

## Production Task Group Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at Muskoka Community Network, Bracebridge

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Ron & Bonnie Karson, Dianne Kretschmar, Andrew Johnson, Ruth Weise, Gord Mitchell, Sue Smith, Matt Richter, Laura Temple, David Leeder, John Dixon, Karen Harvey, J. Clipsham, Ayako Horiguchi, Willi Horvath, Diane Wiber, James Murphy, Lynda Hutt, Elise Curry, Steve Bacon.

**REGRETS:** Bob Norris

1. The agenda was circulated prior to the meeting. There were no additions or changes.
2. Minutes of the meeting on Dec 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010 were emailed to all those in attendance. If you did not receive them, please contact Lynda Hutt.
3. **Report on Inventory Committee** – Ron Karson  
Ron Karson has spoken with farmers in his community. They are very excited that there was an interest in local food and re-establishing farming in Muskoka. Ron shared their queries regarding who or what organization is gathering this information and for what purpose. There was some discussion around the identity of this task group. At this point we are a Task Group functioning under the Farm Committee of SAVOUR Muskoka.  
James Murphy stated that SAVOUR Muskoka will be undergoing their strategic planning process over the next several months.  
John Dixon sees the process of doing an inventory of farm skills, equipment and resources as fulfilling two goals. First is to assess what is available to produce food locally and secondly to help develop a community of producers to support each other.  
Ron shared an invitation to farmers to consider participating in an inventory. There were further questions and discussion around regarding who this information would be shared with and privacy issues that may arise.  
It was also suggested that an inventory could also include non-farmers who may have skills or resources they are willing to share. The value of drawing upon the experience, skills and knowledge of ageing farmers and passing it on was highlighted. Karen Harvey offered to film oral history and skills sharing of any ageing farmers who were interested.  
Willi Horvath & Diane Wiber spoke about their upcoming farm open house on June 18 19<sup>th</sup>. This is the second year for this event. It is free of charge to everyone.
4. **Report on FarmSTART Program** – Bob Norris  
Bob Norris was unable to attend this meeting, but did send the following information regarding the FarmSTART program:
  - It is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is “to support a new generation of farmers”. This is done through workshops and courses which are laid out on their website. One of these workshops is called “Exploring Your New Farm Dream” and is being offered in Kingston & Peterborough. Check out their website at [www.farmstart.ca](http://www.farmstart.ca)
  - Their incubator program is only available in southern Ontario.Lynda Hutt investigated the possibility of linking into the “Exploring Your New Farm Dream” course through video conferencing. This is a possibility and the first step is to find out how many individuals may be interested in this course. There did not appear to be any interest from the individuals at this meeting at this time.
5. **SAVOUR Website** – James Murphy  
James has not yet spoken to their web person to set up new web page. This is only the second meeting of this Task Group and he feels there is more clarity required to see specifically what is

required and appropriate. James suggested beginning with a blog. This capacity is already existing.

6. **The District of Muskoka** did a report on agriculture in Muskoka in 1998. Lynda Hutt has secured a copy of this report. It will be distributed with these minutes. The District of Muskoka has offered to assist with with an inventory if we would like. They are reviewing their official plan and would like to include agriculture. Dianne stated that she felt a Farm Committee member should contact Samantha Hastings and Melissa Halford at the District to further discuss their cooperation.
7. **Muskoka Heritage Trust:**  
Dianne has contacted the Muskoka Heritage Trust. They were not aware of the Farmland Conservation Agreement. They were going to take this idea to their board of directors. Also, Dianne has information on the Ontario Conservation land Act if you would like to learn more.
8. **Revisit Action Plan Points...**
  - Skilled Farm Labour:** Dianne stated that she feels there is a high need for a Farm Labour Pool especially for market gardening. Bob Norris (OMAF) has suggested to Dianne that Ridgetown would be the college to approach for skilled labour. He felt the agricultural colleges were better place to look than FarmSTART. John Dixon expressed concerns regarding the university/College teaching a chemical based approach to farming. He has been impressed with the CRAFT program. The need for skilled farm labour will be discussed at the next meeting.
  - Barriers to local processing:** Barriers to local food processing need to ease up, in particular regarding abattoirs and butchers. We need local abattoirs and the current regulations are highly restrictive. There was considerable discussion regarding what can be done to alleviate this situation. It was felt that the general public needs to become more aware of what is at stake and that this must be communicated with local elected official to bring the issue to the forefront. Matt Richter volunteered to look into strategies to address this issue. Andrew Johnson and Ayako Horiguchi volunteered to work with Matt on this issue.
  - Education:** Ron Karson suggested that there is a need to be educating everyone, not just in the schools. Elise Curry suggesting working with Willi Horvath regarding his Farm Open House and creating educational opportunities at the event. It would also be good to ensure that there is local newspaper coverage of the issues and opportunities for farming in Muskoka.
9. **Next meeting** – James noted that the SAVOUR AGM is Feb 27<sup>th</sup>.The goal is to have some clarity from sub-committees regarding their goals and the resources required to achieve these goals. The next meeting of the Production Task Group is set for Feb 9 hopefully in the MCN conference room.

Respectfully submitted by  
Lynda Hutt