

Cabarrus County Food Policy Council

A Vision for Cabarrus County

The Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners (BOC) has a vision of Cabarrus as a county in which our children learn, our citizens participate, our dreams matter, our families and neighbors thrive, and our community prospers.

The BOC established the following five broad goals in an effort to achieve and maintain its vision:

1. Preserve and enhance quality of life by addressing growth with sound public policies that sustain resources, fund infrastructure needs, and provide high quality services.
2. Achieve community-wide preparedness to protect public safety, respond to routine and catastrophic events, and maintain and restore the well-being of all residents.
3. Use resources wisely and responsibly by protecting assets, minimizing risk, creating partnerships and using technology to maximize the value of county investments, expenditures and services.
4. A fully engaged community with a shared understanding of its issues and challenges and working together to achieve its goals.
5. Ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity and access to education, health care, and economic prosperity and encourage citizens to fulfill their potential and contribute to their community.

Sustainability

The BOC has determined that a critical element in achieving its vision is the establishment of Cabarrus County as a sustainable community. Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The pursuit of sustainability involves a triple bottom line approach; that is, policies and regulations are designed to achieve a balance between the social consequences (health, equity and justice), the economic consequences (economic growth and prosperity) and the environmental consequences (wise use of natural resources and protecting the environment).

Several policies, programs and regulations have already been implemented in the sustainability effort. Land use regulations are in place that encourage development in areas with existing infrastructure and provide for the preservation of farmland and rural areas. An incubator farm was opened to train new farmers to help meet the demand for fresh, local food and to keep land in agricultural production.

Energy and water conservation measures have been employed in county facilities and procurement policies minimize the use of disposable items and require the use of products with recycled content when possible. Also, environmentally (and human) friendly cleaning and grounds maintenance products are used at county facilities.

A number of measures have also been implemented aimed at improving air quality, including vehicle idling policies and the establishment of a large fleet of hybrid vehicles.

A Local Food Economy

The production and consumption of fresh, healthy food is at the heart of a sustainable community and the BOC wishes to encourage the local production, processing, distribution and consumption of food in Cabarrus County for a number of reasons.

1. There is a significant incidence of diet-related disease and poor health (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity) in Cabarrus County. The consumption of fresh, nutritious food can prevent and mitigate those diet-related conditions, thereby improving quality of life and reducing health care costs.
2. Cabarrus County has experienced a great deal of sprawling development which has displaced farms and open space and consumed significant natural and fiscal resources. Policies that promote sustainable agriculture, the preservation of existing farms and the creation of new farms to meet local food needs will keep land in production, preserve our local rural and agricultural heritage, consume minimal public resources and provide an important counterbalance to development.
3. Cabarrus County's traditional manufacturing base has diminished significantly with the closing of Pillowtex and Philip Morris. The Great Recession brought historically high unemployment rates. Building a robust, sustainable local food economy serves as a foundation for a resilient local economy that is resistant to downward global trends.
4. The air quality in Cabarrus County and the Charlotte region does not meet EPA standards. Global carbon emissions are contributing to climate change and peak oil is approaching. One method of addressing these issues is through distributed production, especially of energy and food.
5. The number of incidents of unsafe and contaminated food being distributed across the nation (and the world) has increased over the last several years. Local production, processing and consumption will improve food safety and security for county residents.

Food Policy Council

The BOC establishes the Cabarrus County Food Policy Council (FPC) to identify and strengthen the connections between food, health, natural resource protection, economic development and the agricultural community.

Charge

The FPC is charged with performing research, educating the community, developing strategies and making policy recommendations that will encourage the development of a robust, sustainable local food economy and a healthier population.

The county government will provide the FPC with staff assistance, meeting space and other resources needed to perform its charge, subject to budget appropriations made by the BOC and

county manager. A new position will be established to staff the FPC. Funding for this position will be derived from the reserve account established for the county's sustainability efforts and will not use annual operating revenues. The initial term of this position will be two years. It will be re-evaluated before the end of the two-year term and may be extended.

Membership

FPC members are appointed by the BOC from a pool of applicants.

The FPC will be comprised of a minimum of 13 and maximum of 21 members. In making appointments, the BOC will seek representation from the following professions and perspectives: farming, nutrition, education, emergency food systems, health care, food services, food manufacturers and distributors, waste management, research, land use planning, grocery, business or economic development, banking (or lending institutions), human services, and concerned citizens. Members shall live or work in Cabarrus County and shall serve without compensation.

Initially, FPC members are appointed for one or two-year terms and may be reappointed for an additional term with rotations that ensure continuity with new members joining experienced members. The membership selection process shall strive to consider racial, socioeconomic, ethnic and geographic diversity.

Tasks and Meetings

The FPC is given broad latitude in addressing its charge, however, the following specific tasks must be performed:

1. Elect from among its members by a simple majority vote a chairman.
2. Elect from among its members by a simple majority vote a vice-chairman.
3. Meet at least on a quarterly basis.
4. Develop and adopt bylaws.
5. Develop a mission statement.
6. Oversee the Cabarrus County community food assessment, being performed on a contractual basis by the Center for Environmental Farming Systems.
7. Establish goals and develop a plan for achieving the charge.
8. Form standing committees and/or issues committees to perform the work of the FPC and to include additional stakeholders.
9. Report findings and recommendations to BOC at least annually.
10. Communicate and coordinate with the NC Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council, established by the NC General Assembly in 2009.

FPC members are expected to attend all meetings and the BOC's attendance policy for boards, committees and commissions applies.

The FPC shall hold regularly scheduled meetings that are publicly announced in advance and subject to the general statutes governing public meetings and public records. All regularly scheduled meetings will include a reasonable allotment of time for community input.

Special meetings may be called by the chairman. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated and proper notice given. Support for meeting organization, logistics and minute taking will be provided by staff.

Duties of Officers

This list of duties may be expanded through the bylaws.

Chairman

- Develop meeting agendas with staff and preside over the FPC meetings.
- Serve as the main liaison between the Council and government representatives.
- Represent the FPC to the community.
- Ensure the Council acts in accordance with policies and mission.
- Facilitate consensus decision-making whenever possible.
- Commit to keeping the work of the FSC going between meetings.

Vice-Chairman

- Assume duties of chairperson in his/her absence.
- Ensure the FPC acts in accordance with its policies and mission.
- Commit to keeping the work of the FSC going between meetings.
- Assist the chairperson with FPC tasks as needed.