

Healthy Roots Collaborative Advisory Committee Meeting
July 20, 2023 – 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
BLUE SKY PACKING 141 Casino Road, Sheldon, VT 05483

Attendance: Emily Alger, Lauren Weston, Cassie Fraser, Elisabeth Nance, Katie Darr, Peter Jenkins, Christine Porcaro

Goals:

- Learn about new Blue Sky Packing space
- Learn more about the new HRC storage space located at Blue Sky Packing

Times	Agenda Item	Action
1:00 to 1:10	Arrive at Blue Sky Packing	
1:10 to 2:00	Blue Sky Packing Facility Tour	
<p>Scott Choiniere, President of Emerging Business at the Abbey Group who is overseeing and managing the Abbey Group’s new project Blue Sky Packing (BSP), gave HRC Advisory Committee a tour of their new space in Sheldon. Scott answered questions on Blue Sky Packing’s sourcing, distribution, and school relationships.</p>		
2:00 to 2:30	HRC Storage “tour” and update	
<p>C. Porcaro gave a tour of the HRC storage space next to the Blue Sky Packing’s new building. She gave an update on the construction timeline, building layout and funding for the renovation.</p>		
2:30 to 2:45	Abbey Group presentation & discussion	
<p>C. Fraser gave an overview of her work and projects going on at the Abbey Group. Cassie shared about a local purchasing incentive from the state that encourages businesses to buy local but that the “local” definition doesn’t include some of the larger businesses they purchase from like King Arthur Flour, or some product produced by Cabot. She also shared about difficulties for schools in meeting order minimums for purchasing local. She explained that logistics on all sides of food distribution and purchasing are complex.</p> <p>L. Weston asked about Blue Sky Packing’s intentions around bottling milk for schools. Cassie shared that BSP was looking to purchase equipment to individually package milk for schools. Cassie explained that a project like that would take new equipment, big expenses, and more labor so the project has not yet come to fruition.</p>		

2:45 to 3:00	Partner Org Updates & Discussion	P. Jenkins send L. Weston information on gleaning opportunities.
<p>E. Alger brought up the recent storm and flooding in Vermont. E. Alger mentioned wanting to visit Boneyard Farm who is currently doing a lot of work in land and stream conservation. L. Weston mentioned that NOFA-VT is hosting an event in August at Boneyard Farm which will discuss waterways and riparian buffers.</p> <p>L. Weston shared that FC NRCD has discussed wanting to make updated flood maps for farmers as FEMA's are out of date. She also shared the importance of farmers having crop insurance and knowing where infrastructure is located. L. Weston also expressed that there was not much notice for this storm so farmers did not have the opportunity to prepare.</p> <p>K. Darr shared about the inconsistent/not clear guidance on individuals being able to go in certain bodies of water, including Lake Champlain. E. Alger added that people on the Islands were wondering if they were still able to swim in the lake.</p> <p>C. Porcaro acknowledged that our region was not hit as badly as others but wondered what HRC should be doing now in anticipation and preparation for another extreme weather event in the future. L. Weston mentioned the loss of seeds by the New Farms for New Americans and that perhaps HRC can play a role in developing a seed bank. E. Alger mentioned the various flood disaster funds from CAE and NOFA-VT and wondered if there was a way to have funds that could be available to farms without other caveats (e.g., needing to be organic or the funds being a loan, etc)</p> <p>Meeting ended 3:00pm.</p>		

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