

## AFSAC Meeting 1/15/2019, Anchorage, Notes

**Present, DEC:** Lorinda Lhotka, Ytamar Rodriguez, Bobbie McDonald (notes), Kim Stryker, Jeremy Ayers, Brehan Kohl

**Present in person:** Ryan (Chugach Chocolates) and Melissa Chlupach (UAA Dietetics), Jeff Hickman (MOA) [*Rachel was unable to join us.*]

**Present, phone-in:** Robbi Mixon (presenter), Steve Lacy, Daniel Tew, Dr. Bob Gerlach, Brian Himelbloom

*Technical issues delayed the start of the meeting. Muted Skype and had people call GCI conference number (315-6330, access code 84882*

Kim Stryker provided building info/housekeeping for in-person attendees.

### Opening Remarks: Kim Stryker (1:48)

Last meeting we heard from Brehan about our social media projects to help identify complaints/illness  
DEC launched Yuck Line to receive text (and phone) complaints, working with partners in Public Health, looking to identify where foodborne illnesses are coming from

New staff: Brandi Tolsma in Juneau (training with Ytamar in the valley this week)

FDA/AFDO co-delivered training in February on Risk-Based Inspections

Regs project for Seafood in public comment period ending 2/1/2019

Next project is regulations for food processors, then retail regulations (AK Food Code) to meet FDA Model Food Code requirements

Today we'd like to talk about the evolution and energizing of this group to work on Food Safety issues.

### Robbie Mixon Presentation on the Alaska Food Hub/Cottage Foods variance (PowerPoint with video)

Emphasize community partnerships for all stages, policy/procedures, distribution sites, review

- Started with a Local Food Promotion grant from USDA
- April 2016 opening; April through November operation for the past 3 years
- Small grocery stores and cafes
- Costs are low, and include time, software, insurance, bookkeeping
- Sliding fee scale \$1-100; Producer fee \$40/year
- Volunteers and 25% markup keeps things running
- AlaskaFoodHub.org
- Order confirmation emails would serve as a good traceback tool—stored indefinitely,
- First variance request denied in 2016; in 2018, was accepted by state and MUNI and permitted as a grocery
- Requirements for cottage food sellers: FWC; labeling
- Shellfish tags maintained by Jakolof Bay (specific to Food Hub orders)
- MN: Registered Cottage Food User logo/emblem
- Benefits: keeps revenue in the community; strengthens networks; expands healthy food options, reduction in food miles/carbon footprint
- Challenges: turn non-purchasers into buyers and keep them; easy for people to go around the hub once they are aware of farm/product
- Vendor benefits: marketing, transportation between Homer/Soldotna; known buyer (don't harvest something that isn't sold)

## Questions?

- Ryan: do we have any metrics on cottage food sales in Alaska?
  - Kim: not really, though we have done quite a bit of education recent years; conscious decision to use limited resources in higher-risk areas; at the time we opened up cottage foods, we also expanded types of temporary events that could be done without permits
  - A few 'scares' around cottage foods but no real issues have arisen around these exemptions. The exempted foods are not without risk, consumers assume the risk
  - Ryan: education and awareness is key
  - Lorinda: Food Hub is actually providing some oversight of cottage foods coming through the hub, which many cottage foods producers don't have
  - Robbie: also manages farmer's market; many small producers go on to becoming permitted producers; cottage foods as incubator
  - Kim: noted Rachel's efforts in this area—test kitchens, etc.; challenges around funding etc. but lots of potential and interest. Focus on safety.
  - Ryan: Producers want to produce and DEC wants to keep them safe: good partnership opportunities
  - Jeff: Muni perspective on cottage foods: now legal with new food code; fewer restrictions. Muni licenses them and has some product vetting that goes on prior to release, no verifications easing them to produce (lab testing that may be required etc.) No inspection, only a \$25 license fee. 30-40 producers licensed so far.
    - Ryan: Are there any doing this without licensing? Probably but the muni just provides info to get them licensed rather than fines etc.
    - Easier now that the rules are codified.
    - Definition of cottage foods mirrors state definition (issues arose when definition was different) though they seem to have some misgivings around what the state allows. ;)
  - Kim: areas of confusion include wholesale vs. retail/direct sales requirements and labeling (allergens)—Lorinda: most issues (complaints) are people selling things that would not qualify as a cottage food (tamales, etc.) and we do follow up on those

Kim: Put Dr. Bob on the spot, but we got no response from him; will circle back; Kate from Epi is on vacation so no SoE representation today.

- 3 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* outbreaks this year (likely due to changing climate); we continue to work with shellfish operators; illnesses occurred despite good practices by operators. Unique conditions in arctic?
- Summer concerns around biotoxins; hoping to partner with other agencies to investigate further.
- Lorinda: Norovirus is going around; causes some complaints, also remains scares
- Melissa: Nome beached whale botulism outbreak, people to ANMC in the last month

Kim: Ebb and flow of this group over the years; serving different purposes based on membership and what's going on in the program as well. Leading in to Food Protection Task Force grant.

- "Task force" speaks to a more active approach than "advisory committee"
- Hepatitis A outbreak led to no BHC rule
- Safe transportation of food—larger issue than group could tackle but valuable info came of it wrt challenges across the state; relates to FDA sanitary transport rules and how to implement in Alaska

- Would like consideration/input on how to energize/participate group and what the focus should be: open discussion/conversation
  - Melissa: interested in starting back up with group; inclusion of a chef would be valuable
  - Ryan: concept of industry and regulators working on common issues; what are some low-hanging fruit on the overlap area (inspections—more info to operators, to better prepare, self-inspections, etc.)
  - Steve: Decide on priorities to work on; he's on a few of these committees and they're working on employee health, food code, etc., develop subcommittees. (he might have more later)
    - Kim: we do have authority to work on the Alaska Food Code and plan on it; have to make updates for manufactured food first.
  - Kim: past iterations had 'membership' and more organized structure (though always an open meeting) – include labor camps (Doyon, NANA etc.), cottage foods rep, small processors, food banks, academia, child development, consumer group or representative; remote lodge
    - Farm-to-fork, boat-to-throat including general food manufacturers and seafood/shellfish—what do people think?
    - Cannabis industry (edibles), State vet, epi, Incubator kitchens, CHAR, AHA
    - Quarterly meetings—FPTF separate/additional or integrated
    - What do you want from US? Other topics WE could facilitate?
    - Ryan: **governance question over the group and good representation?** Structured? Terms? State and Muni combined is a good draw for this group. Narrow this to individuals occupying slots for a set time might get more participation (i.e. guilt them into participating?)
      - Does Muni have anything they run like this? Not really. Went to Health Commission to get blessing for food code
    - MOU? Do we need one?
- Kim: What is the best way to gather thoughts and ideas on this?
  - Goals for next meeting: two ideas, send them in to one person?
    - Lorinda: Survey Monkey? Email? Listserv?
- Steve: Send some invitations to industry and ask them too? What do they need? Invitation in a way that makes people feel like we really want their input/participation (we do.)

### **To Dos:**

- Ask for top 2 priorities: discuss at next meeting
- Official invitations with structure/term
- Other FPTF ideas: Kim will send out to inspire
- Next Meeting 4/16/2019, 1:30 pm