Working with Minnesota Local Governments to Increase Access to Healthy Food

Part I - The Basics: Minnesota Local Government Structure

April 18, 2016

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The Public Health Law Center
What does the Public Health Law Center do?

- Legal Research
- Policy Development
- Publications
- Trainings
- Direct Representation
- Lobby
Introductions

Mary Marrow
Staff Attorney
Public Health Law Center
Introductions

Dr. Beth Wielde Heidelberg
Professor of Urban Studies
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Introductions

Julie Ring
Executive Director
Association of Minnesota Counties
Goals for this presentation:

- Understand the legal authority Minnesota cities and counties have to impact the food system.
- Discuss how Minnesota county and city governments operate and opportunities to partner to increase local food production and access to healthy food.
- Apply city and county framework to specific issues impacting access to healthy food.
- Provide ideas on navigating and collaborating with city and county governments to increase local food production and access to healthy food.
- Q&A Session
EQUALITY does not mean EQUITY
Levels of Regulation

- Federal
- State
- Local
- Internal Policy/ Rules
Know how policy change works
Minnesota Local Governments

- City
- County
- Towns/Townships
- School Districts
- Other Special Districts

http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/ss/sslgterms.pdf
Minnesota’s Local Governments

- 853 Cities
- 1,785 Towns
- 87 Counties
Local Government Policy Tools Impacting the Local Food Environment

- Local ordinances
- Licensing
- Permitting
- Land use planning and zoning
- Variances and conditional use permits
- Regulation of structures
- Financing mechanisms
- Internal policies and guidelines
Identifying Priorities

- What component of the food system can you impact?
- What exists in your community that could be modified or strengthened?
- What policies/strategies do you want to pursue?
- What are the possible obstacles?
- What are the tools available to help?
- What barriers currently keep your community members from having access to healthy food?
Growing/Processing Food

- Gardening
- Farming
- Keeping Animals (including Bees and Chickens)
- Fences
- Arbor, Trellises, Pergolas, Planting Boxes, and Raised Beds
- Greenhouses and Hoop Houses
- Sheds
- Processing Facilities
- Food Hubs
Distributing/Getting Food

- Selling Products of a Farm or Garden
- Farmers’ Markets
- Restaurants
- Mobile, Temporary, and Seasonal Food and Beverage Service Establishments
- Transient Merchants
- Grocery Stores
- Displaying Signs
- Parking
Making/Disposing of Food

- Commercial/Community Kitchens
- Composting
- Recycling
- Waste Disposal
Increasing Food Access
Local Government Structures

Dr. Beth Wielde Heidelberg
Professor of Urban Studies
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Part I: City Council

- Elected by citizens as local representatives
- The primary decision making body
- In charge of adopting new official controls and plans
- In charge of ensuring plans and official controls are considered during decision making
City Commissions

- Appointed, not elected
- Assist City Council in decision making process
- Specialize in specific parts of city operations
- Mainly advisory to Council, but has some decision making powers.
City Council/ Staff

- Employed by the City
- Non-partisan, not elected or appointed
- Hiring is merit based.
- In charge of daily operations of the city
- Divided into specialized departments
- Provide the research and information needed for Council and Commissions to do their work.

Winona, MN City Hall
Local Government: Food Planning Oversight

- City oversight of public health matters
- Controls cities might have over food planning
Part II: Official Control

- Laws (Federal regulations, State Statutes, City Code, ordinances)
- Rules that *must* be followed, or face penalty
Plans

- Guidelines
- Details what citizens and stakeholders want for the future of their communities.

- Plans provide:
  - Detailed goals
  - Strategies to achieve these goals
  - How to know when the goals have been achieved
Official Controls and Plans

- Must be *complimentary* and *compatible*

- If a Comprehensive Plan conflicts with the official controls, local governments in the 7-county twin cities metropolitan area must amend their official controls to conform to the plan.
Food Planning: Where to Start?

- Can be included in various city plans:
  - Comp Plan
  - Transportation plans
  - Parks plans
  - Land use plans
Where to start?

- With CITIZENS!
- Citizens talking to Council, Commission, or staff
- Local officials must be made aware of issues surrounding food planning and how it impacts their community.
County Government in Minnesota

Julie Ring
Executive Director
Association of Minnesota Counties
What is AMC?

- The Association of Minnesota Counties unites Minnesota’s counties to achieve public service excellence.
- All 87 Minnesota counties are members of AMC, united around a vision that Minnesota counties are trusted partners in strengthening communities.
- AMC provides public policy analysis, legislative advocacy, training, leadership development and other services to Minnesota’s counties.
Levels of Local Government

- Counties
- Cities
- Townships
- School Boards
- Special Districts
• **Cooley Doctrine**
  *Counties can do anything that is not prohibited by state/federal government.*

• **Dillion Rule**
  *Counties can only do things that are expressly granted by the state.*

*Minnesota is a Dillion Rule state.*
- 5 or 7 members.
- Elected to represent districts within the county.
- Makes all policy, organizational and spending decisions.
- Levy property taxes to pay for county services
- Adopt ordinances.
- Approve plans.
Management Structures

County Manager, Administrator, Coordinator or Clerk of the Board.
- County authority
- Unincorporated areas
- Interaction with towns and cities
- Default

Relatively long process with many opportunities for public input.
The Local Public Health System

- Minnesota State Statute 145A.
- Public health authority is at the county level.
- Community Health Boards.
- Public health advisory committees.
- Public health promotion and regulation.
Other Local Governments

- School Boards
- Special Districts
Strategies

If healthy food is widely available, the healthy choice is the easy choice, for all of us.

BUILDING FOOD

Create incentives for Minnesota healthcare employers to pay all employees a living wage.

Offer incentives programs for consumers, such as “market matters” or “wage prescription programs” for healthy food purchases at schools and farmers markets.

MINING FOOD

Establish healthy food programs and policies that slow institutional food buyers greater purchasing power, so they have more resources to buy healthier food for meals, concessions, vending machines, and cafeterias.

SELLING FOOD

Streamline regulations so more farmers who sell food at farmers markets or elsewhere can accept WIC and SNAP/EBT.

Develop a “healthy food financing” initiative that provides funding, incentives, loan-loss financing, and tax breaks for healthy food-related enterprises such as new food stores, offering affordable, healthy options in communities that need them, or regionally focused food distribution companies.

Create incentives for institutional foodservice providers, stores, and farmers markets to purchase and sell affordable foods grown locally, sustainably, or organically.

Create incentives for Minnesota farmers to grow affordable, healthy food for healthy institutions.

Matching ‘food bucks’ programs can greatly increase healthy food consumption for low-income people and increase farmer profits.

Fair Food Foundation, 2014

Identifying Priorities

- What component of the food system can you impact?
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- What policies/strategies do you want to pursue?
- What are the possible obstacles?
- What are the tools available to help?
- What barriers currently keep your community members from having access to healthy food?
Creating Your Vision

Resources
Dakota County:
Local Policies Impacting Food Access

http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/DakotaCounty
Minnesota Local Government Resources

Upcoming Webinar:

Working with Minnesota Local Governments to Increase Access to Healthy Food

Part II: Navigating the connections between food and local planning efforts

Speakers:

• Andy Hubley
• Ellen Pillsbury
• Eric Weiss

Date: May 16, 2016, noon – 1:30 pm

Registration link: http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/comp-planning-101
Questions?
THANK YOU!!
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