



Dexter Regional Development Corporation

Minutes: August 04, 2009

Dexter Community Farmers Project

Members Present: Judy Craig, Dave Pearson, Courtney Brown, Joan Peters, Barb O'Brien, Dave Giles, Darlene Bagley

Others Present: Jason Bird, Fred Donovan, Fred Sherburne, Mark McKusick, Sue Watson, Dave Leighton, John Harker, Seth Bradstreet, Jen Vigue, Scott Herring, Dana Wilbur, Marilyn Scribner, Josh Salm
Book Club Members: Frank Spizuoco, Beth Ranagan, Joe Ranagan, Ed Hummel, Liz Breault, Judy Hummel, Sam Brown, Jim Greehey

Meeting opened: 7:00 p.m.

Jason gave an overview of the farm project.

Mark McKusick went to Smiling Hill Farm in Westbrook recently. It was an impressive creamery producing milk, butter, cheese and ice cream. Mark spoke with the manager. Smiling Hill will process Mark's milk, make products and he can test his products in the community and see how they sell. Mark feels "all natural" milk (as opposed to organic) would sell better at a price ½ way between conventional and organic prices. Sue asked what the difference is between natural and organic. Mark answered that natural milk would not meet organic standards, but still, no artificial hormones would be used. Smiling Hill Farm is natural, not organic. Sue asked how they manage maintain quality.

Mark said they know where their milk is coming from and only use superior milk. They currently only process milk 2 days a week but they would like to process 6 days a week. Judy asked Fred S. if he would be natural or organic. Fred would like to stay certified organic.

Mark stated that pint, ½ pint and quart glass bottles cost \$1.16 each. They require a \$1 deposit on the bottles. There is only 1 place in Canada the produces glass bottles. He feels we should find an environmentally safe plastic to take place of glass. Washing would also be easier. Smiling Hill is currently looking for cheaper glass bottles.

Jason asked about transportation for Mark's milk. If Smiling Hill Farm bottle Mark's milk he would have a truck waiting to be loaded. Probably three times a week.

Judy asked Dave Leighton if the schools would be interested in buying milk. He stated he would like to go from cartons to 10 oz. plastic bottles. He hasn't switched because cartons are ½ the price of plastic bottles. He uses about 325,000 units of milk per school year. He pays .21 per unit. Sam Brown asked Dave if there was any money available to buy local. Dave answered there is none that he knows of. Mark asked if the schools bid the milk. Dave said yes 4-5 districts go together on the bid.

The Book Club presented what they have been working on. They have developed a three stage system. Ed Hummel explained that the club has been reading books on economy, energy and land use. They found that the shape of the economy as it is now is not going to come and go. Transportation costs will continue to rise and it is going to be hard to move product. They feel we need local farmers and local customers. Sam Brown has researched and found that within 15 miles of Dexter there are about 30,000 people. In a 20-mile radius there is about 55,000 people. Within a 15-mile radius there are approximately 55 farmers. They feel the Dexter Shoe building is ideal for a creamery. Judy expressed EPA concerns. There were also some bank issues dealing with foreclosure on the building.

An online buying program may not be available for another year or so. Dave Giles asked if it would be a wholesale program or specific orders. The farmers would input their available crops and consumer would place their order and the website would tell the consumer when and where they could pick up their orders.

Mark feels that as the project develops, winter will be the best time to get out there and find out what is wanted so farmers can plan their crops. Dave Leighton stated that he is ready to start purchasing now. School starts in 3 weeks. He is concerned about costs. Jason asked if he is able to fluctuate buying between farmers and his current providers. Dave said he could purchase a little here and there then meet with farmers this winter to talk about what products the school needs. Each school needs different quantities and he can break

up cases and share with other schools. Jason stated that produce is fresh this time of year, are they able to freeze or can produce? He asked if it is possible to use school kitchens during the summer for canning and such. Seth replied that those would be local bylaws. John Harker asked if Dave could develop a list of products, quantity and price usually paid? Dave stated he would have his list ready next Wednesday. He plans his menu a month at a time. Dave also explained an a la cart vending program. We could put products into vending machines at a price students can pay. Fred feels this would be good marketing potential with students. Dave would also like to have local produces come to schools and educate. He is also looking for fresh fruit. 4 of his schools were able to get a grant for a fruit and veggie snack program for mid-morning after breakfast.

Seth feels that Wal-Mart may also be a possibility for selling product. Wal-Mart has been reaching out and trying to do the right thing. They have come a long way and we need to pressure them into purchasing local.

Meeting adjourned: 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Brown, Secretary