

**CIRCL Group Meeting**  
**November 12, 2019**  
**Notes by Janet Edwards and Jane LaPointe**

Thank you, Marissa Mannion-King, for hosting this meeting at the Clark Memorial YMCA Community Room!

We had a packed room with 22 members of the community present sharing their excitement and ideas around the Winchendon Food Project.

See the presentation here: [CIRCL Group Nov 12 Presentation](#)

**HEAL Winchendon webpage with more info:**  
[GrowingPlaces.org/ProgramOverview/Heal-Winchendon/](http://GrowingPlaces.org/ProgramOverview/Heal-Winchendon/)

## **CSA MEAL KITS**

Comments on topic of CSA Meal Kits

- Art of cooking at home is lost
- Kit is a very good idea, long overdue
  - Provides convenience
  - Cuts down on preparation

What goes in them besides produce?

CSA Meal Kits should include:

- Knowledge (vegetable types and cooking skills)
- Whole plate (include dairy etc.)
- Advice on storage and preservation items for food
- Options for cooking the food; different ways to cook
  - Some people don't have a way to cook, lack a kitchen; perhaps only have access to a microwave. (Survey should help us know more)
  - Recipe cards and nutrition education should take into account by providing cooking instruction with limited equipment (e.g. a recipe for cooking squash in a microwave)

Pricing

- Sliding scale pricing so lower income families and individuals pay less
- UU Church community suppers suggest \$2/meal and not all will/can pay

## **PRODUCER CHALLENGES**

Farmers Market Pricing and HIP

- Low equity and high cost for farmers to participate in HIP
- Availability of HIP products low

- Awareness/education around HIP low
- Need better advocacy
- WIC promotes Farmers Markets and HIP, can we support WIC better?

Certified organic vs organic practices (Small farmers who practice organic cannot afford the official organic label)

- How can we educate consumers on the source of their food?

Consumer perspective that eating healthy is expensive

- Cost of produce at farmers' markets versus grocery is high
  - Regulations drive costs for farmers
  - Also volume considerations
- Knowing the source and their practices – don't need organic
- Able to sell “ugly” produce as seconds – otherwise discard
  - Lots produce ends up being left in the fields. E.g. Farms in Maine have gleaning opportunities for the community (gleaning is when farmers allow community to pick produce that has fallen on the ground or otherwise left behind from the farmer's harvest)
- Need education on the real economics of local food
- Locally sourced food is a much “greener” option – include in education
- Good food doesn't have to be as expensive, if it's local – but/and – farmers need volume
- Switch the question. Not, “why is healthy food so expensive?” But, “why is junk food so cheap?”

Supporting our local food producers

- If producers know they have a market, they can plan

## MARKET SURVEYS

Need 350 to fairly represent Winchendon

Members of community should represent the project at a Board of Selectmen Meeting in February with results from Market Surveys. Ideally have ~150 responses at that time.

Several members of the meeting took market surveys with them to distribute.

- [Digital Version](#)
- [Hard-copy version](#)

## HOLISTIC FOOD SYSTEM

Needs to be a “green” system

- Efficiency
- “Full Cycle” e.g. how is waste disposed of? Are there gleaning opportunities?

## Economics

- Local food is a whole community initiative, not just for low income

## MARKETING AND PROMOTION

- Most nutrition marketing in general focuses on the need for healthy food, and how the healthy food is so expensive, but a big missed opportunity is “Why is junk food so cheap?” We should educate and raise awareness around this.
- Emphasize this is a food system for everyone not just those with the greatest need
  - Make it clear on why this is for all people, households – how this is necessary for the program/system to work for everyone
  - Need to avoid guilt and people thinking “I don’t want to take it away from people who need it.” They should want to participate because it benefits everyone
- CSA Meal Kits must be attractively packaged – attention to marketing, language
  - Market the convenience as well as other benefits
- Education on the benefits and need for wide community support
- Big opportunity for cooking demos in the community
  - Cooking demos in gardens using vegetables that are just harvested

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Create intergenerational matchups

- Benches for older adults needed

Transportation needed for youth; YMCA can help?

Ayn shared that a farm in Winchendon has offered space for a large garden plot that can accommodate both the community and students from the Murdock High School. Growing Places will write a grant application to fund the start up. This generated ideas:

- Need and interest in older adult stewards for young people
- Rotating schedule – especially for summer months
- Example from another community/program of people in Senior Housing doing the seed starting – being involved (benches for them to visit gardens)
  - Can volunteers visit older adults and help them start the seeds in their homes?
- This is a great opportunity for a youth development model
  - Youth could be compensated with payment in kind (e.g. take home fruits and veggies)
- Questions of how to incorporate cooking into the program – experience of using the produce
  - Community Harvest Project – enlist groups that involve kids
  - Cornucopia Project, Peterborough NH – young chefs program, compliments gardens

## YOUTH EDUCATION

- For schools – kids take lessons home
  - Growing Places has a [youth development program](#)
- For farmers and producers – to build business
- [Agriculture in the classroom](#)
  - Resources for K-12 teachers
- [Cornucopia Project](#)
  - Includes Chefs Youth Cooking Classes
  - Can be supportive of cooking workshops for the community

## REGIONAL MODEL

Build network across the state, may find interest and ideas for what we are doing

- UMass Agriculture, vegetable program

Ayn - After year one, this initiative/pilot will expand to other towns and eventually to the whole North Central region – a regional model

- Need volume (supply and demand) to be successful
- Once we have a viable model, will apply for a grant to support/build the infrastructure