

Meeting Minutes From The:
Long Island Victory Garden Task Force
Thursday, May 27, 2010

Task Force Members In Attendance:

Joe Gergela
Pamela Greene
Caroline Kiang
Tom Lyon
Richard Meyer

Guests:

Lawrence Foglia
Danielle Gill
Elizabeth Krumlauf
Iman Marghoob
Swkyee Or
Seth Squicciarino
Ginny Suhr
Susan Wilk

On Final Report To The Suffolk County Legislature:

Ginny Suhr: The Task Force's members need to begin working on its report to the Legislature. What is going to be included, who is going to work on what parts?

Joe Gergela: A list of County sites suitable for victory garden development was supposed to be produced, is that complete? Will that list be included in the report?

Pamela Greene: That report has just been completed and is going to be delivered to the Legislature shortly.

Ginny Suhr: Yes it will be in the report.

Joe Gergela: Goals and objectives of the report should encourage surplus food grown at these gardens be donated to Long Island Cares, Island Harvest or local food pantries.

Ginny Suhr: This has been an objective stated in both the legislation and amongst the Task Force's membership.

Tom Lyon: Food equity should be one of the stated goals.

On Discussion of USDA/Federal Matching Funding For People's Gardens:

Ginny Suhr: E-mail sent to Task Force's distribution list on Wednesday, May 26, 2010 outlining USDA providing up to 75% cost share for the installation of People's Garden (a community type garden initiative). Suffolk County Soil and Water is compiling a list of suitable sites that will be submitted to USDA representatives by June 7, 2010.

Caroline Kiang: Who do we send that information to, Soil and Water or to Legislator Viloría-Fisher?

Ginny Suhr: Send to Soil and Water with a copy to Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

On New Victory Gardens and Programs:

Ginny Suhr: Every day there is something new.

Tom Lyon: New things spring up everyday.

On The Format And Content Of The Task Force's Report To The Legislature:

Ginny Suhr: Legislator Viloría-Fisher is sponsoring a bill that will extend the term of the Task Force to the end of the year to allow for the completion of the report.

The final report should include information on:

1. School Gardens
2. Green Thumb Challenge

3. USDA Funding
4. Community Gardens including information from the University of Missouri Extension's *Community Gardening Tool Kit*
5. Website links to gardening groups and organizations
6. Map of gardens in Suffolk County
7. List of County owned property suitable for gardening
8. Educational Component – What programs and education tools are needed?

Caroline Kiang: Need to keep the list of community gardens and website links up-to-date as more information is being added. We should also include information on composting and other gardening techniques.

Ginny Suhr: The report should include information for gardeners so that individuals and organizations that want to grow a community garden have access to the information need to begin.

Lawrence Foglia: Cornell Cooperative Extension has a lot of useful information for gardeners.

Iman Marghoob: New York State Department of Health has asked Stony Brook University to compile a list serve for local community gardeners; this can be included as a resource in the report.

Lawrence Foglia: Will some of the County properties recommended for garden development be open for management by the towns? Not-for-profits may find it hard to administer a community garden; the towns can fulfill the role of administrator for the not-for-profits.

Pamela Greene: The legislation is specific that the gardens should be administered by not-for-profits.

Lawrence Foglia: Will Suffolk County allow for garden development on large County owned parcels, allowing for large scale farming? How do we get this policy change for agricultural use on County lands? Agricultural output of Froehlich Farm is not fully realized; a new arrangement between Suffolk County, the not-for-profits, and the Town should be worked out to utilize more of the land. This type of new arrangement should be extended to other large County owned parcels. We should recommend the establishment of a west-end Suffolk County Farm to be

built on large County owned parcels. People can learn how to farm at this west-end County farm.?

Ginny Suhr: Policy change recommendations should be included in the final report. The Legislature sets policy; this Task Force does not.

Joe Gergela: Suffolk County's role should not be to subsidize private interests that want to farm. The Task Force should confine its recommendations to the promotion of public gardens. Government support of private individuals interested in farming would be unreasonable competition to local farmers.

Tom Lyon: The Task Force's future should include that ability to examine existing and future County policies on farming. The committee should revisit some established policies.

We need to establish an educational component to get younger students involved, teach them about the difficulty involved in successful farming. Task Force should make recommendations to school districts on how to implement and maintain garden programs on school grounds.

Ginny Suhr: The legislation directs the Task Force to include certain topics in its final report. Education is a key component that should be addressed.

Final report should include links to information on victory/community gardens and should have parts of the University of Missouri Extension's *Community Gardening Tool Kit* inserted.

Lawrence Foglia: How should we define a *Victory Garden*?

Tom Lyon: At the core of the definition of *Victory Garden* is that food be locally grown, but there are many other components including: food transportation, nutrition, and diabetes education – so many different things. The definition should not be limiting.

We should include a history of victory gardens and why the term *Victory Garden* was chosen. That should be in the introduction.

There is so much ongoing with the victory garden movement that this body's work must continue. Are there permanent County task forces?

Seth Squicciarino: There are advisory committees that meet periodically to give recommendations to the Legislature on changing issues within the field. The final report should include this recommendation if that is something the Task Force supports.

Tom Lyon: The report should be target to certain audiences and the Task Force should be a facilitator for people and groups interested in gardening. That is the Task Force's major role. There is so much here for the Task Force to do.

Ginny Suhr: Perhaps there should be a recommendation to have speakers go to different organizations and talk to them about gardening and farming to spur interest.

Joe Gergela: There are a lot of things going on in this field that are not really intergraded or people just don't know about. Many organizations across Long Island have programs, but they are not coordinated.

Trying to initiate community gardens in schools will be difficult. Teachers do not have the time or the resources to take on new responsibilities. LIFB has been trying to start a mentoring/intern program with BOCES for the past two years, but it have been extremely difficult.

Lawrence Foglia: Farming programs should be started at the elementary school level. That interest will then follow these students throughout their educational career.

Joe Gergela: Curriculum already exists from Cornell, but teachers are having trouble using it because it interferes with the time they have for teaching the New York State Education Department mandated curriculum that is required.

Caroline Kiang: There are programs available, including the Junior Master Gardner program that is endorsed by New York State. Perhaps this Task Force can be a consortium to identify needs and resources available for community gardening.

Joe Gergela: New York State set up a Food and Agriculture Policy Council; we should look at that and try and implement here in Suffolk County.

Ginny Suhr: Tom Lyon will put together a little information on Hobbs Farm for the introduction in addition to the history of Victory Gardens.

Pamela Greene: We should start from the mandate of the legislation. There are four main points cited, so we should outline it and place the information into report based upon the areas required in the bill. I will do the outline and sent it to Ginny for distribution to the rest of the Task Force to write up their individual sections.

Joe Gergela: When the report is complete we should make a presentation to the Environment, Planning and Agriculture committee and then the full Legislature.

Ginny Suhr: We will set up another meeting, but work on the report can be done through e-mail.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 24, 2010 at 10:00 AM.