subscribers and at farm stands.

IV. Equity / Food Access: In partnership with Food Is Free Solano (FIFS), Sustainable Solano submitted a grant under the EPA Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving program, to pilot a food rescue and recovery operation in Vallejo. The pilot will prepare FIFS to take over the program and expand it to the County level. If granted, the project begins in October, 2021. Meanwhile, FIFS has begun piloting its "Park-It Market" which brings mini farmers markets directly to neighborhoods in Vallejo with funding from No Kid Hungry, with county-wide expansion happening soon under First 5 funding. FIFS seeks other funds which supports different populations (beyond kids 0-5) such as senior centers, housing complexes, etc.

V. Policy Updates

VI. Children and Youth: Sustainable Solano re-allocated funds within the CDFA grant and is launching a Youth Cooking Pilot this year. The pilot will test a curriculum that educates high school students on basic culinary skills and the importance of supporting a local food system. Program Manager Stefani Iribarren Brooks will lead the effort and use the results of the pilot to apply for a larger CDFA grant that supports a program modeled after [Ceres Community Project](#) (medically tailored meals prepared by youth).

VII. Around the table & wrap-up

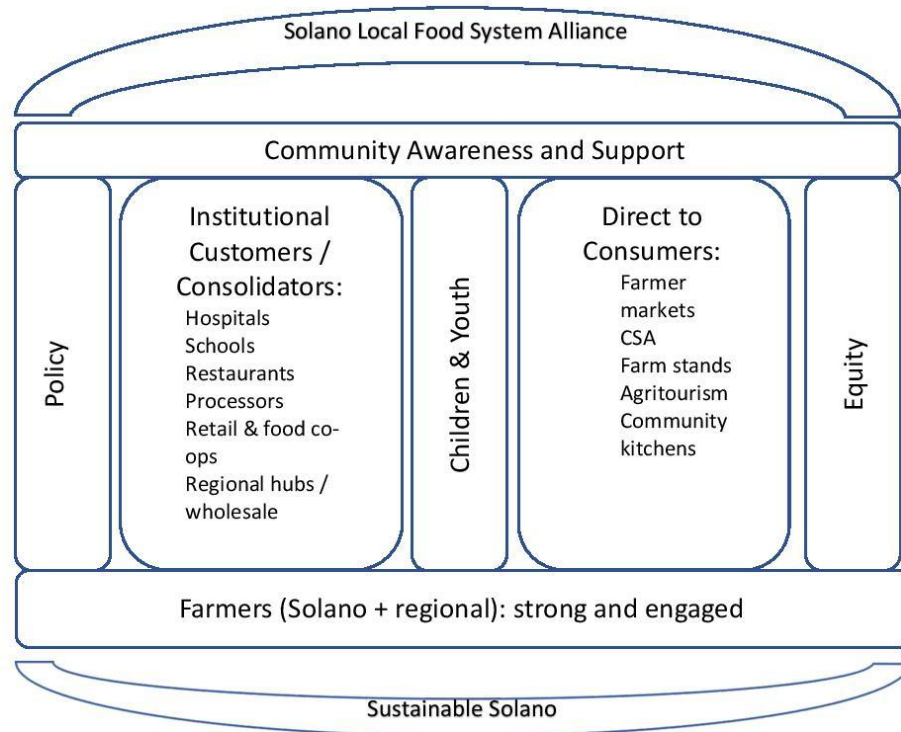
***** Next meeting: October 7, 2021, 4:00-6:00 pm, Zoom *****

Future meetings: First Thursday of the month

2021: December 2

2022: February 3, April 7, June 2, August 4, October 6, December 1.

Solano County Local Food System



*A **local food system** is a collaborative network that integrates sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management in order to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular area.*

Mission: *Create an environmentally sustainable, economically viable, socially just and equitable local food system in Solano County.*

Vision: *To diversify, expand and safeguard a local healthy food economy that will preserve farmland, its integrity and biodiversity in Solano County, and ensure food access for local communities.*

"5 by 25" GOAL: *To substitute 5% of food spending on all levels with locally-sourced food (Solano and neighboring counties)*

For more information: <http://sustainablesolano.org/local-food/>