

# Highlights from Pre-Meeting Session of Weaver Street Market's Board of Directors and WSM Owners

*December 2012 Meeting*

*Board Pre-Meeting, Carrboro Century Center, Carrboro, NC on December 12, 2012, 6:15 pm to 7:30 pm*

## Board Pre-Meeting Session on WSM 2020 Goal 2: Drive the growth of local and sustainable foods

At the December pre-meeting WSM Directors met with owners and community experts to discuss **Goal 2: Drive the growth of local and sustainable foods**. The Goal 2 Conversation built upon more than 300 ideas from co-op owners and employees. Three themes emerged:

- Offer more local and sustainable products.
- Promote local.
- Develop new strategic opportunities.

These three themes closely align with the elements necessary to drive local sales.

The GM presented a potential breakdown of local and regional produce as a goal for percentage of sales, with a move from 20% to 40% for local products, moving regional products to 20%, and doubling healthy food sales from 15% to 30%. This, by 2020, would move local produce from \$16k to \$64k, and \$100k a week including regional sales.

Components of making this increase include

Success Requirements	WSM Theme	Measurement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable as well as local</li> <li>• Superior freshness and taste</li> <li>• Competitive price</li> </ul>	Products	Sales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge to choose and prepare</li> <li>• Local food culture (enjoyable, easy)</li> </ul>	Promotions	Sales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensible definitions</li> <li>• Analysis of food system</li> <li>• A sustainable path forward</li> </ul>	New Strategies	Reach

- More space in store for these products
- Featuring products through displays, employee interactions, and samplings
- Selling organic at conventional prices
- Providing products with an unmatched taste

Supply and distribution systems are important factors too. Some possibilities for future work include freezing local produce, developing a following around products grown locally, and working on season extension. Opportunities for increasing local sales exist in several product areas:

- Increase local wine sales, which are currently 2% of sales, to align more closely with local beer sales, which represent about a third of sales. Promotions on local wines have doubled sales over the last six months.
- Expand local dairy products, which are currently about a third local as well, through opportunities like local yogurt and tempeh/tofu.

- Expand local meat sales, which currently accounts for 44% of total meat sales, with beef and pork driving these sales. Future opportunities include poultry, better utilization of the facility, and value-added meats.
- Continue to expand local deli and bakery products, which are already highly successful, with new product lines and increased local ingredients.

There was also a discussion of our local food system and what defines it. Roles include farmers, processors, distributors, retailer, and consumer, with WSM currently falling mainly in the retailer role:



Future questions include identifying partners for filling these roles and determining which roles may be appropriate for WSM to fill. Filling the “retailer” space seems to be the most obvious role for WSM, but there are some unmet needs in the processor/distributor “middle ground” which may make sense for WSM to take a role in.

Visiting owner and co-director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, John O’Sullivan, spoke about the need for forward thinking as WSM as it advances this goal. He identified several challenges and opportunities:

- The growth of local co-ops in the region provides opportunities for synergy and purchasing power. For example, an opportunity exists in focusing on turkeys and guinea hens as alternatives to chicken.
- A certain coming challenge is the aging farmer population, especially amongst African American farmers.

- Season extension, crop rotation, organic systems changes, and other areas are currently evolving and provide new opportunities to explore.
- Changes that are coming among national distributors will impact what opportunities are locally.
- Signature products continue to drive consumer interest, and should be expanded..

Mr. O'Sullivan also highlighted the successes and challenges of the 10% Campaign's efforts to drive local food sales. The 10% Campaign, a Center for Environmental Farming Systems initiative, encourages all North Carolinians to spend 10% of their existing food dollars on locally grown and produced foods. The Campaign has now tracked \$25 million in local food purchases since its launch in July 2010. While reported local sales are still a relatively low percentage of the total statewide sales of food, they have helped to illustrate to distributors and manufacturers that this market exists and that it has a robust consumer base.

Owners attending the pre-meeting offered their insights and suggestions for Goal 2, including the following highlights:

- Some products, even at a greater price, are worth highlighting because of their accompanying excitement level.
- Merchandising and the quality of displays are critical to driving sales.
- WSM needs to incubate businesses locally to fill voids in the local food system.
- Unmatched freshness may require a loss in money, but is worth focusing on.
- WSM could take a role in helping consumers preserve products themselves and sell accompanying products.
- A local producer tour, in the same vein as the popular Farm Tour, might be an opportunity for highlighting producers.
- The Food House could use more local ingredients, such as local butter, in the breads and pastries produced.
- WSM stores can serve as a living experiment for a greater role in education, educating consumers about not just what is local, but what is seasonably local.
- People are open to making different decisions about their purchases, but they need to be directed.
- Local is an overarching theme that connects all four 2020 goals.
- Creating a committee for helping work on these goals is an important volunteer opportunity.

At the end of the discussion the Board Directors considered how the conversation might inform future planning of the Board and its outreach to the community. Some highlights include:

- Creating a staff position that focuses on building new partnerships with local farmers and producers.
- Communicating regularly with local farmers and finding opportunities for cutting margins to make it more profitable for farmers to sell their products to us.
- Providing additional resources to local producers, such as marketing and outreach.
- Purchasing leftover produce from the farmer's market for sale at WSM to prevent its waste.
- Publicizing our needs for local products and what our volume needs might be, and also sharing information to help incubate new businesses to meet holes in the product line.
- Publishing follow-up articles to promotions to talk about our successes.
- Defining WSM's role in increasing people's quality of life and the opportunities for doing so.
- Creating an offshoot business for distribution.