

**MINUTES OF THE INFORMAL MEETING OF THE JOHNSON COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:
NOVEMBER 12, 2013**

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Chairperson Rettig called the Johnson County Board of Supervisors to order in the Johnson County Administration Building at 6:58 p.m. Members present were: John Etheredge, Pat Harney, Terrence Neuzil, Janelle Rettig, and Rod Sullivan.

Click [here](#) for audio file of this meeting.

**IOWA VALLEY RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOOD
SYSTEM PLANNER JASON GRIMM: REPORT AND UPDATE, INCLUDING
POTENTIAL BUSINESS/COMMUNITY ALLIANCE TO SUPPORT THE
DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL FOOD BUSINESSES IN THE AREA**

Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development (RCD) Food System Planner Jason Grimm presented a report on an economic development block grant the Board awarded to the RCD earlier this year. He hired Prairie Ventures, LLC Owner K. Jesse Singerman to help study and understand the local food industry within the Coralville region.

Singerman presented a PowerPoint which examined supply of local foods and agricultural products and the demand for expansion of this production. Slides discussing supply included information about the decreasing total number of farms but increasing number of small farms (50 acres or fewer), and Johnson County's diverse market. The growth in the market value of agricultural products in Johnson County has grown 81% compared to the state average of 66% whereas the average sales per farm in Johnson County are almost 50% smaller than the state average. The number one crop in Johnson County is corn. Johnson County ranks 48th of the 99 Iowa counties in corn production, 5th in vegetable, melon, and potato production, and 18th in production of milk and other dairy products.

Singerman said data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates there are 24 establishments in Johnson County fitting the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code which accounted for total sales of just over \$250 million in 2007.

Singerman said the 2012 estimate of local food sales was roughly \$3.3 million. Singerman concluded the market demand for local food products is very high in Johnson

County. She said she conducted interviews with natural food cooperatives (co-ops) both in Johnson County and outside of Iowa. Sullivan asked Singerman what she used as a definition of “local” when compiling this report. Singerman said she used the stores’ individual definitions, which vary and are included in the report on page 12.

Singerman said food enterprise centers (FECs) supply infrastructure necessary for food processing and preparation, an incubation function, business planning, technical assistance, and coaching. A food hub is usually more a distribution business which includes aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified or local food. The idea is to move this food into secondary markets like wholesale, retail, and institutional demand. Viroqua, Wisconsin has both a food processing center and a food hub for a county with a population of about 30,000.

Singerman said New Pioneer Co-op has been particularly successful with perishables and meat but there are efforts to make it better. Local package goods are difficult to source and according to New Pioneer Co-op General Manager Matt Hartz, Johnson County is lacking in the organized and institutional support for local foods that seem to be available elsewhere. An example of this is that there is no resource for information about food businesses and there is no commercial kitchen with food storage available for rent. A consequence of this is a lack of market readiness for many local producers which is at the low end of what is necessary to reach the retail shelves.

Singerman said there are many important pieces in place already to foster a strong local food economy and support additional food businesses. Iowa City is an organic hotspot and there are several businesses that are supporting development of a network which is anchored by New Pioneer Co-op and the Iowa City Farmers Market. Johnson County’s agriculture base is suited to additional local food production given the growth of small farms and the relative diversification of agricultural production as compared to other counties in Iowa. The area’s population is also growing as is the demand for local food.

Singerman suggested that Johnson County provide technical food processing training or at least an annual workshop. This would provide a resource for entrepreneurs to get started. It would also be worth doing research to determine if a food hub – which would be a distribution-focused business – would be feasible in Johnson County. These food hubs are not always economically viable but based on data; Johnson County is one place where this can likely be done. She also thinks it would be worth researching an FEC with a commercial kitchen, storage, business planning, and market development to determine its economic feasibility in Johnson County. A survey of local businesses by the Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD) last summer determined that there is a demand for commercial kitchen space.

Singerman said she and Grimm submitted a planning grant to the Leopold Center for an FEC in the Johnson County-Linn County corridor with support from the City of Iowa City, the Johnson and Linn Counties’ Boards of Supervisors, ICAD, New-Pioneer Co-op, Hy-Vee, and Oasis in addition to a few others. The grant will be used for networking,

education and information about FECs and food hubs, research of likely models, and brainstorming workshops. Singerman said they are seeking support from the Board of Supervisors with money through the Economic Development Block Grant in the amount of \$5,000. None of the information reported today would have been compiled without past support from the Board.

Harney asked whether the Board's recent Limited Processing Facility Ordinance would compete with this proposed expansion to FECs. Grimm said no because the scales of limited processing facilities and FECs are very different. Singerman said the proposed FEC would be staffed by professionals with experience in recipe development and food production. The proposal Harney referred to was focused more on direct marketing products into the farmers markets and community supported agriculture (CSA). Grimm said currently food businesses mostly go through the training for food processing at the University of Nebraska which is expensive.

Sullivan gave the example of the Sioux City Sioux brand name, which serves Woodbury County's economic development. He asked whether Johnson County could have a similar level of ownership depending on the amount of money the Board allocates to this proposal. Singerman said she and Grimm hope the planning process will answer that question. Sullivan said they have worked well with Linn County but the county where the facility is located will reap all of the economic benefit because counties in Iowa are mostly funded through property taxes. Rettig said this report will be available at www.johnson-county.com and more information will be sent to the public.

SOLON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT CLAYTON OLSON: VETERANS EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

Neuzil said this past summer, Solon High School student Clayton Olson shadowed him on the job and is going to address the Board.

Olson said he interviewed the following individuals for his research on barriers veterans face in finding employment in Johnson County: Veterans Affairs Director Gary Boseneiler, Sheriff's Major Steve Dolezal, Medical Examiner Administrator Mike Hensch, Assistant Planning and Zoning Administrator R.J. Moore, Human Resources Administrator Lora Shramek, and Ambulance Director Steve Spenler. Olson summarized ways local government can address this problem and discussed advantages to hiring veterans in the public and the private sector.

REPORTS AND INQUIRIES FROM EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ANDY JOHNSON

Executive Assistant Andy Johnson noted the following Board meeting schedule: November 21st: Formal/Informal Meeting at 9:00 a.m. followed by a Budget Work Session; November 25th: Budget Works Session; November 26th: Secondary Road's quarterly meeting on the 5-Year Road Construction Plan; November 27th: Key Issues Meeting. Most County offices are closed for the Thanksgiving holiday on November

28th and 29th. A number of board and commission openings are listed on the County website, several of which have deadlines on November 15th. The Board is scheduled to receive a Historic Preservation Award for the Sutliff Bridge on November 21st at 6:00 p.m.

REPORTS AND INQUIRIES FROM THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Neuzil said the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) Fall School is upcoming.

Sullivan said a response is due for the Mental Health/Disability Services (MH/DS) Regional Fiscal Agent request for proposal. The letter is not a commitment but indicates intent to apply. He said County Auditor Travis Weipert said the Auditor's Office plans to submit a letter tomorrow. He said Jones County Supervisor Wayne Manternach is now the district chair of the MH/DS region.

Harney said he attended the Military Affairs Association annual banquet at Riverside Casino and the East Central Iowa Council of Governments Board of Directors meeting. Along with Etheredge, Harney attended the Iowa City Creative Corridor study update.

Rettig said the majority of the Board plans to attend the ISAC Fall School so the Supervisors will be available by email or text message. Budget meetings began today and there will about 16 more budget meetings in the next couple of months. The Board Office and Auditor's Office recently launched IQM2, new meeting management software, and testing is in progress.

Adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Attest: Travis Weipert, Auditor
Recorded By Nick Fetty
Finalized on September 22, 2014