



## Food System Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date:** January 27th, 2026

**Time:** 4:30-6:00pm

**Location:** Hybrid- 509 Girard Street & Zoom - <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88133101206>

**Members Present:** Rhys-Thorvald Hansen, Noelle Beecroft, Trevor Gearhart, Henry Fisher, Sean Hopps

**Guests:** Kade Eckert, Rachel SantaOlalla, Kristy Matta, Cat Sieh

Agenda Item		Discussion	Action/Who
<b>1</b>	<b>Roll Call, Determination of Quorum, Land Acknowledgement</b>	Quorum Met. The meeting was called to order at 4:34 PM.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Approve Meeting Minutes</b>	Minute approval deferred to the next meeting due to the need for reformatting.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Public Comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitation extended by Alan of the Agricultural Advisory Group to find overlap in efforts, especially concerning meat processing.</li> <li>• Kade Eckert is new to Bellingham with previous experience in food systems. Interested in getting introduced to the local food system and engaging.</li> <li>• Cat Sieh gives an update on the WA Department of Health public hearing regarding mobile markets accepting FMNP and WIC. Cat notes unexpected pushback from WSFMA, including desire for mobile markets to be 501(c)(3)s (perceived as a time-buying strategy), concerns about price gouging (seen as unrealistic) and concerns about competition with other markets and farmers (viewed as unfounded). Cat clarified that Twin Sisters Market is an additional sales avenue for farmers, and is therefore not a competitor and requests letters of support. Noelle raised the need</li> </ul>	Rhys is presenting to the Agricultural Advisory Committee at their February meeting.





		<p>to reaffirm support and committed to sending a letter of support before midnight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rachel SantaOlalla is the new Operations Lead for WFN.</li> <li>• Kristy Matta is the new Network Policy Lead for WFN.</li> </ul>	
4	<b>Public Outreach Event</b>	The event has been rescheduled for March	
5	<b>Officer Elections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motion by Rhys to appoint Trevor and Rhys as Co-Chairs, seconded by Noelle, approved unanimously.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Secretary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motion by Rhys to appoint Noelle as Secretary, seconded by Trevor, approved unanimously.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Officers are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhys – Co-Chair</li> <li>• Trevor – Co-Chair</li> <li>• Noelle – Secretary</li> </ul>	
6	<b>Meeting Schedule</b>	Food System Committee will continue meeting the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 4:30-6pm for 2026.	
7	<b>Meeting Minutes Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on posting draft minutes publicly in advance of approval to make committee work more accessible to the interested public.</li> <li>• Committee agreed that draft minutes may be posted with the DRAFT watermark prior to approval, and will be updated once approved.</li> </ul>	Noelle will clean up and circulate draft minutes after meetings for any initial edits.
8	<b>Comprehensive Plan Update</b>	The 2025 Comprehensive Plan is expected to be before the County Council in March 2026. No further news has been shared on where the drafts are in process.	





9	<p><b>Food System Updates</b></p>	<p><b>Farmworker Tribunal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent Food System Committee meetings focused on outreach; direct engagement with community leaders emphasized.</li> <li>• The annual farmworker tribunal has grown significantly in recent years.</li> <li>• Rhys and Sean attended.</li> <li>• Legislative agenda and farmworker experiences need review.</li> <li>• Collective bargaining bills SB 6045 highlighted as potentially transformative for farmworkers.</li> <li>• Sean is open to answering questions.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Letter of Support to County Council</b></p>	<p>Sean asked the Committee to sign a letter of support to the Councilmembers who led the Resolution Affirming Dignity and Civil Rights (Regardless of Immigration Status):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Farmworker community was consulted and provided input. Based on this, Sean created a draft.</li> <li>• Draft reviewed collectively.</li> <li>• The committee agreed to send a letter, with some discussion about the purpose/impact.</li> <li>• Need to explicitly tie the resolution to food access.</li> <li>• Discussion on accountability and ensuring the resolution is proactive, not symbolic.</li> <li>• Ann noted that staff find the visible support reaffirming.</li> </ul>	<p>Sean Hopps will share a revised draft next week. Co-chairs to sign and send before the next Committee meeting.</p>
10	<p><b>Implementation Tracker</b></p>	<p>Whatcom Food Network has created an Implementation Tracker to assist the Food System Committee in tracking Food System Plan implementation.</p> <p>Focus Areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Progress through implementation</li> <li>2. Areas of critical need</li> <li>3. In-progress and ongoing items</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noelle asked for Cat's perspective on implementation effectiveness.</li> <li>• The group expressed a desire to rebuild momentum.</li> </ul> <p>Cat Sieh suggested additional areas to track:</p>	<p>The Implementation Tracker will become a standing agenda item for 2026.</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two Whatcom County farms—Mariposa Farm and Terra Verde Farm—need elevation support after being flooded for the second time.</li> <li>• Emphasized the need for consistent pressure and follow-up.</li> <li>• Action: Someone to contact Katie and continue tracking these issues.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion of <a href="#">Food System Dashboard</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need clarity on how the dashboard is being updated.</li> <li>• Concern about the tool becoming outdated.</li> <li>• Question raised: Who holds responsibility for dashboard updates?</li> <li>• Action: Send to Ann to determine ownership and process.</li> <li>• Rhys will work on relaying FSC information in more bite-sized, accessible formats.</li> </ul>	Rhys to follow up with Cat re contacting Katie and followup on flood tracking.
<b>11</b>	<b>Additional Discussion</b>	Noelle asked about reformatting roles to better align with a new role.	Ann will send Noelle and Rhys 2026 Agenda and Minutes templates from Health & Community Services.
<b>12</b>	<b>Adjournment</b>	Meeting adjourned at 5:58pm	

**Next Meeting: March 17th, 2026 4:30pm Location:Hybrid- 110 Unity Street.**

