

Northside Grocery Store Meeting w/ Dean Sparks
Thursday, July 6, 2006
6:30 PM

Attendance: Merry Harris, Mrs. Marshall, Dean Sparks, Phil Stanton, Linda Pecka, Samantha Morgan, Scott Barvainis, Daphne Gathers, Talyse Hampton.

Dean Sparks-Organic farmer out of Greene, New York, former Greenstar Coop from Ithaca, NY was a guest at our committee meeting. Dean has partnered with Dr. Hank Herrera of NYSAWG- New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group out of Rochester, to help the residents of the North side get a sustainable food chain. Dean gave an overview of how farmers could provide wholesome farm fresh foods to adults and children in our North side area and community at large.

Needs Assessment

Dean stated we needed to find out the different needs of the local community in order to address the needs.

Location

As far as a location, if we are talking about starting a food-coop, finding a 2 story Brownstone that would 1. employ a manager and 2. house the food-coop on the lower level. It would have to be at least 2,500 square feet.

Products

The Coop would have fresh produce, fruit, meat, etc. Dean has compiled the top 100 items people buy from a grocery store. His document could only hold 62 of those items.

How was the list compiled?

- An intern working in the Economic Development office, City of Binghamton was sent to the area supermarkets to do a price comparison on the top staple items that people buy all the time.
- Stores that the data was compiled from were The Giant Markets, Pricechopper and Wegmans.
- The population on the North Side is 7,492 residents.
- From these figures Dean Sparks was able to figure that residents spend 9.5 million dollars on food every year when shopping at these other markets.

What are the benefits of having a farmers market/food co-op system in our area?

- There would be a local store that carried items that we use.
- Having fresh fruit and vegetables grown on the farm would help sustain the farms.
- People would be eating healthier therefore less sickness and diseases and diminish the need for the use of expensive medications.
- It is something that can be done in other areas. People from all over would utilize this store.
- Other farmers could help provide produce to keep up with the demand for fresh fruits and veggies.
- With the food co-op system the residents would learn how to work with fruit and vegetables that are grown.
- Economic development. It would create jobs in the local community. Residents can work and shop in the neighborhood they live in.

- By getting an abandoned lot and turning it into a community garden, we can grow our own and sell the farmers market.

How do we get some property for a community garden?

Dean mentioned that Dr Herrera was able to get a community garden by finding some property that was owned by the City of Rochester and turning it into a community land trust. A non-profit organization with a board that is built in a community, that has gardens in local neighborhoods. The City can sell land to land trust to use to cultivate and develop community gardens.

Funding

Vegetables can be grown to be sold at stores. The youth from the Gang Prevention-At Risk Youth Program through the Binghamton Housing Authority started growing vegetables out of 30 garden boxes and sold them to the elderly residents of North Shore towers. Other sources of income for this project could come through the Kellogg and Ford Foundations.

There was a discussion of possible buildings and sites to use for a food-coop store. Bing Plaza was mentioned where the former Millstone store was located.

How does all this happen?

We know we don't have the capital right now to put a store up and operate it and pay a manager. The thought was to start by have products on a truck and brought down to the area. People would buy off the truck for the first 3-6 months. This is what is called product movement. Gather 6 months of data to determine what's used and how often it is used so that the farmers will know how much to grow. We need to develop a list of foods we would like to see in our neighborhood grocery store.

List of Food Items:

- Dairy- Eggs, Cheese, Soy Milk, Milk
- Meats- Pork, Beef, Bacon, Roast, Hamburger,
- Prepared Foods-Breakfast foods, chicken, fish, beef
- Poultry-Turkey, turkey bacon
- Fish, Salmon, Whiting
- Breads-Bagels, Rolls, Pastry
- Spices, Herbs
- Produce-Fruit, Vegetables
- Frozen Food-Ice Cream, Dinners & Entrees, Pizza
- Bulk Items-Sugar, rice, potatoes, beans, coffee, tea, peanut butter, jelly, syrup flour, etc.
- Juice
- Nantucket Farms-nectars
- Water
- Deli meat

These items would come on a truck delivery to the store. The nearest one is Evans Farmhouse Creamery. This is not a complete list, but gives Dean a frame to work with; staple items would we like to see in our neighborhood store. Dean also said the store would be capable of processing WIC and EBT payments.

Dean mentioned that he is working with Gang Prevention w/ Beth Harrington and some students next Thursday from 3-5. They will learn how to make organic omelettes.

If you would like to visit his farm the information is as follows:

Call before you come: 656-4142 or 371-1515

Fairwinds Farm
Off Harbor Rd
Greene NY

What can we do as a committee?

- Find out what things people want to see in a store
- Get people to meeting on the 11th.
- We need to know the things people want in their store, so they will buy it.
- People to get 90 % of what they need from their neighborhood and 10% from other places. This will keep the demand high and the need low if people can get what they are looking for in their neighborhood store.

The deal with SAV-A-LOT?

- It will take 2 million dollars to make this work.
- It would be a 20% profit for farmers if we go with the co-op model.
- How to build capital to make this a reality? Grants, community fund raisers.

Public meeting on Tuesday, July 11th

Location- Michelle Tully has secured Centenary-Chenango St Church for the meeting on Tuesday at 6:30 pm

Flyer- Merry Harris will develop a flyer to be distributed.

There are 22 bldgs in Countrytowne apt.

Town house on Way St.

Churches-St. Paul's on Chenango between Doubleday and Robinson St.

Calvary Baptist on Chenango St, near Sturges? And Centenary-Chenango St Church on Chenango St near Advance Auto.

Press release:

Mrs. Marshall and Marie Gallagher worked on a press release together and Marie gave it to the Deputy Mayor. He added more to it and will send it out on Monday.

Phone calls:

Lea Webb and Barbara Daly will do phone calls to Northside residents.

Flyering

Daphne will go door-door to give out flyers. Saturday, Monday.

Everyone was encouraged to tell their neighbor about the meeting on Tuesday the 11th Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.