



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS County of Dane

ROOM 118, CITY-COUNTY BUILDING
210 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53703-3342
608/266-5758 • FAX 266-4361 • TDD 266-4121



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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Supervisor Kyle Richmond, 608-251-3171

Dane County Food Council Members Appointed; Funding Set

First of its kind in Wisconsin, the 12-member Citizen Body Will Meet in January

MADISON, WI – Dane County's new Food Council, created in October to advise the County on food policy issues, has been appointed and funded, and will meet for the first time this month.

The Council – the first of its kind in Wisconsin – is set to work on issues ranging from hunger and nutrition to local agriculture and economic development. Its agenda was set forth last year in a 44-page report to the County Board and County Executive by a citizen subcommittee.

While two County Board committees appointed half of the 12-member Council, County Executive Kathleen Falk appointed the other six citizens. Falk said food policy is an important topic in Dane County.

“Throughout Dane County’s urban and rural communities, there is great interest and enthusiasm for growing, processing, selling, and consuming local food,” Falk said. “People see this as a healthy way to eat and a way of boosting many local farmers. The Food Council will strengthen these positive trends.”

Food policy bodies already exist in other parts of the U.S., such as Portland, Oregon, and the states of Michigan and Connecticut. Board sponsor of the Food Council resolution, Supervisor Kyle Richmond, said a main goal is to strengthen local producers.

“Two years of work and many ideas later, the Food Council is now a reality that will help us move toward a more sustainable local economy,” Richmond said. “We have a wealth of resources and community support for growing, buying and eating local food.”

Richmond – chairman of the Board’s Environment, Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee – said other communities already have begun contacting Food Council members to inquire about starting food councils. Members of the Oneida Nation have requested a meeting.

In addition, Dane County, the City of Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Madison have contributed a total of \$15,000 for 2006 to support the Council with part-time staff, which will be housed in the County’s Planning and Development Department.

(more)



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Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz confirmed the City's financial commitment before Christmas.

"I am very pleased that we are able to partner with the County and the University of Wisconsin to help provide this support," Cieslewicz said. "I have been very interested and involved in strategies to help secure both a strong urban core and a vital and successful agricultural sector throughout Dane County."

The University's contribution came from part of a Kellogg Foundation grant to the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, according to Ken Shapiro, associate dean.

"The percentage of food insecure households has been rising in Wisconsin and in the nation," Shapiro said. "The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that more than 17 percent of our country's households with children were food insecure in 2004. That's one out of six. This is shameful. We are pleased to be able to contribute to an effort to alleviate this terrible problem."

The 12 members of the new Food Council are:

- Martin Bailkey, food system-planning consultant, involved with Madison's Troy Gardens
- Jerry Bradley, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Board and Sun Prairie vegetable farmer
- Gerald Campbell, Professor and Extension Specialist at the University of Wisconsin - Madison's Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
- Judy Hageman, owner of Snug Haven Farm, former co-manager of the Dane County Farmer's Market and member of the Dane County Agricultural Advisory Council
- Jerry Kaufman, retired UW Professor of Urban and Regional Planning and board chair of Growing Power in Milwaukee
- Robert Pierce, manager of the South Madison Farmers' Market and local produce farmer
- Ken Ruegsegger, co-owner of Ruegsegger Farms, a natural livestock/meat producer
- Dale Secher, operator of Carandale (Produce) Farms in Oregon, Wisconsin
- Ruth Simpson, chair of the REAP Food Group and member of Family Farm Defenders
- Richard Slone, Public Market project director for Commonwealth Development
- Jane Voichick, former UW Professor of Nutrition and USDA administrator
- Lisa Wiese, president of the Northside Community Co-op Board

Six of the 12 members (Hageman, Kaufman, Ruegsegger, Secher, Simpson and Voichick) served on the Local Food Policy Advisory Subcommittee which recommended creation of the Food Council to the County Board last summer.

Council members will serve staggered terms of one, two or three years. County Planning and Development staff will convene the first Food Council meeting this month.

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