

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, October 16, 2024

Place: Third Christian Reformed Church, 2400 Winchell Ave, Kalamazoo, MI

Board Members:

Present: Christopher Shook, President; Rachel Bennett, Treasurer; Christopher Bovid, Secretary; Christine Chadderdon, Barry Olson, Barb Miller

Excused: Stephanie Watkins, Vice President; Peter Kushner, Past President; Paul Scott; Diana Morton-Thompson



In Attendance: Approximately 19 people (includes Board members)

- I. Meeting called to order by Christopher Shook, President; 7:00 PM
 - A. Chris Shook welcomed our attendees and thanked Third Christian Reformed Church for the use of the space for the meeting.
 - B. Review of Agenda and tonight's guest speaker
- II. MINUTES – September 18, 2024 (Christopher Bovid, Secretary)
 - A. Minutes from the September 18, 2024 ODWNA meeting have been recently posted to the website and some printed copies are available at the back of the room if anyone has not had a chance to see them yet.
 - B. Minutes adopted without objection.
- III. TREASURER'S REPORT - (Christopher Shook for Rachel Bennett, Treasurer)
 - A. ODWNA Checking Account Balance as of 3/31/2024 was \$4422.16.
 - B. No income; total expenses \$1,534.17 (Adopt-A-Drain \$290.44; 2024 Car Show \$292.88; 2024 Annual Report filing fee \$20; Association Meeting childcare \$30, Speaker Series Postcard Postage \$596.30; Speaker Series Postcard Printing \$304.55). Membership dues checks received are still being processed.
 - C. If anyone is unsure about current membership, please talk with our treasurer, Rachel Bennett.
- IV. BUSINESS ITEMS
 - A. Woods Lake Association (Christopher Bovid)
 - I. The WLA will hold its annual meeting on Sunday, November 3, 2024. Stephanie Watkins will be presenting on the Adopt-A-Drain program and its potential benefits for Woods Lake and its watershed.
 - B. Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (Christopher Shook)
 - I. Please check kalamazoo.city.ohio.gov for information about the City's work on its new 10 year master plan, "Imagine Kalamazoo 2035", which greatly impacts the direction of City planning, development, and resources, including in our neighborhood.
 - II. Multiple ways to get involved early on:
 - i. "Meeting on the go"
 - ii. City survey to take
 - iii. Private groups also meeting and taking surveys
 - III. City is encouraging all of us to get involved as much as we can
 - i. The City is encouraging people to read the book, "Happy City" by Charles Montgomery
 - IV. Even though we had hundreds of Oakland Drive-Winchell Neighborhood residents involved in Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 and subsequently the Oakland Drive-Winchell Neighborhood Plan, the City would love to see even more residents involved in working on the next iterations of the plan(s).
- VI. GUEST SPEAKER – Rachel Bair – Director for Sustainable Food Systems at Kalamazoo Community College (Introduced by Christine Chadderdon)
 - A. Overview of ValleyHUB Food Hub and Sustainable Food Systems Programs
 - B. ValleyHUB's building is on Crosstown Parkway – looks like a futuristic barn. Turn on John Street and come through the parking lot.
 - C. According to the USDA, "A regional food hub is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail and institutional demand
 - D. ValleyHUB is trying to connect local producers of food to customers like retailers, hospitals, schools, restaurants, and food systems.
 - E. There is also an urban farm there.
 - F. ValleyHUB has about 40 suppliers within a 50 mile radius, most of which are farms and some of which make foods. That food is aggregated at the ValleyHub and then taken to customers (restaurants, cafes, etc.) and early childhood centers and distribution centers (e.g., loaves and fishes) and hospitals (Bronson Hospital has been a core partner since day 1).
 - G. Fresh & Frozen Processing also utilized – expanding seasonality and making it easier to use farm-fresh products.
 - H. Logistics + More – reducing barriers between producers & consumers
 - I. On-Farm Food Safety – teaching best practice in the field and in the classroom
 - i. Very important because customers are often serving vulnerable populations

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes



- J. ValleyHUB is not the only food hub. 107 food hubs responded to a survey in the US and Canada. Most Food Hubs are Nonprofits or Co-ops and are not profitable. The roots of such programs come from marginalized populations (primarily in the South) that were unable to access traditional food systems. It has worked in Kalamazoo but might not work in other communities.
- K. Global Industrial Food System
- i. The food we eat in the U.S. is coming from all over the world and being produced on an industrial scale on large farms through large distribution systems and is highly processed. Food Hubs are in response to what is wrong with that system.
 - ii. This Global Industrial Food System is miraculous – most abundant and safe food supply humanity has ever seen. It might also be its own demise, however.
 - iii. The food and agriculture system is responsible for at least 10% of greenhouse gas emissions. It is responsible for habitat loss and a large extinction event like what happened in the late cretaceous period.
 - iv. It is a leading contributor to 7 of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States.
 - v. The way we produce food on this scale relies on expensive machinery so the farms are often under a heavy debt load to acquire and maintain that equipment. Those pressures together with weather events put farmers in poor mental health.
 - vi. As became apparent in 2020, if there are disruptions in the food chain, there are fragilities that appear within days.
 - vii. There is major consolidation of brands in the current system under food processors. Even if we think we see brands that give us choice in the supermarket, almost all the food we buy is actually made by few producers. That gives them a lot of power with wages, quality of products, and leaves consumers with little power in the system. All of this is worse for people of color and in the south. It is hard to be a farmer and stay a farmer if you are a person of color. 13.6% of US population but only 1% of US farmers identify as Black in 2020.
 - viii. 14% of US farmland in 1919 but only 2% of US farmland owned by Blacks in 2019.
 - ix. Percent of population experiencing food insecurity in 2020 by race shows large disparity, which has roots in redlining (such as was the case in Kalamazoo).
 - x. Climate Change is predominantly caused by people in the global north and its effects will be felt predominantly by people in the global south.
 - xi. Sometimes global problems need local solutions.
 1. That is happening in places like Kalamazoo.
 2. We do things here that don't happen other places.
 3. 10 years ago the vision came for the Bronson Healthy Living Campus.
 4. Kalamazoo Valley Community College came together with Bronson and Kalamazoo County Health and Human Services and they envisioned a space that would reinvigorate the area.
 5. Integrated Services of Kalamazoo needed a new location and that was built into the program.
 6. KValley also wanted to start a culinary and sustainable brewing program and those were also built in.
 7. In 2015 it was envisioned to have a new approach to culinary education, farm to table, seasonal, focused on food health, all together.
 8. Bronson was trying to source 60% of food from local farmers but was stuck at around 25% and asked KValley to build a food hub for Kalamazoo.
 9. Envisioned to demonstrate the full spectrum of food production but also involve students in the field.
 10. Realized that it would not work on semester basis to make it work for farmers.
 - xii. At ValleyHUB, Education is our #1 crop
 1. Community programs (e.g., composting class; home container gardening class; Kalamazoo Foodway Symposium event that focuses on culture and history and people connected aspects of cuisines – this year focused on freshwater foodways)
 2. Corporate volunteer groups
 3. Beekeeping classes in partnership with Kalamazoo Bee Club
 4. Childrens programming, including Saturday programs with WMU School of Education
 5. Involvement of culinary students
 6. ULTIMATELY want to shift the mindset of what good food is and why it is important to feed it to our community
 - xiii. We have the resources to do School Food well in Michigan (but there are still barriers)
 1. Michigan School Meals Only
 - a. Michigan School Meals provides better meal access by ensuring that families don't have to pay for their children to eat breakfast and lunch
 2. 10 Cents a Meal + NSLP Only
 - a. 10 Cents a Meal provides better meal quality by ensuring that the most delicious, locally grown fruits, veggies, and beans are served to kids in schools.
 3. Michigan School meals + 10 Cents a Meal

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes



- a. Pairing the two programs together ensures that we use school food service dollars for the greatest benefit of Michigan's children and farmers.
4. Visit [tencentsmichigan.org](https://www.tencentsmichigan.org) and <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/food/michigan-school-meals> to learn more!
- xiv. ValleyHUB is trying to reduce the barriers for schools to be able to use local food sources and make it easy
- xv. Partner Highlight:
 1. Kalamazoo Public Schools - Food Service
 2. YMCA - Dreamery (qualify for Ten Cents a Meal) and able to get local foods through ValleyHUB. Serve small enough population of kids that can do scratch cooking in their kitchens. They have decided as an organization that feeding children and helping them develop healthy habits for life is part of their mission.
 3. KValley - Valley Food Share: food boxes for college students each week
- L. Kalamazoo Valley Community College creates innovative and equitable opportunities that empower all to learn, grow and thrive.
- M. Invitation to Honorable Harvest Lecture Series on Tuesdays, September 17-November 19, 6:30-7:30pm
Location: Marilyn J. Schlack Culinary and Allied Health Building, 418 E. Walnut St., Kalamazoo
 - i. Arrive as early as 5pm to enjoy Taps on Tuesday, a happy hour-style event
- N. Questions:
 1. The problem of salmonella in lettuce, spinach, etc. - how does ValleyHUB limit/control it in the produce ValleyHUB sources?
 - a. ValleyHUB asks the farms to go through an on-farm readiness review with a safety team making sure they are following best practices to help limit salmonella on leafy greens – hand washing, tool washing, exclusion of animals from the field, sanitation of containers, and temperature controls. Also no handling of leafy greens takes place at ValleyHUB. And the produce that is handled is washed before being handled. There is always a risk of food borne illness in every single bite you eat. But farmers and food handlers can take every step possible to minimize that risk.
 2. FoodHUB buys from farmers – who sets the prices?
 - a. Farmers are allowed to set their own prices. ValleyHUB runs an online marketplace. The farms tell ValleyHUB what they have and update their inventory and customers can go on starting the next day and can order. Once ordered, the farmer gathers it and ValleyHUB picks it up the next day. Because customers can see the food from all the farms and the prices, the customers purchase what they need. So farmers set prices based on what will help them stay viable. ValleyHUB applies a 12% margin to food that is being handled but for processed food there is anywhere from 20-60% margin.
 3. Are there opportunities to volunteer?
 - a. ValleyHUB really likes corporate volunteer groups.
 - b. Also will take individual volunteers – just email valleyhub@kvcc.edu to set it up
 - c. Funded by the college and most of management staff is in the college's general fund budget because of educational contributions. However when there are new projects, Rachel writes a grant. When they want to give food away in the community, Rachel writes a grant. They have raised about \$5.5 million total, most from USDA. They recently qualified for a State of Michigan grant. The margin charged ends up being about 20% overall and gross sales this year are about \$2 million.
 4. What does the FoodHUB do to address food waste?
 - a. What ValleyHUB does in its own operations:
 - i. Doesn't buy any food that isn't already sold. So very little goes bad in ValleyHUB's possession or in the possession of its customers.
 - ii. A lot of processing (pre-consumer food scraps from peeling carrots, cutting apples, etc.) so much of that is given to companies that compost it. There is also now an on-site composting site that consumes thousands of pounds of food waste.
 - b. Also talk with customers and students to avoid and work on reducing food waste.
 - c. It costs more to do anything with food 'waste' other than throw it away, so that is a barrier.
 5. Did it take 10 years for the Kalamazoo Public Schools to participate in the program?
 - a. The food hub opened in 2017 and KPS made its first purchases in 2019 but they weren't a substantial partner until 2021-2022 when they got out of COVID shutdowns and had changes in management. Another barrier is that their food service is operated by a national contractor that has constraints around where schools can make food purchases so ValleyHUB had to work with them in order to get approved.

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes



6. What percentage of food used by KPS Schools comes from the ValleyHUB?
 - a. KPS serves 3 million meals per year and spends about \$4.5 million and last year only spent around \$75,000 on food from ValleyHUB.
7. Is there room to grow the supply?
 - a. There is a parent group calls Healthy Food In Schools (pre-pandemic) but their kids are adults now so it needs some new energy. The school day and other demands put on our educators are barriers. YWCA has said 'food is part of our educational mission.' That is what needs to shift in the schools as well but right now it is not part of the mission (and there are multiple layers to why it is not).
8. Discussion about the author of the book "Braiding Sweetgrass" and how there is a theme of "Honorable Harvest".
9. What is the purpose of the greenhouses?
 - a. They are part of the "education is our number 1 crop" demonstration. One heated one and two passive solar ones. In them there is basic in-ground production, composting, aquaponics, hydroponic tomatoes, and space for horticulture students to practice propagation and raise tropical plants. Anytime 8-5 on a weekday public is welcome to show up and there are also public tours several times per year.

O. Christopher Shook asked whether anyone had any old or new business to bring forth and none was raised.

V. Christopher Shook adjourned the meeting at 7:56 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary