**Lake County Community Food Council**

**January 11, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

**St. Ann’s Church Baldwin, MI 3:30 p.m.**

Attending:

Anne Bianchi, District 10 Health Dept.

Tom Ellis, Lake County Community Foundation

Sue Brown-Havens, Bread of Life Pantry and Garden Club

Freddie Rosado, Circle R Farm and Chairperson

Kendra Gibson, MSU Extension

Val Handy, USDA Rural Development

Leo Heska, local citizen and Rotarian

Michael Krauch, MSU Extension

Kathy Merchant, Bread of Life Pantry

Lynne Mills, Bread of Life Pantry

Fr. Ron Schneider, St. Ann’s Church

Meryl Smith, District 10 Health Dept.

Barb Stenger, County Commissioner

Kendra Wills, MSU Extension

1. **Presentation by Michael Krauch regarding Lake County Property**

Mike introduced himself to the group. His wife is a third grade teacher at Baldwin Elementary School. He is an attorney and lives in Ludington. He attended the first meeting of this Council in 2015. Mike is a District Coordinator for MSU Extension. He works with several county Board of Commissioners to make sure MSU Extension is meeting the needs of the community. He believes MSU Extension can play an important role in foster economic development and community success in Lake County. Current MSU Extension programs in Lake County include: personal financial management, homeownership and foreclosure prevention, 4-H youth development, agricultural production expertise, nutrition education, and local food systems/food preservation and food safety. Additional resources may be added as needed.

Mike noted that Lake County Board of Commissioners is interested in seeing more programming in the county. The Board is also interested in programs in locations other than Baldwin. They feel other areas in the county may be underserved.

The Board of Commissioners told Mike that they are interested in a local food project, possibly a community farmers market, at their county property located in Weber Township. This property used to be the county fairgrounds. There are approximately 20 acres of county owned property. On the property is a ¼ acre fenced in area, an open-sided livestock barn that is in need of some light repair, a wellhead and we believe electricity is in the area. This property is approximately 3-4 miles north of Baldwin. Mike says he believes this property would not be subject to significant vandalism due to its remote location. (Unlike the greenhouse at Baldwin Schools, which was an attractive nuisance.)

The county property may be a location where the Council sponsors educational programs or perhaps installs a garden. The Board of Commissioners would need to approve any project on this property. Mike also noted that a new Shooting Sports 4-H Club may be forming and perhaps they would like to use this property as well. Krauch said he has approximately $500 to contribute toward educational programming for Lake County residents at this location if the Council is interesting in partnering.

It was noted that this property is not for sale and the county has no plans for selling the property. TRV is no longer using the property. We are unsure of the soil health and MSU Extension would be willing to have the soils tested if that was necessary for a Council project.

Kendra Wills noted that she has volunteered to coordinate a farmers market feasibility study for this property and other possible farmers market options (including a mobile farmers market) for Lake County. She will work with the Council on developing a work plan for this project.

1. **District Health Department #10 CDC Grant Award**

Anne Bianchi and Meryl Smith from the District Health Department #10 announced that they were one of 17 only grantees in the nation to receive a Community Partnership for Healthy Mothers and Healthy Babies grant from the CDC (Center for Disease Control). The grant must focus on policy systems and the creation of healthy eating environments in Lake County. Grant funds cannot be used for classes or services for individuals.

The DHD #10 was awarded this grant in Oceana County and they formed a community advisory board. Projects included: a printed community contact directory, signs in restaurants pointing people toward healthy meal choices and education about healthy food choices at farmers markets and the Hart food pantry and coming soon will be some grocery store signage.

The DHD #10 will be hiring a full time coordinator for this project in Lake County. The job posting is on the DHD #10 web site. Funding for the project is available through June 2017.

Anne and Meryl are interested in the possibility of coordinating with the Food Council on this project as it would seem redundant to create another council focused on healthy eating projects in Lake County. Council members seemed to be in favor of considering a partnership, but wanted to check with the Voices for Food Grant to make sure we would not be violating this grant process by doing so. Council members asked for more information on what a partnership would involve and they will discuss this again at the February 2016 Food Council meeting.

1. **Update from the Bread of Life Food Pantry on Transitioning to Client Choice**

Kathy Merchant reported that the pantry is making new signs to color code shelves matching the “My Plate” meal guidelines. This is in preparation for the client choice shopping model in the pantry. Quotes for a pantry expansion are being sought so there would be enough room for people to come in and shop in the pantry. Lynne Mills reported that the shelves are stocked and the freezers are full. Donations and fundraising efforts have been very successful over the past few months. Over 600 pounds of venison were donated by area hunters. The pantry feels very blessed. Last week 70 families were served and approximately 200 families are served each month.

Freddie asked if we will be working with the other pantries in Lake County as well. The Voices for Food grant specifies that our focus is on converting the Bread of Life pantry to a choice pantry; however, Kendra Gibson said she will be contacting the pantries in Luther and Irons to see if they are interested in this kind of technical assistance and/or educational programming that MSU Extension can offer.

1. **Reports from Other Members**

Leo reported that he has been working with some National Honors Society students at Baldwin High School to develop a community services project. He helped them develop the idea of “The Real Hunger Games” shooting sports 4-H Club. Leo is excited about the students’ enthusiasm around peer mentorship, teens teaching younger youth, and donation of venison or fish to area food pantries as a community service effort. Freddie noted that it would be great to compile a list of property owners that would allow these students to hunt on their property because access to hunting lands can be a challenge. This club will be a countywide club, open to all, not just Baldwin Schools students.

Freddie reported that Circle R Farm will apply to receive Double Up Food Bucks grant funds for this year’s market season. Freddie and his family are in the process of evaluating their future in Lake County. The can only promise they will be here for one more market season (2016). If the family does decide to relocate, Freddie will be looking for a family that is willing to work hard so he can pass on the farm operation to them. Freddie has been working with Kendra Wills on researching grants and information related to fish farming for sales to restaurants.

1. **Meeting Schedule for 2016**

The Lake County Community Food Council will meet on the second Monday of the month from 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. In the winter months we will continue to meet at St. Ann’s Church in Baldwin. (We are very grateful for this meeting space!)

In the warmer months we would like to host meetings in other locations. We are accepting invitations from our contacts if you are willing to host a meeting.

Our next meeting will be:

**Monday, February 8, 2016 at 3:30 p.m.**

**St. Ann’s Church in Baldwin**

**Open to all.**

Items to be discussed include: Development of a revised Voices for Food Mini Grant budget, collaboration with the Health Department’s CDC project, process for conducing a farmers market feasibility study. Please submit additional agenda items to Kendra Wills with MSU Extension.

1. **Meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.**

Minutes submitted by Kendra Wills with MSU Extension. If you have any questions, comments, or corrections, please contact Kendra at willsk@anr.msu.edu or (616) 608-7424.