

Alexandria Food Safety Advisory Council

Minutes for Meeting held 11/4/2009 at 2:15 pm

1) Gathering on November 4

2) Introduction of Participants

- Bob Custard, EH Division Manager
- Kristin Garcia, EH Division Supervisor
- June Oden, ACPS
- Vicki Griffith, Clydes
- Wendy Albert, Tempo Restaurant
- Jennifer Lehman, RAMW
- Susan Grandgeorge, Joe Theismanns
- Declan Conroy, Food Talk Editor
- Lisa Guli-AHD District Epidemiologist

3) EH Status Update-Bob Custard

Bob Custard announced some personnel changes to the Division of Environmental Health, which occurred since the previous meeting and resulted in two additional vacancies in the Division. Seyra Hammond, EHS Technical Specialist, moved on to a position in the FDA, and Lawrence Appleton, EH Specialist Sr., retired. While the EH Division has requested the vacancies be field, the budget situation does not lend to these positions being filled anytime soon. As a result of these changes (and the recent departure of another EHS Michael Kasnia), EH will now have 6 EHS's working in the field when there was formerly 9.

The EH's ability to adapt to these reductions have led to some of the following changes: 1) deregulation of the coin-operated dry cleaners and laundries, 2) referring food manufacturing plans to be exclusively inspected by the VA Dept of Agriculture, 3) reducing inspection frequencies, and 4) streamlining and/or requesting deregulation of Massage establishments and therapists.

Going forward, the EH Division anticipates additional reductions in EH's ability to participate or head special projects in the EH Division or with the Advisory Council since EH's resources are being prioritize to serve the needs and responsibilities of its office.

4) Draft Welcome Package

Bob Custard distributed a suggested list of items to include in the welcome packet. After reviewing them, the council attempted to identify what were the most helpful items in the proposed packet. To do that, the council felt that the audience of the packet and the manner in which the packet was distributed should be defined. It was believed that the major food establishment chains would already have most of the information in the proposed welcome packet. It was also believed that small operators and '*mom and pop stores*' would not, and that they would be the probable audience of the packet. The suggestion was made to break apart the packet to coincide with the different stages of opening a food establishment (pre-opening, first routine, etc.), but it was argued that the owner should be fully aware of his/her responsibilities from the start.

The council also discussed whether or not a fee should be charged for this packet, and Bob Custard stated that the EH would prefer not to charge a fee, or if one was charged, make it nominal so obtaining the packet was not cost prohibitive. An alternative

suggestion to the fee was to provide the information on a separate website or portal that focuses exclusively on this packet.

Next, the council discussed what items from the provided list should be removed. It concluded while the test strips and thermometer was a nice idea, these things would be obtained by the business owner through other means. Without these items, the cost of creating the packet would be reduced.

Various other suggestions were made to add to the list, including: Consumer Advisory, references for food recalls, a list of ongoing common deficiencies, sample of inspection form, and an explanation of the relationship between a business and the health department.

Finally, regardless of the content in the packet, it was stressed that the current list be reorganized to provide the most necessary information first. For example, put the CFM first or highlight it prominently.

5) ECO Friendly Restaurant Initiative

This initiative would focus on promoting green and eco-friendly practices to the restaurant on a voluntary basis—currently, the City will not mandate these activities.

The council discussed what the format of these initiatives would take. One suggestion was a conference with education seminars, and another suggestion was an expo format with interactive booths of information or a combination both. Another suggestion stated that using categories and neighborhoods to organize the initiatives content, like the ECO-City Conferences did, was one way to approach the format. Bob presented a list of topics to discuss and the Council organized them by categories. In each circumstance, the idea of the initiative was to provide education and information and not to market one particular product or process overall.

The proposed dates for the conference or expo were discussed and it was agreed that a weekday would be better to restaurant owners because business was slower on those days. Mondays were excluded because they are considered the 'work day' for the restaurants, so the council suggested using a Tuesday or Wednesday. A suggestion was made to coincide with the Anniversary of Earth Day, but there were concerns that the initiative would compete with other activities in the City and elsewhere. Another suggestion was made for early next year, but depending on the scope of the initiative, this may be too soon. This topic was deferred until it could be determine what scope the project should be, who could the council partner with, and what resources would that partnership provide. The council brainstormed some potential partners, including: NVCC, Restaurant Associations, Local Civic Groups and Chamber of Commerce's, the NCAEHA, etc. The council agreed to bring back contact information and an idea of what each of these groups and others could provide.

6) Baseline Survey-A Preview-Kristin Garcia

The baseline survey was a study of compliance with foodborne illness risk factors and public health interventions within different types of food establishments in 2003. The EH Division conducted a follow up study in 2009. Due to the departure of Seyra Hammond from the EH Division, the plan presentation of the 2009 observations has been postponed until next meeting. In the mean time, Kristin provided some examples of what kind of data the study yielded, specifically in Full Service and Fast Food Restaurants.

For Full Service restaurants, there was an overall decrease in violations observed for Time/Date Marking of Prepared Foods, Employee Health Policy, Proper Handwashing,

Records & Parasite Destruction, and separation of Raw & RTE Foods and an increase in Separation of Raw & RTE foods, Cold Holding ($\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$), and Chemical Storage.

For Fast Food restaurants, there was an overall increase in violations observed for Cold Holding ($\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$) but decreases in Employee Health Policy, Separation of Raw & RTE foods, Proper Handwashing, Time/Date Marking of Prepared and CP Foods, Chemical Storage, Good Hygienic Practices, and Food Contact Surfaces – cleaned and sanitized.

Requests were made that the presentation give more detail in describing the method of identifying and explaining the increases of the violations, especially for the demonstration of knowledge and cold holding violations.

7) FSAC Membership and Meeting Schedule

Due to limited resources and time constraints, it was proposed that the FSCA reduce the meeting frequency to the third Wednesday every other month. The meetings would still be from 2:15-3:45 pm at Alexandria Health Department, 4480 King St. 5th Floor. The 2010 meeting dates agreed to are:

Wednesday January 20, 2010

Wednesday March 17, 2010

Wednesday May 19, 2010

Wednesday July 21, 2010

Wednesday September 15, 2010

Wednesday November 17, 2010

The December 9 meeting was cancelled.

Requests for recommendation for new FSCA members was made.

8) Upcoming Tasks

Seek out partners and contacts to provide resources for the Eco-Friendly Restaurant Initiative.

Developing additional resources for the New Facility Welcome Package.

Consider distributing a special message and guidance about thanksgiving meals and food safety.

9) Adjournment