Together We Can – Health Improvement Council

Date: June 6, 2013
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Clare Gladwin RESD, 4041 E. Mannsiding Road, Clare, MI 48617

Present: Alison Fegan, Allison Dunn, Cindy Sherwood, Dennis Cantrell, Gary Billotti, Gretchen Wilbur, Heather Cole, Helen Lee, Julie Wright, Katina Price, Kelly Conley, Lisa Cross, Melissa DeRoche, Melissa Steiner, Mitchell Cote, Sarah Kile, Scott Miller, Stephanie Leibfritz, and Veronica Romanov

Welcome and Introductions
G. Billotti called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the Together We Can Health Improvement Council meeting. G. Billotti stated that Mary Kushion could not attend the meeting as she had a prior commitment out of state. Introductions were made.

Review/Approval of the May 2, 2013 Meeting Minutes
With no corrections stated, G. Billotti stated that the May 2, 2013 meeting minutes will stand as approved and will be posted on the Together We Can team room, on the Central Michigan District Health Department’s website (www.cmdhd.org), and on the Together We Can website (www.together-we-can.org).

Mark Hitchcock, MSU Extension – Food Systems
G. Billotti stated that Mark Hitchcock, from MSU Extension, was here at the TWC meeting today to present information of Food Systems. G. Billotti stated that Mark Hitchcock joined Michigan State University Extension in the Fall of 2012. G. Billotti stated that his duties for MSU Extension, while serving in the Greening Michigan Institute, fall under the Sustaining Community Prosperity Workgroup with a focus on Tourism and Entrepreneurism as well as the Community Food Systems Workgroup, primarily focused on supporting, educating and presenting statewide initiatives throughout Northeast Michigan. G. Billotti stated that Mark served as the Executive Director of the Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce prior to joining MSU Extension, as well as nearly 10 years in the recreation industry, primarily the ice arena realm. Mark also served honorably for 10 years in the US Army Reserve, serving a tour to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. G. Billotti stated that Mark is also involved with several local community organizations in the Iosco County area and continues to grow his network regionally. Hitchcock currently serves as Chairperson of the LIVE Iosco Young Professionals Network, Ex-Officio Representative on the Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Board Member of the Tawas Kiwanis Club, Board Member with Develop Iosco, Inc., and member of the Tawas City Business Association. Uniting the communities and working together, we will improve health and promote wellness in central Michigan.
Holding both a Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Business Administration from Northwood University, Hitchcock has a strong belief and background in a free market economy, which translates well into the efforts taking place to help lead Northeast Michigan toward sustainable prosperity in the new economy.

M. Hitchcock provided a power point presentation entitled “Understanding Community Food Systems.” From his power point, M. Hitchcock gave an overview on what is good food and what makes up a community food system. M. Hitchcock stated that good food is healthy, green, and affordable. M. Hitchcock stated that grocery stores are a part of the solution by stepping in to provide fresh fruits and vegetables when local food systems can’t provide enough.

M. Hitchcock stated that a sustainable community food system integrates food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management to enhance the environmental, economic and social health of residents. M. Hitchcock also stated that farmers, consumers and communities partner to create a more locally-based, self-reliant food economy which improves access to all community members to an adequate, affordable nutritious diet. M. Hitchcock stated that jobs are created in community food systems because someone has to grow the food, and someone has to sell the food, and someone has to transport the food.

M. Hitchcock stated that there is new technology being explored called aquaponics. M. Hitchcock stated that aquaponics is the method of growing crops and fish together in a re-circulating system. M. Hitchcock also stated that some farmers are also using what are called “hoop houses.” M. Hitchcock stated that hoop houses can protect crops from intense heat, bright sunlight, strong winds, and cold temperatures, allowing fruits and vegetables to be grown at times usually considered off season.

M. Hitchcock reviewed regional food hubs stating that 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. M. Hitchcock stated that the Eastern Market in Detroit is an example of a food hub.

M. Hitchcock stated that farmer’s markets are a great way for residents in communities to eat healthier. M. Hitchcock reviewed the topic of food insecurity stating that there are people in our communities who do not know where their next meal will come from. M. Hitchcock stated that food insecurity is a big issue for many rural areas. M. Hitchcock

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stated programs such as Future Farmers of America and Community Gardens are a good way to get the youth involved in growing and eating healthy foods.

M. Hitchcock reviewed ways that people in the community can make a change by educating children, growing your own garden, shopping at farmer’s markets, and reading labels on food packages.

V. Romanov asked if the food hubs have a method in place to get excess food out to community members. M. Hitchcock stated that some do, but not all of them. M. Hitchcock stated that food hubs will make every effort to distribute all food before it goes bad as they do not like to throw anything away.

J. Wright asked if MSU Extension has looked at the growing practices of any other northern states to see what is the length of their crop growing season. M. Hitchcock stated that MSU Extension is looking at the growing practices of farmers in both Wisconsin and Minnesota.

D. Milner asked if there are any hoop houses in northern Michigan. M. Hitchcock stated that there are and that MSU Extension is working on complying that information into a database.

M. Hitchcock thanked the Together We Can Health Improvement Council for allowing him to present today and stated that if anyone had any questions, to please contact him, and to feel free to use him as a resource during the TWC process.

Review of the “Meetings” Operating Agreement
G. Billotti distributed a document entitled “Complaints About Meetings.” G. Billotti stated that this list of complaints about meetings was developed at the Together We Can facilitator’s workshop and asked council members to circle what complaints they felt applied to TWC meetings. After members circled items they felt applied to TWC, G. Billotti stated that the Meetings operating agreement was emailed to everyone prior to the meeting and asked council members what they thought of the operating agreement. H. Cole stated that she likes that the operating agreement isn’t so structured and that it is more of an outline. H. Cole stated that she felt this is important because it then allows for some flexibility in meetings. M. DeRoche stated that she felt we did live up to this operating agreement for the most part, but does not know if the time keeper role has been identified or enforced. The council did have some technical changes, seeing as how the council now meets on the 1st Thursday of the month from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.

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Review of TWC “Governance Structure” Operating Agreement

G. Billotti thanked all the council members for taking the time to answer the TWC Direction Survey that was sent to everyone earlier in the week. G. Billotti reviewed outcomes of the survey stating that when asked to rank the qualifications for the next TWC leader, community health experience was ranked highest; when asked who should facilitate our meetings, the CMDHD director was ranked highest; when asked where TWC should go from here, the top choice was continue as CMDHD program but seek 501(c)3 status as part of CMDHD; and when asked if you believe you/your organization would be willing to financially contribute to the sustainability of TWC, 76% responded yes.

G. Billotti asked people to discuss at their tables the results of the survey and to look at why people may have responded in the way they did. G. Billotti stated that it is his hope that by the end of the meeting, we will have a good sense of the direction the council will want to go, and then we can decide at the August meeting.

D. Cantrell stated that he has heard from people at the health department that they do not know where the money is going to when the agency has the TWC golf outing or the TWC Trot. K. Conley stated that there is transparency associated with having a budget attached to TWC. D. Cantrell asked what qualifies as a contribution stating that some people could feel that they are making a contribution by attending the meetings.

Each table reviewed the survey results regarding question 3, which asked people to please select your top choice from the options below:

- Maintain the status quo
- Become an independent 501(c) organization
- Continue as CMDHD program but seek 501(c)3 status as part of CMDHD
- Become a program/service under the auspices of a current 501(c)3, such as Mi-HIA

G. Billotti stated that the survey response showed that 66% of the people who took the survey answered to continue as CMDHD program but seek 501(c)3 status as part of CMDHD. G. Billotti asked each table to report out if they agreed with this or not. The following comments were made:

- One table agreed with the survey response
- One table stated that being an independent 501 (c) would be a lot of work and also stated that Mi-HIA does cover more counties then CMDHD and could use Mi-HIA to build upon.
- One table stated that staying local is very important and that the six counties of CMDHD are invested and have brought along community and local organizations.

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• One table stated that they felt this initiative could be bigger than the six counties. This table stated that one option could be that TWC stays with CMDHD but Mi-HIA becomes the fiduciary. Another person asked why set up another 501(c)3, when we are all here because of the leadership of the health department and that we need to maintain that connection.

• One table stated that they do not want to take away from the leadership of the health department, but that they are in support of Mi-HIA taking over because they feel that there are some people not at the table because those people feel that this is a health department program.

Discussion was held on whether or not it was time to take TWC regionally. H. Cole stated that these strengths can come from outside the health department, but does not want to see the health department lose TWC. J. Wright asked if Mi-HIA and CMDHD could both lead TWC. After discussion, it was determined that the council would like to see pros and cons of becoming a 501(c)3.

Discussion was also held as to who would facilitate the meetings. S. Kile stated that it would be nice if facilitators were rotated through because that could give council members buy in to the process. H. Cole stated that facilitating is more than following agenda and asked the question on how we want council members spending their time. V. Romanov stated that she felt that having the Health Officer facilitate attaches a higher level of importance. J. Wright asked if Mi-HIA and CMDHD could co-facilitate.

G. Billotti stated that it sounded like the council needs to hear descriptions of 501(c)3 vs. Mi-HIA and have clear status scenarios.

G. Billotti stated that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 1st, 2013, at 9:00 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison B. Dunn

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