



Minutes – Friday, March 31, 2023
Video Conference
9 am to 11 am

Attending: Don Barber, Agnes Guillo, Brian Eden, Chuck Geisler, Dan Lamb, Dave Bradley, David Kay, Gay Nicholson, Gerri Wiley, Guillermo Metz, Hailley Delisle, Ingrid Zabel, Jack Wright, Janelle Bourgeois, Jon Jensen, Leigh Miller, Luka, Margaret Johnson, Margaret McCasland, Marie McRae, Milena Bimpong, Paul Moore, Ray Burger, Rod Howe, Scott Doyle, Terry Carroll, Kyle Perkins, Tom Hirasuna, Rebecca Evans, Sara Hess, Nick Goldsmith, Rachel Leon, Peter Bardaglio

Tompkins County Food System Plan – Don Barber

The Tompkins County Food System Plan approved by the County Legislature last July is now in the implementation phase. Don Barber, chair of the Food Policy Council of Tompkins County and former Town of Caroline supervisor, updated the group about the plan and next steps.

- Don reminded the group that when he last appeared in February 2022 the food system database had just been put together – the plan has now been completed and he wants to share it with the group
- Ninety percent of our food comes from outside the home – food travels average of 1,500 miles before arriving to our table – has significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change
- Food spending in Tompkins County: \$349,583,000 annually, \$8,556 average per household
- Widespread food insecurity among county residents: 11.9% of adults, 13.6% of children
- Diet impacts health and contributes to chronic diseases – 24% obesity rate in Tompkins County
- Six key elements to food system: production, infrastructure, retail, access and security, consumption, waste
- Why a food system plan?
 - Like air and water, food is a necessity and touches everyone
 - Decisions about food affect our resilience, well-being, and health
 - Good plans can guide sound decision making and improve quality of life for all residents
- Effort to create county food system plan launched in 2019 with Katie Hallas coordinating it – Covid crisis exposed serious vulnerabilities with our food system
- Food system planning pathway:
 - Process: Two-year effort funded by Legislature and Community Foundation led by Food Policy Council and CCE Tompkins
 - Baseline: First comprehensive study of local food system challenges, vulnerabilities, and opportunities
 - Engagement: 50+ businesses and organizations, 2,000 individuals participating
 - Outcome: Community Food System Plan with vision, directions, goals, and recommendations
- Plan and executive summaries regarding Food System Baseline Assessment can be found on web at <http://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports>
- Baseline Sections
 - Production
 - Infrastructure
 - Food Environment
 - Food Access and Security
 - Consumption
 - Waste
- Data sources for these studies

- Primary interviews and surveys
- USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas
- USDA Ag Census
- US Census
- Feeding America
- JobsEQ (Ithaca Area Development)
- Various local studies
- Farmers in Tompkins County sell \$65 million worth of products each year – 523 farms in county with 75% of them under 180 acres – 94% of farmland in county use for growing animal feed
- Food environment mix of businesses and institutions
 - 113 food retail outlets, 105 full-service restaurants, and 74 fast food restaurants – employ about 3,300 workers
 - Significant portion of food provided by institutions, including Cayuga Medical Center, Cornell, Ithaca College, and K-12 schools – very little local food purchased
 - 17 food pantries in county and Southern Tier Food Bank has 25 partners in community
- Food security means always having physical & economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets needs for active and healthy life
- Additional \$7.4 million needed to meet needs of food insecure families – 62% of residents eligible for SNAP not enrolled
- Food consumption patterns:
 - 24% of adults and 12% of children obese and 53% say healthy, affordable food is key issue
 - 60% of food eaten at home and 40% outside of it
 - Increasing access to healthy food identified by Tompkins County resident as highest priority
- Nationally and locally, 35% of food remains uneaten – 3.4 million pounds of food waste ends up at Cayuga Compost each year – 1,400 pounds rescued each day
- Challenges and vulnerabilities in county food system
 - Production: profitability, land access, climate change, and short growing season
 - Infrastructure: local sourcing, scaling up, and access to processing facilities
 - Food environment: reliance on multinationals, hiring and retention, volume and consistency, consolidation, and concentration
 - Food access and insecurity: transportation, systemic problems, evolving emergency system
 - Consumption: limited access to fresh food, racial disparities, chronic diet-related illness
 - Food waste and recovery: sheer volume, funding, lack of access and education, misconceptions re: liability
- Food system accounts for one-third of global GHG emissions – heavy use of fossil fuels in agribusiness, commodity crops produced in central NY
- Extreme weather, seasonal shifts, invasives, and population growth all pose serious challenges to food production in Tompkins County
- Dramatic increase in food prices due to infrastructure damage, flooding and drought, geopolitical turmoil
- Paul Hawkins identifies plant-rich diet, reducing food waste, silvopasture, and regenerative agriculture as critical ways to reduce GHG emissions
- Key equity issues:
 - Less than 1% of local farms run by farmers of color
 - 12.7% of SNAP recipients are Black, while only 4% of population is Black
 - 96% higher diabetes hospitalizations among Black residents
 - Historical food system oppression maintains present-day inequities
- Key food security issues:

- Average meal in Tompkins is 17% more expensive than national average
- One-third of food insecure residents not eligible for SNAP
- Consolidated supply chains leave us vulnerable to shortages and price fluctuations
- Threats to global food system are varied and disruptions will impact local residents
- Need local ownership of food production and processing
- 2020: \$6.1 trillion global food system, \$1.82 billion in US, and \$250 million in Tompkins County
- 10% of Tompkins County Food is local, 90% is sourced from agro corporations
- Food system monopolies control choices and prices for growers and on the shelves
- Processed food provides consistency, convenience, and saves time, but many studies have shown this source is unhealthy: few nutrients, added sugar, carbohydrates, salt that cause chronic disease
- Food insecure adults annually pay \$1,193 more in health care
- Red meat releases >100x GHG and dairy 10X more per serving than fruits and vegetables
- Based on input from residents, food system plan outlines three directions: build resilience, cultivate equity and economic opportunity, and promote human and ecosystem health
- Build Resilience
 - Goal 1: Mitigate and adapt to climate risks that affect the food system
 - Goal 2: Double local food production to sustainably meet community food needs and support the viability of local farms
 - Goal 3: Promote coordination and collaboration among food system stakeholders to meet community needs
- Cultivate equity and economic opportunity
 - Goal 4: Halve food insecurity rates by increasing access to affordable, nutritious, safe food
 - Goal 5: Grow land access and food production opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), low income, and historically excluded resident
 - Goal 6: Create opportunities for entrepreneurship, innovation, investment and fair employment in the food economy
- Promote human and ecosystem health
 - Goal 7: Protect natural resources by prioritizing climate smart practices
 - Goal 8: Provide widespread opportunity for community participation in food waste reduction and recovery
 - Goal 9: Integrate broad nutritional support for a healthier population
- Food Policy Council has developed Community Food System Pledge to implement plan
- Calls on community members to support creation of county food system that:
 - 1) Mitigates and adapts to climate risks that affect our food system
 - 2) Expands capacity for local food production while improving the viability of farms
 - 3) Enhances coordination and collaboration among food system stakeholders
 - 4) Increases community food security by creating equitable access
 - 5) Expands opportunities for excluded residents within the food system
 - 6) Facilitates opportunities for food system entrepreneurship and innovation
 - 7) Protects natural resources that sustain us by prioritizing climate smart practices
 - 8) Reduces food waste and increase food recovery
 - 9) Improves community health through broad, equitable nutritional support
- Can sign pledge online at <https://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/pledge>
- Besides signing pledge, some other steps people can take:
- Food Choices
 - Eat for your health
 - Eat for planetary health
 - Eat to reduce food waste

- Plan meals including leftovers
 - Compost inedible scraps
 - Donate edible items thru FDN
 - Eat for our local economy
 - Restaurants & retail that buy from regional farms.
 - Farmers markets, farm stands, and local CSA share
 - Build a food budget that aligns with your values
 - Eat seasonally & be flexible about the varieties
- Food Preparation
 - Grow more of your own food
 - Prepare your own dishes from whole foods
 - Use food prep as family & community building times
 - U-pick
- Social Justice
 - Support local food justice efforts by donating your land, money, or time
 - Engage with local and national food advocacy efforts

Q&A

- Peter: What do you see as our biggest opportunity?
- Don: Need to find ways to build and strengthen connections among different participants in food system – Food Policy Council working on communication and outreach
- Each of us individually need to be more aware of food choices we make every day – also make sure to plant trees and gardens to sequester carbon
- Peter: One of most striking points in presentation was fact that food system generates one-third of GHG emissions
- Don: What's really driving this is changing diet around world with increased consumption of beef – going in exactly wrong direction
- Peter: Also unsettling to find out that 94% of all farmland in Tompkins County devoted to growing food for animals and only 10% of food we consume is locally produced
- Don: Farmers who focus on growing food for people actually more profitable – surprising when you examine own food decisions to find out how little food is local
- Dan Lamb: Glad to see more emphasis on GHG emissions in plan – moving toward more plant-based food consumption could make big difference – any ideas of how to address issue of so much farmland being used to grow food for animals?
- Don: If we can create mindset to buy more local food, then farmers would shift to growing food for people – people need to participate more in CSAs and farmer markets – individual choices do make difference
- Peter: A lot of people think recent increase in food prices is temporary, but lot of your presentation underlined possibility that lot of rising food costs could be permanent going forward
- Don: We've been lulled into complacency by availability and convenience of corporate-prepared foods – even more consolidation going on now
- Need to draw more attention to healthcare costs incurred by consuming corporate food instead of local food
- Dave Bradley: Where is necessary protein going to come from if you're vegetarian? What are sources of local vegetarian protein that can displace meat?
- Don: Beans can be good source of protein – several growers and manufacturers in area – also chickens only have one-quarter of carbon footprint of beef

- David Kay: What about debate over regenerative agriculture? Growing concern that term may have been hijacked by corporate interests – also what about possibility of cellular meat? To what extent was this discussed during planning process?
- Don: Cellular meat not discussed – we did have large discussion about sustainability and regenerative agriculture – decided to emphasize resilience in plan
- Peter: Could you delineate distinction between organic and regenerative for us?
- Don: Organic means not to use synthetic fertilizers and other means to change dynamics in ground – regenerative focuses on putting more carbon into ground through photosynthesis process – soil is one of most effective technologies for capturing carbon
- David Kay: Heart of issue involves infrastructure and bureaucracy regulates organic practices and sets standards through certification – no such determination about what constitutes regenerative agricultural practices and no enforcement mechanism – concern that regenerative agriculture could be used to undermine organic standards
- Don: Organic label has been coopted by many corporations – many people are practicing organic farming in Tompkins County without getting certified
- Margaret McCasland: Dairy is a contributor to climate change and to lake pollution in our region – also need to take into account dietary restrictions many people have – as result of climate change, possible to grow rice here now but getting right equipment to process it a major obstacle – are there opportunities at state and federal level to provide more support for smaller farmers so they could grow rice as well as beans?
- Don: Lots of opportunities in farm bill but not very optimistic about Congress providing assistance to small farmers – hasn't been much support for small farmers since 1970s
- Food Policy Council is working to bring farmers together to talk about what they need to create new products locally – lack of commercial kitchens a major challenge – exploring options for space to install them in city
- Peter: Could you say more about steps being taken to enhance coordination and collaboration within the food system?
- Don: Looking for ways to increase connections between local healthcare providers and food system – one example of how Food Policy Council is bringing together different players in food system who haven't interacted in past – also working on getting major area institutions which are largest food purveyors to buy more local food – Cornell had been putting system in place when pandemic hit and disrupted effort
- Peter suggested we might need to think more about global aspects of food system – Don encouraged Peter to reach out to Rachel Bezner Kerr at Cornell to come speak to group about this topic
- Dave Bradley: Important to remember that very often cost to produce food is very different from price being charged to buy it – expense of purchasing food is only going to go up

Sustainable Finger Lakes Heat Pump Pilot – Gay Nicholson

Sustainable Finger Lakes has recently received significant funding to launch an affordable heat pump pilot. Gay Nicholson, the organization's president, shared the details of this innovative program and how it will contribute to climate justice in our community.

- Gay introduced her colleague Milena Bimpong, who presented along with Gay – Milena has served as tenant engagement coordinator on project
- Many barriers to the transition to clean energy, especially for lower-income folks in rentals – Gay became very familiar with issue as member of HeatSmart Tompkins board and through work with Finger Lakes Climate Fund
- 119 low-income families helped through our Finger Lakes Climate Fund and an earlier NYSERDA project
- Decided to focus on rentals – two-year pilot project to convert 100 rentals from fossil gas to heat pumps

- NYSERDA providing \$585,000 in extra incentives from its Innovative Market Strategies Program to provide heat pumps for low-income households
- Objectives of pilot project:
 - Increase accessibility to energy efficiency for low-to-moderate income tenants in 1-4 unit rentals (24% of all LMI housing in NYS)
 - Address the split incentive with additional incentives
 - Provide energy education to tenants
 - Document quantitative and qualitative data on costs, energy use, comfort, and landlord/tenant relationships.
 - Contribute to the Ithaca Green New Deal's climate goals
- Split incentive difficult, long-standing barrier to energy efficiency investments in rental properties
 - Tenant pays for energy either directly or indirectly
 - Landlord pays for the efficiency investment, but is not direct beneficiary
 - Tenants have only marginal control over consumption and landlords see tenants as consuming energy carelessly
- Tight rental markets make it hard to shop around for efficient apartment – tenants don't have much bargaining power
- Given these challenges, LMI rentals receive the least amount of NYSERDA subsidies
- Why Heat Pumps?
 - Really efficient!
 - Provide both heating and cooling, as well as cleaner indoor air and lower monthly bills
 - Low carbon footprint and run on green electricity
 - Local installers
- First step is to reduce heating and cooling load – requirement of program
 - Insulate the roof (R30), walls, and floor (R14)
 - Stop the drafts – 7 ACH (air changes/hour)
 - Then you can 'right size' your heat pumps – too many oversized heat pumps getting installed
 - Cheapest kilowatt is the one you don't use
- Who qualifies for pilot?
 - Rental in the City or Town of Ithaca
 - 1-4 unit buildings
 - Use natural gas for heating
 - At least half of rental units are low income
 - Must be brought up to insulation standard
 - Landlords limited to 5 rentals in pilot
- Annual income requirements per individuals in household
 - 1 -> \$50,200
 - 2 -> \$57,400
 - 3 -> \$70,544
 - 4 -> \$83,984
 - 5 -> \$97,408
- What incentives are available for this pilot?
- Insulation and Air Sealing
 - \$5000-\$10000 for first unit, then \$2500-
 - \$5000 for each unit more.
- Air Source Heat Pump -
 - \$5000 for first two tons, then \$500 per ton
- Electric Panel Upgrade - \$2000 (limited quantities)
- Heat Pump Water Heater - \$500 (also limited quantities)
- Plus NYSEG rebates and tax credits
- Cost of installing heat pumps make most sense when landlords have to replace their old gas systems
- What's required of landlords to participate in pilot program?
 - Can't raise rent for two years
 - If heating costs moved from Landlord to Tenant, must reduce rent equal to previous year's heating load

- Utility release form
 - Media release form and interview
 - Must insulate and air seal first
- What's required of tenants?
 - Utility release form to track energy
 - Media release form and interview
 - Take home energy survey before
 - Take home energy survey after
 - Attend home energy workshop (and receive a dozen LED bulbs!)
- Tenant pre-installation and post-installation surveys
 - Basic information (monthly rent, gross income, household size, etc.)
 - Electric and gas bill information (who pays for utility bills, POD numbers, etc.)
 - Heating and cooling conditions – before and after installation
 - Identifying problem areas and how landlords address them
 - Energy behaviors
- Post-installation survey will be 1-4 months after – goal will be to evaluate effectiveness of upgrades and impact on improving home comfort
- Topics in home energy workshops will include:
 - Phantom load/plug load
 - Reading NYSEG bill
 - Buying ENERGY STAR appliances
 - LED lighting
 - Storm windows
 - Weather stripping
 - Heat pump best practices
- Workshops required of tenants – will be 45 minutes long, over Zoom
- Measurement and verification
 - Partnering with PSD to measure performance over time
 - Pilot is special case for Compass platform funded by NYSERDA and DOE
 - Upload all building and project data, installer findings and photos
 - Accessing 1-yr pre and 1-yr post NYSEG utility data
 - Installing 50 Emporia real time energy monitors
 - Detection of performance problems to report to occupants and installers
 - Final report to integrate performance, costs, comfort results
- Electrify Tompkins! LMI Mobile Home Heat Pump Pilot
 - Received grant from Tompkins Community Recovery Fund
 - Launching April 2023, 18 months – goal is to upgrade 50 mobile homes
 - 4,054 mobile homes in county (1,750 in parks, 2,304 solo)
 - Unique needs of mobile homes – use lots of energy due to poor quality of doors and windows – 20% more on average – also get very hot in summer, creating health risk
 - Access utility data pre and post and survey occupants pre and post
 - Track barriers to participation
- LMI mobile home requirements to participate in pilot
 - Must own their mobile home
 - Household income <300% of federal poverty guideline
 - 1 -> \$40,770
 - 2 -> \$54,930
 - 3 -> \$69,090
 - 4 -> \$83,250
 - 5 -> \$97,408
 - Envelope must be brought up to Comfort Home Standard (R24 attic, R21 belly, R6 walls, 12 ACH)
 - Installers will apply for all subsidies and rebates
 - Owner responsible for applying for \$2,000 federal tax credit
 - Utility and media waivers
- Costs for mobile home upgrades

- Significant envelope work likely
- Replacing propane furnace typically with 3-ton air source heat pump
- Heat pump water heater not good fit for mobile homes
- Electric panel upgrade likely and can be pricey
- Incentives available
 - Empower+: \$5,000-\$10,000 toward envelope upgrades
 - NYSEG rebate: \$1,400 per 10K BTUs (typically \$5,040)
 - Mobile Home Pilot: \$5,500 for heat pump and \$2,000 for electric panel
- After various incentives, including \$2K federal tax credit, net cost to mobile homeowner might be about \$7,500
- Replacement cost of propane furnace would be about \$5K
- Fuel savings over 18-year lifespan of air source heat pump would be about \$19K
- Added benefits: greater comfort, air conditioning

Q&A

- Peter: What kinds of conversations are you having with INHS regarding mobile homes?
- Gay: Good conversations about how to prevent hedge fund investors buying up mobile home parks and then jacking up rents
- Also what possibilities are there for cooperatively owned cellphones in mobile home parks?
- Are there opportunities for INHS to step in beyond Compass mobile home park in Trumansburg?
- Terry Carroll (in chat): Are 3-ton air source heat pumps really necessary for mobile homes?
- Gay: Mobile homes very energy inefficient so they are necessary – new NYSEDA requirements to meet Comfort Home Standard should help with oversizing issue – we’re aware of problem and working to put guard rails in place to prevent oversizing
- Peter: Are there opportunities for Cooperative Extension to collaborate on education?
- Gay: We’ve been meeting with Energy Navigators and Clean Energy Hub to discuss how they can help get word out about the two pilots – also hope TCCPI members could help with outreach
- Gerri Wiley (in chat): Who will be cleaning the air filters in the rental heat pump pilot?
- Gay: Not clear but will probably vary depending on situation
- Gerri: Will there be any funding for annual or semi-annual maintenance?
- Gay: No, not through our pilot – will be up to landlords
- Chuck Geisler: Appreciate how these two pilots help focus attention on issue of affordability in what is a very high rent county – what do you think energy cost burden should be after upgrades take place?
- Gay: Has heard it should be about 6% -- very worried about how much prices of energy, equipment, and labor have gone up – five installers participating in rental pilot and Gay is advising landlords to get at least two bids – we need more competition and more workforce
- Lot to learn due to complexity of pilots – one of reasons why NYSEDA so interested
- Dave Bradley: Indoor air pollution problem arose due to extent of insulation sealing as part of heat pump installation – had to purchase air exchanger which turned out to be very expensive, too
- Peter wrapped up the meeting by reminding people to pay close attention to the climate and energy bills being debated in Albany – next couple of weeks is especially critical for making sure we implement NYS climate plan and meet CLCPA targets
- Encourage people to sign up for updates and reminders from Renewable Heat Now and NY Renews – TCCPI active member of both coalitions in terms of advocacy
- Peter also congratulated Nick Goldsmith on becoming the new program officer for the Park Foundation’s Sustainability