



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Food Council

Wednesday, August 20, 2025

4:15 PM

Regular

Department of Public
Health and Human
Services

Training Room 1
1005 W. Worley St.
Columbia, MO 65203

I. CALL TO ORDER

- Meyers called the meeting to order at 4:19 p.m

Present: 7 - Anna Meyer, Gabriela Weir Vera, Tish Johnson, Shannon Stokes, Kyra Barnard, Corrina Smith and Johnna Martin

Excused: 2 - Katie Molitor and Adam Saunders

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Johnson moved to approve the agenda, with Weir Vera seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Johnson moved to approve the July 16, 2025 minutes with the changes noted by herself and Meyer. Smith seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Attachments: [Draft Minutes July 16,2025](#)

IV. OLD BUSINESS

• OFBC update

Schley provided an update on focus group activities. The formal focus group campaign has been completed, though additional informal information gathering is planned due to challenges with participant turnout. While over 100 people registered, actual attendance was low; however, the discussions held were meaningful and informative. Approximately 20 gift cards remain, and the remaining budget will be used to support informal engagement. One final focus group with students is anticipated, and incentives will be used for that session. Participants noted that despite low attendance, conversations yielded valuable insights, with some attendees coming prepared with notes.

The group expressed appreciation for the effort to provide local food and baked goods at sessions. The next phase will include key informant interviews, either individually, in pairs, or in small groups, with questions mirroring those used in focus groups. Members were asked to provide recommendations for interviewees, particularly from underrepresented areas of the food system such as distribution and small retailers. Interviewees will also include “connector” individuals who engage with multiple sectors. These interviews will likely begin in September. Additional outreach opportunities may arise through community events, including a potential public rollout of draft data modeled after the Live Well Boone County process, where community members could review findings, provide feedback, and identify gaps.

The group also discussed opportunities for continued engagement through community events. Schley stated that they plan to participate in the Hootenanny, where surveys and children’s activities may be offered. Suggestions included setting up a booth, organizing carnival-style games, or using educational tools such as an EnviroScape to demonstrate environmental impacts. A future agenda item will be added to allow more planning time for these events.

Ambassadors have continued survey work at locations such as the mall, farmers market, and focus groups, with their final round taking place during this meeting. Their contributions were recognized as valuable, and a recent Tribune article covering one of the focus groups was highlighted as generating community interest. Some individuals expressed interest in participating in future sessions, and follow-up emails were sent to registrants who did not attend to gather feedback.

• County representation update

Varvaro shared an update county representation. A memo was submitted to City Council, and the Boone County Commission announced on August 5 that it is accepting applications for two county representatives to join the council, with an August 15 application deadline. Once appointed, the council will expand from nine to eleven members, which will also adjust the quorum requirement.

The group briefly discussed member terms. Current terms are staggered to provide continuity, and all terms officially end on February 28. Members with terms ending in February—including Adam, Shannon, and Johnson—will have the option to reapply, with City Council making final appointments.

• Epinephrine access in schools and public services

The group discussed updates on epinephrine access and allergen-related issues. At this time, no new information has been received from FAIR. It was noted that allergens are currently mentioned only briefly in food handler training, while food manager training reportedly provides more detail. The Environmental Health Manager, Chrystal Smart, confirmed that her team focuses more heavily on allergens in high-risk settings such as daycares and assisted living facilities. Follow-up is planned to clarify training specifics and explore opportunities for expanding allergen education in food safety programs. Additional outreach has been made to CPS, with contacts directing inquiries to the appropriate specialist, though responses are still pending.

Members also discussed recent developments related to allergy treatments and access to epinephrine. While schools have recently resumed, creating delays in communication, it was noted that the FDA has approved a nasal spray version of epinephrine for both children and adults, with other delivery methods, including a dissolving film, currently in development. Emerging research on asthma medications, such as Xolair, shows promise in preventing anaphylaxis, which could lead to future treatment options.

Concerns were raised about the high cost and limited accessibility of epinephrine auto-injectors. Meyer shared their experience with a local pharmacy, where Medicaid was expected to cover the prescription but the initial cost quoted was \$299. After persistence, a pharmacist was able to order the brand covered under Medicaid, but this option had not been previously offered, highlighting barriers to affordable access. The group agreed that broader awareness and advocacy are needed to make epinephrine more affordable and accessible. A training injector will be brought to the next meeting for members to familiarize themselves with its use.

V. NEW BUSINESS

• Vision, mission, and goal statements

The group discussed the development of vision, mission, and goal statements for the Food Council. Members noted that many city commissions and coalitions have formal vision and values statements, which help articulate purpose, guide priorities, and strengthen standing with City Council. This council had previously tabled similar discussions, but members expressed interest in revisiting the idea now that the council's work has progressed and has a clearer direction. Examples from other city commissions and food councils will be gathered to provide models for consideration.

It was suggested that the council dedicate a full meeting to this effort, with preparatory materials shared in advance. A previous informal survey and draft statements from earlier iterations of the council may serve as a starting point. Members emphasized the importance of aligning with both local needs and allowable parameters for city commissions. Additional interest was expressed in reviewing models from other food councils, such as Lawrence, Kansas, which successfully transitioned from an informal group into a formal city-supported body.

The group also reflected on the Food Council's history, including early informal meetings, support from part-time staff, and a grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health that helped initiate local food system assessments. While COVID-19 temporarily stalled progress, subsequent efforts led to the formal creation of the council by City Council in 2022. Members noted the value of past research and agreed that collecting historical materials and examples will help inform the development of meaningful vision, mission, and goal statements.

The discussion concluded with consensus to prioritize this work at an upcoming meeting, with Schley preparing background materials and Oliver distributing them ahead of time so members can come prepared for a focused visioning session.

• Current events/relevant food policy updates

Johnson reported that federal funding for SNAP-Ed has ended nationwide, resulting in the loss of positions across the state, including six staff members in Boone County. The program will officially end on August 29. This cut may also affect the Family Impact Center, which has relied heavily on SNAP-Ed funds to cover rent and operational costs, creating uncertainty about the Center's future.

In addition to SNAP-Ed, two major food access programs at the local farmers market are also experiencing funding shortages. The Produce Prescription Program, which provides fresh food resources to families, is projected to run out of funding by October. If additional support is not secured, this will leave a gap until the program can renew in January. Organizers are actively seeking donors to help bridge the gap. The Access Healthy Food Program currently has slightly more financial stability and is expected to continue until mid-December, but it too faces sustainability challenges.

Both programs have been consistently highlighted in community focus groups as valuable resources, particularly for immigrant and refugee families who rely on them. However, high demand combined with flat funding has placed a significant strain on budgets. Organizers estimate that an additional \$20,000 to \$25,000 would be needed to sustain the programs through the remainder of the year.

To help raise funds, a benefit dinner has been scheduled for September 8. Tickets have already sold out, and organizers plan to use the event as a strong call to action for community support.

During discussion, members also noted that there are ongoing misconceptions about farmers market pricing. While local produce is often more affordable than grocery store options, many immigrant and refugee families still perceive supermarkets as more accessible, convenient, or modern. This perception continues to pose a barrier for participation in farmers market programs.

VI. GENERAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC, MEMBERS AND STAFF

None

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

September 17, 2025

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

• Stokes moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:14 pm with Barnard seconding. The motion passed unanimously.