



Legislation Text

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Request to Approve & Participate in “Gainesville Food Systems: A Community Conversation” Workshop (NB)

This is a request for the City Commission to approve hosting and participating in a workshop on February 12, 2019 to engage with residents and local stakeholders in a discussion about food accessibility issues in Gainesville.

On August 2, 2018 a new referral was made at the City Commission Meeting on the matter of the Food Policy, Food Economy & Urban Agriculture Group. The motion to add limited staffing to help with the work / goals of the Food Policy, Food Economy, and Urban Agriculture group passed unanimously among the six Commissioners present (Mayor Poe was absent). In a second motion, it was agreed that this topic would be addressed at the GPC meeting on April 20, 2019. The catalyst for these motions was the increasing concerns that citizens and community stakeholders were voicing to the City Commissioners regarding the issues of food accessibility and food insecurity existing in Gainesville. In the summer of 2018 Commissioners Johnson, Arreola, and Ward responded by convening regular ‘Food Policy’ special topic meetings that were open to the public. At these meetings residents, stakeholders, and commissioners shared ideas and concerns regarding food policy issues in Gainesville.

At the City Commission meeting on August 16, 2018, it was recommended that Food Policy be discussed at the next GPC meeting in September. At the GPC meeting on September 27, 2019 this item was discussed by the City Commission and a motion was passed that directed staff to engage UF in jointly scheduled public community meetings where UF, City, and community stakeholders would participate in a discussion around issues of food accessibility and food security in Gainesville. The Mayor agreed to send a letter / invitation out to community residents and organizations to promote community engagement in these meetings.

Since October 2018, staff in the Department of Strategic Initiatives have engaged in a community-based participatory research process to bring a more diverse population of residents and local stakeholders into the discussion of food accessibility issues. Interviews and informal focus groups have been held to gain insight about the specific challenges that residents face in terms of food access and security, as well as learn about the different community resources currently available that address these issues. The information gathered through this research process has been used to inform the framework of the community meeting the Commission called for during the September 27 GPC meeting.

Staff requests the Commission approve and participate in a workshop on February 12, 2019 to review the information learned through the community-based research process, discuss additional issues not yet identified, and brainstorm solutions to improve these issues. Staff also requests that the ideas generated during the brainstorming session be presented to the City Commission at the GPC meeting on March 14, 2019 for further discussion by the commissioners.

Childcare services will be provided for up to 20 children whose parents / guardians are attending the meeting.

Providing childcare will enable more residents to attend whom otherwise may not be able to participate in the discussion and thus supports the mission to achieve true community engagement. The estimated cost for childcare is \$350.

Light refreshments will be provided for an audience estimated to be about 80 adults. In efforts to support our local food system, a local small business will provide the catering service for this event. The estimated cost for refreshments is \$850.

The City Commission 1) approve hosting and participating in a workshop on February 12, 2019, to discuss issues of food accessibility and brainstorm ideas for possible next steps in addressing these issues.