

APPROVED 3/10/2020

**MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
ANNUAL PLANNING RETREAT
Cedar Grove Community Center
January 24, 2020
9:00 a.m.**

The Orange County Board of Commissioners met for their annual Board retreat on Friday, January 24, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. at the Cedar Grove Community Center in Hillsborough, N.C.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Penny Rich and Commissioners Jamezetta Bedford, Sally Greene, Mark Marcoplos, Earl McKee, and Renee Price

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

COUNTY ATTORNEY PRESENT: John Roberts

COUNTY STAFF PRESENT: County Manager Bonnie Hammersley, Deputy County Manager Travis Myren and Clerk to the Board Donna S. Baker.

FACILITATOR: Maggie Chotas, Dispute Settlement Center

CONSULTANT: Michael Goodman, Innovation Associates Organizational Learning

Observers – Department Directors and members of the public and news media.

Department Heads: Nancy Coston, Janice Tyler, Annette Moore, Jim Northup, David Stancil, Cait Fenhagen, Todd McGee, Erica Bryant, Greg Wilder

Chair Rich called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Welcome & Introductions Maggie Chotas, Facilitator, Dispute Settlement Center

Chair Rich welcomed everyone.

Maggie Chotas introduced Michael Goodman, from Innovation Associates Organizational Learning.

Ms. Chotas said it promised to be a rich day with the potential for positive outcomes. She reviewed the retreat desired outcomes and ground rules:

Proposed Ground Rules - How do we want to work together today?

- Begin and adjourn on time
- One speaker at a time
- Listen attentively
- Focus on learning and inquiry
- Step up/Step back
- Share the time available for discussion
- It is OK to disagree...please do so respectfully

Commissioners affirmed the ground rules.

Review retreat goals & desired outcomes

Ms. Chotas reviewed the retreat goals and desired outcomes:

- Better definition of issues
- Better appreciation of problems
- Understanding for how systems thinking could be helpful to us

- Identification of what we need to know more of and the new questions that are arising for us re: hunger

Ms. Chotas presented the Parking Lot as a place for ideas that weren't immediately relevant to the topic of the retreat. Commissioners were invited to identify issues as they arise.

Systems Thinking introduction & overview with a focus on hunger in Orange County

Michael Goodman, Innovation Associates Organizational Learning

Michael Goodman reviewed the objectives and agenda as follows:

Overall Objectives

- Understand what systems thinking is and its importance
- Learn a few basic Systems Thinking tools Gain hands on experience applying systems thinking to food insecurity in Orange County

Agenda

- Why Good Intentions are Not Enough
- Observations about Systems
- Conventional Vs. Systems Thinking
- Why Systems Thinking?
- Background on Hunger and Food Insecurity in Orange County
- Fundamental Systems Thinking Framework & Case
- Team Iceberg Exercise
- Brief Introduction to the Language of Systems Thinking & Exercise (Time permitting)
- Introduction to Mental Models & Exercise
- Questions and Answers

Mr. Goodman set the context for stories in the news and asked the small groups to reflect on what the following stories have in common:

- Homeless shelters perpetuate homelessness
- Drug busts increase drug-related crime
- Food aid increases starvation
- Get tough prison sentences fail to reduce fear of violent crime
- Job training programs increase unemployment

Small groups noted the following commonalities:

- Unintended consequences
- Good intentions
- Mindset that anyone on both sides of these issues can use them or talking points or a hammer – both sides can be right and both sides can be wrong
- Hard to explain to the public if you don't do these things – they are expected

Mr. Goodman reviewed the common characteristics of failed solutions as follows:

- Address symptoms vs. underlying problems
- Obvious and often succeed in the short run
- But short-term gains undermined by long-term impacts
- Negative consequences are unintentional
- If the problem recurs, we do not see our responsibility

Mr. Goodman framed remarks around the limitations of good intentions with the following quote:
“When you are confronted by any complex social system ... with things about it that you’re dissatisfied with and anxious to fix, you cannot just step in and set about fixing with much hope of helping. This is one of the sore discouragements of our time. If you want to fix something you are first obliged to understand ... the whole system.”

Lewis Thomas

Physician, poet, etymologist, essayist, educator, policy advisor, researcher

Dean Yale Medical School & NYU

President Memorial Sloan-Kettering Institute

Distinguishing Conventional From Systems Thinking

Mr. Goodman shared definitions of a system and systems thinking:

“A system is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something” – Donella Meadows

“Systems Thinking is the ability to understand these interconnections in such a way as to achieve a desired purpose.”

Observations about Systems

Mr. Goodman shared laws of human systems:

- Many of today’s problems were yesterday’s solutions.
- The Law of Unintended Consequences - Systems are seductive... what looks obvious to do often generates non-obvious consequences... but NOT right away.
- The Law of Worse Before Better - What works in the short term typically makes things worse in the long term and what works in the long term often makes things worse in the short term.
- The Law of Compensating Feedback – The harder you push on the system the harder the system pushes back.
- We are prisoners of systemic forces to the extent we are unaware of their existence and don’t appreciate their power.
- Systems naturally resist change despite how well intended the efforts to improve performance.
- Systems are “perfectly” designed to produce the results we are getting.
- We spend enormous time, effort and money fixing problems we don’t really understand.
- Real leverage points in the system are displaced both in time and in space from the symptoms.
- *Collective awareness of the system can produce the shifts needed to produce real, sustainable change... when see it, we no longer have to be controlled by it.*

Mr. Goodman asked participants if they had witnessed any of the following first-hand:

1. Many of today’s problems were yesterday’s solutions
2. The Law of Unintended Consequences
3. The Law of Worse Before Better
4. The Law of Compensating Feedback
5. We spend enormous time, effort and money fixing problems we don’t really understand

Conventional vs. Systems Thinking

Mr. Goodman delineated the differences between Conventional and Systems Thinking:

Conventional Thinking	Systems Thinking
Obvious how cause and effect are connected	Problems and causes not obviously connected
Others are to blame	We are part of the problem
Short-term success leads to long-term success	Most quick fixes yield no difference or make matters worse over time
Optimize the parts	Improve relationships among the parts
Do as much as you can as quickly as you can	Focus on a few key coordinated changes over time

Mr. Goodman polled Commissioners around the following questions about the balance of conventional versus systems thinking in their organizations:

- A. Almost entirely conventional thinking
- B. Some systems thinking
- C. Pretty balanced
- D. Mostly systems thinking
- E. No idea...

Mr. Goodman delineated the elements that make for good Systems Thinking issues

- Chronic problems we've been trying to figure out for a long time
- Our thinking hasn't properly matched the problem
- We haven't been as effective as we thought we would be
- We're willing to take a learning attitude – we're willing to suspend those to have an honest conversation about the problem
- We're the people who can work on it – we have some control

Introduction to what we know about hunger in Orange County & an introduction to the current programs to address it

Travis Myren, Deputy County Manager & Ashley Heger, Food Council Coordinator
State of Food Insecurity in
Orange County
January 24, 2020

Mr. Myren provided context that about a year ago Commissioners approved the Food Council coordinator to be part of County Government. The Food Council touches systems thinking in several ways: (1) Coordinator position is intergovernmentally funded; The County, Chapel Hill Carrboro and Hillsborough jointly fund it; (2) Goal of Food Council is to understand the food system and where interventions can be helpful; (3) Since Ms. Heger is part of the County Government, she helps them work interdepartmentally.

Ms. Heger explained the Food Council takes a systems thinking approach on three levels:

1. Everything across our system is interrelated and the last few years has been about building relationships
2. Working toward getting data and better understanding for what's happening in Orange County

3. Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE Core Team) is working toward helping see interrelatedness across systems – if one piece is changed, what happens throughout the systems?

A look at the numbers: 2017 - 2019 Data

Food Insecurity Rate **12.7%**

Number of people experiencing food insecurity **18,030**

Children under 18 who are food insecure **4,420**

Adults over 65 who are living below the poverty level **914**

Federal Nutrition Service # of recipients FY 2018-19 **14,478**

WIC participation #s for December 2019 **2,260**

Demographics Carrboro Clinic WIC Dec 2019

American Indian or Alaskan Native – 0

Asian – 150

Black or African American – 249

White – 859

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – 1

Multi-Race – 23

Latinx – 40%

Demographics Chapel Hill Clinic WIC Dec 2019

American Indian or Alaskan Native – 0

Asian – 6

Black or African American – 113

White – 75

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – 0

Multi-Race – 7

Latinx – 11%

Demographics Hillsborough Clinic WIC Dec 2019

American Indian or Alaskan Native – 2

Asian – 11

Black or African American – 215

White – 514

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander -- 0

Multi-Race – 35

Latinx – 17%

Stories about hunger & food insecurity

Ms. Heger explained the Food Council has been working on gathering qualitative stories and learning from people who have lived experience with food insecurity. There is a designated place on their board for someone with personal experience with food insecurity.

Community Health Assessment (2019)

Sample survey every community does every three years across North Carolina.

- Food Access named in top 10 priorities
- 1 in 5 respondents reported they had to cut the size of their meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food

Conversations with those experiencing food insecurity & food access providers tell us:

- Falling in between the gaps (do not receive FNS but experience food insecurity)
- Cost of living takes away from resources available for food
- Food received in charity programs is not culturally appropriate and/or nutritional
- Fear of receiving services or participating in programs may endanger immigration status

Falling in between the gaps

SNAP (Food Stamps)

Eligibility Requirements for family of 3 = About \$27,020

- Gross monthly income must at or below 130% the poverty line (about \$2,252/month) with assets less than \$2,250 (vehicles, savings, etc) - does not apply to households with elderly or disabled members
- Most college students and certain legal immigrants are not eligible
- Most unemployed childless adults are limited to 3 months of benefits, unless they are working at least 20 hours per week or participating in a qualifying job training program
- Average monthly benefit for family of 3 = \$365/month
- Limitations for what can be bought with SNAP benefits
- Potential more more restrictions in this program this year

Cost of Living

Income in Orange County

- 2018 median household income \$68,211
- 2018 per capita household income \$40,650 (includes non wage earners)

Fair Market Rent in Orange County 2020

- 2 bedroom \$1,088/month and 3 bedroom \$1,461/month
- 2020 3 bedroom FMR = 64.8% of income for a family of 3 eligible for SNAP
- Family of 3 with gross income of \$4,000/month spending 36.5% on rent

Charity Programs

- Culturally appropriate foods offered
- Lived experience centered in leadership and advising programs
- Nutritional foods v. non-perishable or easy to donate foods

Trends

Federal Nutrition Services (FNS)

- Decrease of 6.5% from **15,499** in the FY17-18 to **14,478** in the FY18-19

Free School Lunch Program (FSLP)

- **CHCCS:** Decreased slightly in 2017-18 to 25.6% and currently at 26.2%
- **OCS:** Currently at 41%
 - o Enrollment has stayed between 39-42% the past few years
 - o Universal free breakfast program increased from 2017-2018 (total: 89,350) to current school year (as of Dec 2019 total: 101,153)

How do we compare

United States:

North Carolina's food insecurity rate is 16.5%

Nationally 11.1%

Orange Co's poverty level is 12.4% Nationally 12.3%

Food Insecurity in other NC Counties:

Highest 24.1% Edgecombe Co

Lowest 9.5% Union Co

Exercises to explore systems thinking related to hunger

Michael Goodman

Mr. Goodman directed small groups to reflect on the presentation:

- What did you learn?
- What did you find surprising or puzzling?
- What questions does this raise for you?

Focusing Questions

Mr. Goodman introduced focusing questions, noting issues are best formulated as a focusing question that starts with the words **Why** or **How Come** but not **How To**.

Examples:

- *Why do we continue to struggle with breaking down our internal silos?*
- *Why, despite our best efforts, have we been unable to end homelessness in Calhoun County?*

Potential Focusing Questions

Mr. Goodman introduced examples of focusing questions:

- Why, despite the county's various programs, are we seeing the trends we're seeing in hunger/food insecurity?
- Why, despite the county's programs and activities we have in place focused on hunger, haven't we seen the impact we'd like?

Team Exercise #1A: Focusing Question

Participants worked in small groups to identify focusing questions related to food insecurity in Orange County:

Why are segments of the population more food insecure/lack access than others despite a variety of interventions by several agencies/County Government?

Why aren't current County programs not reaching the needs of targeted populations despite our affluence?

After identifying focusing questions, participants worked in small groups to imagine the end results they would like to see if the problem/issue was fully addressed/fixed:

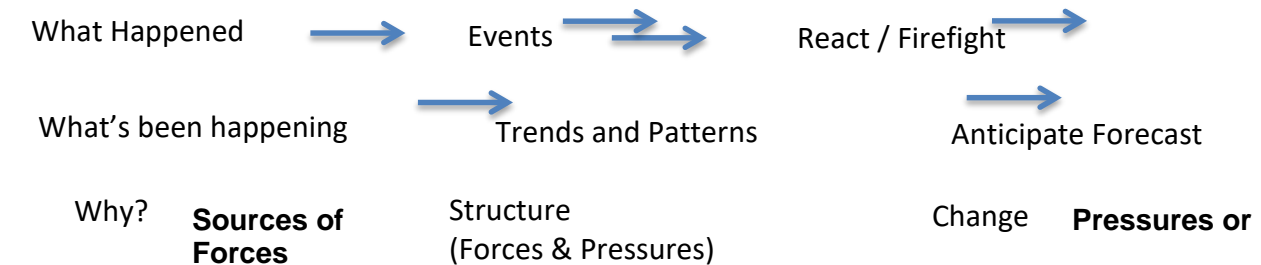
- Free up more funding for other programs/needs
- Kids focus better in school – improved educational outcomes
- Access to nutritious food when they need it
- Obesity rate goes down
- Malnutrition rates go down
- Health care demand goes down

- Gap between benefits provided and needs are fulfilled
- Multiple outlets that provide healthier food
- Universal food programs in schools
- End of income disparities

- Eliminate burdensome program eligibility requirements

The Fundamental Framework of Systems Thinking

Mr. Goodman introduced the concept of The Iceberg as a concept for understanding deepening our understanding of problems.



Mr. Goodman described the

- External structures
- Organizational structures
- Interpersonal structures
- Individual structures (Mental Models)

sources of pressures or forces:

Additional Elements of Structure that Generate Forces & Pressures

- State/local regulations & laws
- General economy
- Local economy
- Financial resources/capital (e.g. access to funding)
- Technology (e.g. access & availability)
- Political climate
- Human capital (e.g. skill level, education)
- Demographics (including migration patterns)
- Availability & access to services (health, education, etc.)
- Level of collaboration among service providers & agencies
- State/local leadership (private/public)
- Housing availability & quality
- Built (infrastructure) capital
- Quality of life factors
- Natural capital
- Social capital (e.g. connections within community, among businesses and to resources outside the community)
- Cultural capital (mindsets, attitudes, level of public trust) (Mental models)

Case Example

Mr. Goodman introduced the Case Example focused on Ending Homelessness in Calhoun County (Battlecreek, MI). There was a federal program in 2006 trying to end chronic homelessness. States were pushing local communities to develop plans and Mr. Goodman and an associate were invited to bring systems thinking to Calhoun County.

Details about the Case Example included:

- Calhoun County, MI: estimated 1,400-1,600 people homelessness among population of 100,000
- Homeless Coalition* meetings again fail to deal with the problem: disagreements, competition, and lack of knowledge cited ten-year plan to end homelessness involving

political and business leaders, service providers, and homeless people – to produce the plan

- **A collaborative workgroup of the Coordinating Council of Calhoun County involving 40 providers of services, consumers of those services, funders & city/county reps.*

Specific data for Calhoun County related to homelessness:

- 75% “episodically” homeless
- 25% “chronically” homeless
- 32% women
- 68% men
- 33% mental illness
- 48% drug and/or alcohol addiction

Other context:

- Research showed there was a growing trend in homelessness. There had been some success, but it had stagnated. The visibility of the homeless problem seemed to be cyclical. Temporary shelters got people off the street, which is important, but didn’t solve the problem of chronic homelessness.
- Housing First approach provided more support. To really address chronic homelessness takes time, effort and leadership – not easy to pull off.
- With temporary shelters, the visibility wasn’t as pronounced and pressure was eased up on.
- Shelters were funded by beds being occupied, not having empty beds. Other providers were also. If you changed the mandate for keeping beds empty, there’s no funding for that. Even showing up for Coalition meetings weren’t funded – had to volunteer to that.
- Whole system tends to gravitate toward the easy to do stuff. If you want to end homelessness, have to figure out how to break the vicious cycle.

As a result of the work in systems thinking, homelessness didn’t end, but did lessen. The group process the Homeless Coalition used focused on:

- Reducing and reframing shelter use
- Sharing a vision of Housing First
- Investing in affordable housing with support services
- Asking the question: how are we implicated in this?

Outcomes

- Homeless Coalition coalesced around a plan and the plan was funded
- Homeless Coalition voted unanimously to reallocate HUD funding from one service provider’s transitional housing program to permanent supportive housing program run by another provider

Quantitative results: In the plan’s first six years of operation (2007-2012), which included the economic collapse of 2008, the county reported the following results:

*Homelessness decreased by 14% (from 1658 to 1419)
DESPITE a 34% increase in unemployment and 7% increase in evictions*

Deepening Our Understanding of Problems: The Iceberg

Mr. Goodman then invited participants to apply The Iceberg Framework to better understand their issue of food insecurity. Participants were instructed to work in their small groups to answer:

- Why do we have this issue or challenge?
- Identify the underlying Structure (Brainstorm list of factors or drivers)
- Why has it persisted this long?

- What are the barriers to improvement?
Remember: NOT WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT OR HOW TO FIX IT YET

Why are segments of the population more food insecure/lack access than others despite a variety of interventions by several agencies/County Government?

- Lack of attention/awareness
- Insufficient outreach/engagement with targeted populations
- Lack of effective coordination (food or other services/programs)
- Reliance on private/nonprofit
- Demographic changes
- Anti-immigration policies/fears
- Wages and financial management
- Healthcare costs
- Nutritional education
- Housing and transit – access to community resources
- Stress on parents
- Racism
- Intergovernmental cooperation (lack of)

Why aren't current County programs not reaching the needs of targeted populations despite our affluence?

- Food charity efforts
- Income inequality
- Dependence on corporate food supply system
- Lack of education on system, gardening, nutrition
- Federal policy
- Food waste
- Misinterpretation of what help looks like
- Cost of nutritious food/supply
- Lack of coordination among providers
- Reluctance to address silos
- Lack of multi-lingual communication

Ms. Price underscored how important it is not to just focus on long-term solutions – people are hurting now and need to have their needs responded to.

Lunch

Over lunch Travis Myren introduced participants to the TedTalk video about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion featuring the author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. In the video, Adichie shares her perspective about the danger of a single story when it comes to assuming who someone is. She challenged audience members to continually look for multiple stories when determining someone's identify.

Systems Thinking & hunger focus in Orange County, Continued Michael Goodman
Mr. Goodman introduced the concept of Mental Models as the thinking behind Systems Thinking.

What are Mental Models?

Mr. Goodman defined Mental Models as habits of thought, the stories we tell ourselves. They are those beliefs, assumptions, and models we have about every aspect of ourselves, others, our organizations, and how the world works.

- They are critical to our effectiveness
- They affect how we think and how we act
- They may be conscious, or unconscious; they can get us into trouble
- It's easier to see others' mental models and harder to see our own
- They are always incomplete and often flawed
- They are high leverage

Examples of Mental Models include beliefs we treat as facts, such as:

- *“The only way anything changes around here is when our senior leaders change it.”*
- *“Learning is what we do outside of work.”*
- *“Home prices will always rise.”*

Mental Models Exercise

Small groups identified and shared at their table the mental models at play that could be barriers to change or improvement related to their issue. What are the mindsets that have perpetuated the current situation?

Belief-Action-Results (BAR) Maps

Mr. Goodman explained the cycle of Beliefs–Actions–Results, noting it could be a positive or a negative outcome. He provided a negative example of how the BAR Map works:

“Staff meetings are a waste of time.”[Mental Model or Belief]

Therefore, I or we... “Don't really fully participate or contribute.” [Action or Behavior]

Which leads to... Decisions don't get made, real issues never get brought up [Results or Outcomes]

Team Exercise #4:

In small groups, participants worked on Belief-Action-Results Maps for one of the Mental Models identified in the previous exercise.

It's not the responsibility of the government – it's a charity act Mental Model

Therefore... less reliance on the government – not asking people what they want

Which leads to nothing changing

Introduction to what we know about hunger in Orange County & an introduction to the current programs to address it

Ashley Heger, Food Council Coordinator

Ms. Heger opened her presentation by emphasizing the importance of a “both/and approach” – both addressing short-term needs and using a systems thinking mindset for systemic change.

How is hunger being addressed in Orange County:

1. **Federal Nutrition Services & School Meals**
SNAP, WIC, Senior vouchers, Free & Reduced Lunch & Universal free school breakfast
2. **Outside Agency Funding**
Supporting existing and emerging food access programs
3. **Nonprofit Services**
Food pantries and meal deliveries; cross sector collaboration and emergency services

School Systems

- **Orange County Schools**
 Universal Free Breakfast Program in PreK - 5th grade
 Free and reduced lunch program
 Summer food service program (school and open community sites)
- **Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools**
 Free and reduced lunch program
 Summer food service program (Food for the Summer, focus on community sites with support from CHCCS)

County funds spent on programs & partnerships

-DSS Funds spent on Food

Food Lion Gift Cards Emergency Assistance Program

FY 2017-18: \$6,425.00

FY 2018-19: \$4,875.00

FY 2019- Current: \$1,225.00

-Outside Agency Funding

Funding for food & nutrition related agencies

FY 2017-18 total \$151,165

FY 2018-19 total \$132,190

FY 2019-20 exampeted total \$145,253

2017 - 2018 Food + Nutrition Outside Agencies

- Meals on Wheels \$15,000
- Farmer Foodshare \$6,250
- Orange Congregations in Mission \$71,415
- Inter-Faith Council \$50,000
- TABLE \$8,500

FY 2017-18 total \$151,165

2018-2019 Food + Nutrition Outside Agencies

- Meals on Wheels \$15,900
- Farmer Foodshare \$7,375
- Orange Congregations in Mission \$77,715
- Orange County Rural Alliance \$20,750
- TABLE \$10,450

FY 2018-19 total \$132,190

2019-2020 Food + Nutrition Outside Agencies

- Meals on Wheels \$17,335
- Farmer Foodshare \$7,375
- Orange Congregations in Mission \$78,450
- Orange County Rural Alliance \$27,488
- PORCH \$3,780
- TABLE \$10,450
- Transplanting Traditions \$375

FY 2019-20 expected total \$145,253

Orange County Funded Programs Related to Food Insecurity

Ms. Heger walked through the different programs that Orange County funds related to food insecurity. Descriptions only include parts of their work related to food insecurity.

Meals on Wheels Chapel Hill - Carrboro

Mission: Chapel Hill/Carrboro Meals on Wheels nourishes the bodies and spirits of the homebound with a balanced meal and the human connection they need to help them live independently. Volunteers deliver a hot meal to the home every weekday. Resources and referral services as needed

Goals & Services:

1. Provide affordable, nutritious and flavorful meals to the homebound individuals in the community.
2. Reduce isolation, support independence and enhance the quality of life of our recipients.
3. Engage families and community in partnerships that benefit both the volunteers and recipients.

Farmer Foodshare

Mission: Farmer Foodshare connects people who grow food with people who need food in ways that are economically sustainable and socially just. We believe that everyone has a right to healthy, fresh food and that farmers deserve to make a fair wage – a system where everyone wins.

Goals & Services: The Donation Station Program improves the health and nutrition of residents in need by collecting fresh, local food gleaned from farmers' markets and/or purchased from those farmers with funds donated by market shopper. Each farmers' market is paired with a recipient agency of their choice. The fresh food is delivered the day it is donated. The DSP and Community Foodshare Site projects are based on requests from the participants of our partner organizations themselves. Includes: mobile market, cooking classes and nutrition education.

Orange Congregations in Mission

Mission: To minister to the urgent needs of citizens of northern Orange County through the volunteer efforts of diverse congregations and individuals inspired by faith in God, and to enhance self-sufficiency and awareness of community resources.

Goals & Services: The Samaritan Relief Ministry provides groceries and additional services to individuals and families. The Meals on Wheels Program provides a nourishing, home delivered lunch, 5 days/week to homebound residents. A volunteer network maintains consistent contact with the most fragile members of this community, as well as promoting well-being

Orange County Rural Alliance

Mission: OCRA is part of a community-based alliance that is building awareness of the needs of rural seniors and supports them with what they need to age in place with independence and dignity. OCRA helps with access to county services, safe homes, nutritious food and friendly human contact. OCRA delivers hot meals to rural seniors in underserved areas

Goals & Services: Today more than 250 seniors are visited or contacted weekly. During visits volunteers noticed unmet needs such as empty food pantries and the need for minor home repairs (accessibility problems and the need for ramps, grab bars, etc.). OCRA now provides meals similar to a Meals on Wheels program.

Inter-Faith Council

Mission: The Inter-Faith Council meets basic needs and helps individuals and families achieve their goals. They provide shelter, food, direct services, advocacy and information to people in need. The IFC accomplishes this through strong partnerships with volunteers, staff and those we serve. They rely on the active involvement of caring individuals, congregations and other community organizations

Goals & Services:

In 2018, IFC provided around 60,000 free meals to community members. Meals are free of charge and are provided to anyone who is hungry as well as to the residents of Community House and HomeStart. IFC provides additional services including a food pantry and crisis intervention program.

TABLE

Mission: Bring together UNC college students and local community members to feed hungry children in Chapel and Carrboro. TABLE began feeding 12 local elementary school children in 2008 and has since expanded to provide healthy food to approximately 500 preschool, elementary and middle school children each week.

Goals & Services: TABLE has 3 goals: (1) to provide weekly emergency food aid to local hungry children (2) to educate and expose our little ones to healthy foods and eating habits (3) to increase community awareness of local childhood hunger.

PORCH

Mission: PORCH's mission is to alleviate hunger and promote better nutrition in the community through monthly food drives.

Goals & Services:

Ensuring our local pantries are well-stocked with non-perishable food; Distributing fresh food directly into the hands of families with children in the public schools identified as food insecure; Creating pantries with healthy snacks in each of the 20 public schools and the community's after-school programs; and Creating more public awareness about the severity of hunger in the community, and the benefits of fresh food consumption.

Transplanting Traditions

Mission: Transplanting Traditions Community Farm (TTCF) works with refugees from Burma to foster a healthier community and maintain agricultural traditions as they build new lives in North Carolina.

Goals & Services: TTCF focuses on serving low-income families in the refugee and immigrant community. Services include continued access to land to grow healthy traditional foods, weekly translated workshops focused on agricultural topics and small farm businesses; youth programming focused on nutrition, active living and leadership development; implementation of a "Share a Share" program in collaboration with PORCH, which provides traditional vegetables for refugee families in need on a monthly basis while providing economic support for TTCF farmers.

Mr. Dorosin asked how someone knows if they are eligible for the programs and what they need to do to access them.

Ms. Heger responded it depends on the program. In terms of visibility and disseminating information, she noted a goal of the Food Council for the last couple of years has been to consolidate resource guides into one. Previously, there were seven resource guides. Ms. Heger said she updates the guide at least twice a year. She noted everyone is working together so

individuals are aware of all the services available to them. A primary goal of the Food Council is to break down siloes.

Nancy Coston said NC 360 is coming out which will incorporate resources for the entire state. Once that happens, it will make it easier for internal referrals and also for someone in the community to check everything they need. All nonprofits need to get their information on line and this will take time. It will be a warm hand off.

Chair Rich asked about if Justice United and the faith-based community if they were helping get out the information out. Ms. Heger said faith-based organizations are important and they have contact with some, but not all.

Reflecting on the day

Maggie Chotas

Ms. Chotas invited responses from Commissioners about what they learned from the retreat, including their thoughts about how a Systems Thinking framework might be different from the way we tend to explore problems. She asked Commissioners to reflect on the deeper questions/challenges arising.

Commissioner McKee said he is encouraged by what he heard and what was done during the day, but wanted more information about the supporting data presented about hunger. One in five kids or people in the County are hungry – that figure raised questions about how it was gathered, how it was determined and how it applies to one demographic group or another. He emphasized gross wages doesn't give a true picture because it is not spendable income – it's not money in your pocket. He would like more real numbers as close to facts as possible.

Commissioner Marcoplos noted he appreciated the presentation and the processes. He said he thought it was true they would make better decisions the more they incorporated systems thinking and wanted to explore how could they incorporate this into their decision-making. He suggested for smaller issues they don't anticipate taking as much time, to just keep this in mind and don't spend a lot of time on it. But for larger issues which will take a lot of time, have a dedicated work session where we do what we did today and spend time admiring the program. Might not be able to do it for everything, but we could try it once in the spring and in the fall with a topic and see how it works for us.

Chair Rich emphasized the need for flexibility in determining when to apply systems thinking. She expressed not wanting systems thinking to stop us from having free flowing ideas like what would be needed in emergency situations or items that come up throughout the year that might need some money spent on them.

Commissioner Greene said the day was a good introduction to systems thinking and she wondered about what the next steps are for the food/hunger issue. The board has started to explore the topic at the retreat and she wanted to know how the board will bring a solution forward.

Commissioner Bedford said this type of thinking does take time and wondered what it might look like if they applied it – rather than the usual Task Force. For example, she brought up PreK and reflected the focusing question for PreK could be, "Why aren't children ready for kindergarten?" This type of thinking process may help with this issue. She mentioned the understanding to challenge assumptions and make sure the right question will be asked.

Commissioner Bedford said she appreciated the video at lunch and wanted to remember how to get the other stories – should be an issue for governments.

Chair Rich said it is important to have achievable goals at the end of every retreat. What is our achievable goal? What will we say we have as our goals six months or a year out of this?

Commissioner Marcoplos gave the example of it being at the end of meetings and it is 11pm and an issue comes up and they take about 10% of the time needed to discuss before making a decision. He stated he would like to avoid this and make sure there is time for discussion.

Chair Rich noted you can ask to table an issue to the next meeting.

Commissioner Marcoplos said sometimes it happens quickly and we're all ready to get home.

Commissioner Dorosin shared his reflection that there is a need for short-term solutions. As elected officials, he noted, we need to be wary of thinking of systems thinking as external. When we talk about systems thinking, we as the policy makers in the County are the system and can change the system from the inside as opposed to being an activist or a nonprofit group trying to change the system from the outside. We are the people whose decisions entrench or expand those institutionalized processes or change them. Universal pre-k or kindergarten readiness is a good example. When we think about how to fix it, we're not looking at an external system; it's a system we have a hand in creating and influencing and changing. One of the slides was about how the system is working the way it's designed for it to work. We might say we want everyone to have enough food, but the policies we've put into place or are continuing to put in place are producing the outcomes they intend to produce. It's not like the policy work is great and something has gone awry in implementation. That's why it's called institutional racism or structural inequity – it's built into the structure. How we think about dismantling that is critical. One of the systems to look at is how the board operates. It would be interesting to look at how effective or efficient the work we do is. The board meets a lot. The idea that we should meet more isn't necessarily the solution. I want to challenge us to work more efficiently. If it's not efficient for us to be taking votes at 11:30, the agenda was too long and we need to push more to the consent agenda. Think about how many votes we take that are 7-0 with almost no discussion – that's not the best use of our time, staff time or the community's time.

Commissioner Price said that with the retreat, the board has owned food insecurity as an issue/concern that needs to be addressed. We need to come up with some benchmarks/metrics to measure as we're going forward in order to assess progress. In terms of the systems approach, she said the board works from budget to budget, but staff has to look at the longer range, with board support. If the systems approach works for Ms. Heger, then the board needs to continue to back her up and any other programs that come into play. It might be a challenge for the board to map out the systems approach for hunger, but staff can take the lead.

Identifying next steps Maggie Chotas

Ms. Chotas asked Commissioners if they wanted to identify possible next steps in regards to Systems Thinking and hunger in Orange County.

Commissioner Dorosin asked staff their thoughts about next steps.

Nancy Coston commented on data, saying she thinks staff can fold the food insecurity data into their discussion of poverty and with the mapping that the human services group is working on. She will bring it forward at their next staff meeting.

Identifying gaps in data (Staff)

- Staff taking the lead (many departments) to see what the food landscape is and track what exists now and fill in the gaps

Strengthen coordination on food related issues

- Identify how the towns/County work together on food related issues
- There are different local government agencies in Orange County involved in food issues – engage with their partners
- Food Council is a good place to start with this
- Identify the impediments

Continue focusing on the topic as a board

- Look at what we are doing to address poverty in Orange County
- Prioritize issues at a high level in the budget process
- Consider holding a work session on the topic of hunger

Public outreach

- Seek to build awareness about food insecurity in the County
- Develop and disseminate a one page infographic about hunger in Orange County (Staff will take the lead on this)

3:50 **Assessing the retreat**

Maggie Chotas

Ms. Chotas invited Commissioners to reflect on how well did the retreat reach its goals and what to change for the future.

Commissioners responded as follows:

What worked well	What to change
Flow of information and exercises	Work together as one group
Structure – conceptual model and one particular issue focus	Add a fun teambuilding exercise – get outside
Food was great	Better job integrating staff – awkward for board and staff to be separate; staff is an integral part of the system
Presenter provided useful information	
The flow of the day – day went quickly and there was a good balance of activities	
Working in a group and hearing others' perspectives	
Broader spectrum with two groups	
Input from everybody throughout the day	

4:00 **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:15pm.

