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Belfast, ME
4/23/16

Local Food Rules Summit: Notes

Introduction - Heather Retberg

- Heather is a farmer in Penobscot, had an interaction with a health inspector that led her to take action
- Says legislators aren't always the ones we should look to for answers, and the goal is to grow food sovereignty from grassroots

Keynote Speaker - Laila Johnson of Wisconsin

- "Democracy is something we do - not something we get"
- Emphasis on community rights
- Role of civil disobedience
- The power to supply ourselves with food represents power on a larger scale (referenced the enclosure of the commons)
- There is a need for accountability at the industrial scale, but not at the local level when issues with food safety can be addressed by townspeople
- Over 200 other communities in the US have defended local rights (fracking bans, etc)
- "Dylan's Law" vs. Home Rule
- Expect to be met with resistance
- Conflict as a productive tool vs cooperation

Home Rule

- Maine has one of the strongest home rule policies
- "You can do whatever you think will contribute to your community" - Bonnie Preston
- The supreme court declined to preempt the ordinance
- Policy diffusion has been largely horizontal
- Craig Hickman put in a concept bill of food sovereignty in 2013, it failed (LD 783)

Logan Perkins, Lawyer and Farmer from Swanville

- Fundamental rights can change under the 14th amendment
- Encouraged non-cooperation during enforcement raids, power of community voice, food disobedience

Panel Discussion

- Bonnie Preston from **Blue Hill** (2011)
 - Wanted to buy food from Heather's farm, said "this is the way we've always done it"
 - Had a supportive newspaper
 - Didn't face much opposition in the town, relatively easy process
- Kendra from **Isle au Haut** (2013)

- Heard about Blue Hill
- Lots of farmers, gardeners, and people raising chickens on the island as well as a general store, local cafe and truckstop
- Restaurants were already buying local produce
- Ordinance took 1 month to pass, pretty easy, little opposition, easier town meeting than usual
- **Appleton (2012)**
 - Jenna Lookner (journalist) reached out to local farmers
 - Appleton only faced opposition from 2 individuals, used tea party to pass ordinance with 78% of the vote
 - Took 3 ½ - 5 months from start to finish
- **Brooklin (2014)**
 - Familiarity with ordinance (proximity to other towns)
 - Young mother was reprimanded by state HHS for feeding child her own goat milk
 - Core committee: 2 libertarians, 2 liberals
 - Went to selectboard, collected signatures, held public hearing
 - 2 points of opposition: innkeeper and a democrat
 - Passed with a 5-1 ratio, process took 5 months
- **Bingham (2015)**
 - Town lawyer, selectman were difficult, biding time, talking to other towns people
 - Legal petition demanded a hearing
 - Activists passed out info, called, spread the word
 - Vote on July 1st passed 59-8. Took 3 ½ months total
 - Targeted granges, local churches because there aren't many farms around
- **Moscow (2015)**
 - A farmer selling chicken eggs/meat had a growing operation, heard about the ordinance passed in Bingham
 - Local hardware store owners collected signatures, husband was one of three selectmen, 2 others weren't really informed
 - Filled the town hall, passed 56-10
- **Solon (2015)**
 - Goat milk farmer, raw unlicensed
 - Lots of community support, Norma Miller was instrumental
 - In a meeting at local church with Bingham + Moscow, Solon found out about it and wanted in. They passed easily with few obstacles
- **Liberty (2016)**
 - Homesteaders (married couple), made the connection through Facebook
 - Very easy process to pass
 - Built a town network for support
 - Selectman wanted to pass a resolution instead, never showed up. There was a unanimous vote at the town meeting (resolution = sentiment / wish, ordinance = law)

Towns Considering Adoption

- **Madison** (note: Backyard Farms is here)
- **East Sangerville**
- **Northport**
- **Islesboro**
- **Jefferson**
- **Swanville**
- **Porter**
- **Ellsworth**
- **North Berwick** (applied for resolution)
- **Rockland**
- **Athens?**

General Notes:

- Most attendees had some connection to organic poultry or livestock farmers (goats, sheep, cows) A definite focus on small-medium sized diversified organic farms.
- Common methods of distribution: direct from producer, bake sales and public suppers at churches/grange halls, some local cafés, bakeries, restaurants and general stores
- No town with a city council has passed the ordinance
- **Montville** invited the Dept. of Ag to their panel, passed a resolution that supported the ordinance, but not a law. They also passed an anti-GMO ordinance a while back that was never challenged (1st town outside of CA, VT)
- No accounts of licensed producers losing business to non-licensed ones
- News of the ordinances has drawn farmers to Maine
- **Brooksville** failed once, but tried again and succeeded. **Monroe** failed to pass the ordinance, but they did not propose the same ordinance that other towns had
- LFR Goal: 30 towns adopted by the end of this year, 50 by the end of next
- Allies of the ordinance: Shenna Bellows, Craig Hickman