



**Rhode Island Seafood Marketing
Collaborative & Advisory Council
March 25, 2014
Meeting Minutes**

In attendance:

Collaborative

Janet Coit, DEM Director
Ken Ayars, DEM Chief of Agriculture
Bob Ballou, DEM Assistant to the Director
Ernest Julian, DOH Chief of Food Protection
Mike Walker, EDC Senior Project Manager
Laurie Pivarnik, URI Cels
Dave Beutel, CRMC Aquaculture Coordinator

Advisory Council

Derek Wagner
Perry Raso
Mike McGiveney
Chris Brown
Hirotsugu Uchida

Others:

Rayna Maguire, DEM Assistant to the Director
Dan Costa, DEM Port Manager
Azure Cygler, RI Sea Grant
David Monti, RDW Group
Nancy Sullivan Senate Legislative Aide
Mike Ryan, DEM Division of Agriculture
Jerry Carvalho, RIFA Vice President
Andrea McHugh, Discover Newport
Michael Roderick, Town Dock Director of Purchasing
Nicole Pollock, DEM Programming Services Officer

Introductions & Updates

The meeting started at 1:30 p.m. with the participants introducing themselves.

Director Coit asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2014 meeting. Monti motioned, Beutel seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Updates

Local Agriculture & Seafood Act (LASA): Nicole Pollock joined the meeting to announce that grants are now available through LASA up to \$20,000 per grant and philanthropy grants up to \$100,000. Pollock announced an Informational/Technical Assistant Grant Session is scheduled for March 26, to assist those submitted a grant. Pollock asked that RISMIC pass the word along to those interested.

Pollock also mentioned that both the House and Senate have RISMIC letter of support for the proposed calarmi bills. A hearing for the Senate is scheduled for March 26 at the rise. Coit indicated that a copy of the letter is in the meeting package for today.

Strategic Priorities

Ballou explained that when DEM staff met to discuss the agenda for this meeting we thought we would take a brief pause to where we are and going in the same directions. As most the key tools are in place, we should make sure that we clarify what we are looking accomplish and how to achieve by opening it to the group to work in agreement. Ballou offered an outline and summary of what we want to achieve. (See attachment)

Discussion

Coit asked if anyone has applied for a Letter of Authority to use the seafood logo. Costa explained that some are in the works, but none have been issued.

Coit mentioned that we have had a lot of presentations, and we have a lot of brain power in the room – contact with a marketing expert. We would need more market research – but there are web base things we can do that are easy and inexpensive. We did the first time around worked with subcommittee is good but at the same time we must be respect of time and critical to those that all important. Coit threw it out to the group that we have a Governmental Council and Advisory committee, we need to identify the one two three things that we most want to work on, but I am not positive what the will of this group what we can do that would be the most important thing we need to promote marketing

Brown responded that he would not want just anyone jump on the bandwagon selling what they claim is local, but it is not. There are many signs that “local fish”, but they are not. What are we doing to stop them from using the logo when they are not? Coit responded in the first year this group discussed the issue and it is addressed in the regulations. Brown continued with regard to squid being the Rhode Island official appetizer. He thinks it is great idea, but we should take it a

step further to ensure that the squid is not from another country, but processed here as a product of Rhode Island, this is not good enough for what we are doing. Fresh, local squid is wonderful and anything less than that is not acceptable.

Pivarnik stated that the regulations addressed this issue that the seafood must be grown or landed in Rhode Island. Coit agreed.

Brown would like to discuss traceability – but not now – perhaps in a couple of years.

Coit asked for other comments on integrity or an idea to push the brand. Coit asked Julian if there were any DOH regulations that would impede us to get the product to consumers. When Farm Fresh RI was here they talked about the particularly issues related to transporting – refrigeration. Julian responded that he has not heard any actionable issues

Carvalho stated that fish management affects the markets. It is hard to market fish that was here today and gone tomorrow. When we try to do that industry takes a hit and tries to fill that void. This group has to work with the industry to resolve this issue.

Coit responded that we discussed and realize that the species availability and limitations are something we need and are addressing. At the Farm Fresh RI presentation, they indicated difficulty marketing to restaurants when they cannot say ahead time what and when they will have a product.

Ballou added that it is well recognized that the consistency of a product is what we want to make as a goal. We currently try and struggle to keep our seasons open, but some species have a small daily possession limit. In the minds of some harvesters it becomes economically unfeasible to keep up with the limitation. Ballou continues to support the goal, and will work towards working it out. This is a tough issue, but important one.

Coit also added that when we discussed this issue, we indicated that we should try to market what it is available.

Roderick commented that we should promote the state and municipalities to use local in schools, correctional institutes, and hospitals as an effort to expand market to a consistent buyer. We need to have healthy products, promote more consumption, and have the product readily available.

Azure suggested we use a card system such as the red, yellow, and green light card indicated what is good for consumers should buy. Perhaps adopting that or create a new way for a Rhode Island specific model.

Pivarnik added that she does not like those cards. Azure agrees. Pivarnik suggested we create seasonal chart for seafood (factoring in the management issue) and place them in the market places. Coit responded that we do have one, it is on the SeafoodRI.org website, and we have the placements, and agreed that we should place either one in the marketplaces. Pivarnik suggested

a brochure. Ballou reiterated that we have it on the website. Pivarnik said those should be in markets.

Brown said the card should not just have a contrary message but a good message to show availability. Such as, "Since 2007 at the signing of a Magnus Fisheries Act, RI is proud that all the fish we catch are not overharvested or over fished." There should be a secondary message,

Coit stated that during our first year we had an Educational Subcommittee should we reinstate it to find ways to educate people, why seafood is healthy, when it is available, and how to cook it.

Ryan stated that social media is very important part of what we are discussing; letting people know when it is available and how to cook it. To overlook social media as a vehicle to get this message across would be shortsighted.

Beutel added that the North Carolina Sea Grant has successfully done a card that only talks about local product availability, and does not address sustainability. We have been talking about this for years. There are lots of other things that other states have done, and we should just follow their lead. We need a dedicated effort to do that. Pivarnik and I have done cooking demonstrations, but it is a challenge to get support and publicity for them. So what I am looking for is what types of efforts are being made for financial support to spread this to more people.

Coit stated that we will soon be submitting our report to the General Assembly; is this our major request? What does Sea Grant do now? We can make the request, but will not get any general revenue. Where would the funds come from?

Cygler responded that Sea Grant hopes to do more in fisheries next year. Pivarnik spoke about the chowder cook off and how we pushed the event.

Ryan asked that that type of information be passed along to post on the web site. Coit asked Ryan to introduce himself. Ryan is a seasonal employee assigned to DEM's Division of Agriculture to overhaul and manage the SeafoodRI.org web site. The website as it stands is geared toward end user. He is also setting an industry side as well as a touch stone for fishermen's – dealers. Ryan is the person on point for the webpage and can answer any questions about the web site. Coit asked the group to check the site out and provide feedback to her, Maguire and Ryan or at the next meeting.

Julian informed that group that DOH has started a quarterly newsletter that goes to a few thousand restaurants and marketplaces. He would be willing to incorporate seafood availability in the newsletter.

McGivney agreed that this was a good idea. We have a lot of information that we should get out.

Coit mentioned at a recent CommerceRI's Tourism Council Luncheon Myrna George asked for information on seafood marketing and how the local tourism offices can learn more on how to can market local seafood. Coit suggested that perhaps one or two RISMC members can join her at one of future luncheons.

McGivney reiterated that everything needs a story. The state should create a handout for markets and restaurants.

Katz stated that this was a great conversation, but coming from different angle, we should engage each municipality's economic entity. This would be an opportunity for the municipality local seafood in their town. For example, Bristol "Caught in Bristol! Cut in Bristol! Served in Bristol!" Win-win for all.

Coit suggested we go on a "road show" with a fisherman, a RISMC member, etc. and meet with municipal leaders to educate them on sustainability harvest fresh products. Coit sent a sign up sheet around for volunteers.

Monti stated that our focus today was on marketing and in the past it was on distribution. These are two different issues. He suggested we survey the fish consumer. What is their hot button? Is it the freshness, is it the cost, or is it nutrition. We need to identify those first, put those keys points on the table ten cards, the website to resonate to the market. All tactical things are great ideas but we have spent little time researching with the consumer what they like and dislike. We should test some possible strategies. Coit agreed.

Pivarnik stated that we have done some of that with national surveys, and the thing that come up to the top is quality, I do not know what to do with, and finally cost. She further asked if we could we use DOH newsletters as survey mechanism? Julian responded that it was not set to do that.

Coit suggested three items to push on marketing, education, and labeling.

Coit then asked each person what the one thing that as a group that we should focus on for the remainder of 2014

Dave Monti	Consumer Research
Azure Cygler	Education
	Consumer education
	An information card for consumers
Mike Roderick	Trace and trust.
	Integrity.
	Demand needs to increase stories
Mike McGivney	Buy stickers
Dan Costa	Buy the fish
Mike Walker	Promote seafood a part of a healthy diet
Nancy Sullivan	Food as big focus for economic sector
Chris Brown	Volume based proposition
	Connect with ethnicity of this state in voluminous way
	Get food on the plates "in the hood"
	Traceability to marketing
	Protect it

Perry Raso	Use label Education
Mike Ryan	Website social media
Andrea McHugh	Local flavor Stories RI seafood seal
Lori Pivarnik	Education Marketing Seafoodhealthfacts.org Benefits of seafood Send a Postcard to her mailing list
Jerry Carvalho	Fish is brain food
Dave Beutel	Advocate for education Advocate for resources for education
Steve Katz	Resultants What is local? Education Economic development
Rayna Maguire	Move forward on marketing contract Time to sell
Bob Ballou	Create the buzz
Ernie Julian	Food safety is value added

Port of Galilee

Costa thanked the visitors to the Port in February. He further announced construction activities going on at the Port.

Coit adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:30 p.m.