



City of Las Cruces®

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

Council Action and Executive Summary

Item # 11 Ordinance/Resolution# 12-203

For Meeting of _____
(Ordinance First Reading Date)

For Meeting of June 4, 2012
(Adoption Date)

Please check box that applies to this item:

QUASI JUDICIAL LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE

TITLE: A RESOLUTION FURTHERING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN THAT AUTHORIZES SUPPORT, INCLUDING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS WITH VARIOUS ENTITIES, FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FARM-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAM(S) IN LAS CRUCES AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, AND FOR THE CITY OF LAS CRUCES TO SERVE AS FISCAL AGENT FOR THOSE PROJECTS THAT SUCCESSFULLY APPLY FOR AND RECEIVE FUNDING FOR SUCH PROGRAMS.

PURPOSE(S) OF ACTION:

To authorize the City of Las Cruces to enter into partnerships and serve as fiscal agent (when requested) in support of Farm-to-School grant programs.

COUNCIL DISTRICT: ALL		
<u>Drafter/Staff Contact:</u> Merideth Hildreth <i>Merideth A. Hildreth</i>	<u>Department/Section:</u> Public Works/Facilities Management	<u>Phone:</u> 541-2177
<u>City Manager Signature:</u> <i>[Signature]</i>		

BACKGROUND / KEY ISSUES / CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

Based on available reports and other statistical information provided through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), indicators point to a need to improve the nation's health. For instance, local areas of the community with lower levels of income have less access to fresh fruits and vegetables than higher-income areas; children frequently have access to unhealthy food choices on school campuses; over one-third of children in the third grade in New Mexico are considered overweight and/or obese; and, many children and adults consequently are at greater risk as it relates to adverse health issues. Based on these observations and other statistics, there is widespread support for sweeping changes to our food programs. The 2012 Farm Bill that is up for debate in the U.S. Congress is intended to help address this situation.

Farm-to-School Programs are one way to help ensure children have access to high-quality food and health education at schools; foster local farm industry growth; and to support local economic development. Two recent acts of Congress help to support this type of initiative. First, the 2008 Farm Bill amended the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage institutions operating Child Nutrition Programs, including schools participating in the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, to purchase unprocessed, locally grown and raised agricultural products. As part of this program, the USDA granted authority to participating institutions to specify the geographic sourcing for these foods. Second, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 provides annual funding to the USDA to award competitive grants for farm-to-school activities. These grants may be up to \$100,000 per project and can be used for training, planning, equipment, school gardens, and for the development of partnerships to create new or supplement existing programs.

To support this endeavor at the state level, New Mexico has established the position of Farm-to-School Coordinator, who works closely with the National Farm-to-School Network. Legislation includes a Senate Bill and Memorial implementing this initiative and placing emphasis on locally procured and home-grown food programs. Benefits of such activities include encouraging consumption of garden produce both at school and home; providing improved nutrition; creating hands-on education in the areas of science, health, nutrition, and entrepreneurship; benefitting small and mid-sized agricultural producers; and reducing energy consumption used in transportation – just to name a few.

In 2011, the Las Cruces City Council adopted the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP). One of the Objectives (8) of the plan is to “Support Local Food Networks.” Goals in support of this objective provide for the implementation of processes and programs that increase the number of community gardens at schools, encourage the purchase of locally grown food for use in City programs, and support local food production.

This Resolution has been prepared by City staff, and is supported by some members of City Council, to help with implementation of this component of the SAP. Councilor Pedroza has been active in the development of the Las Cruces School Garden Partnership. Furthermore, the City has been an active participant in the Dona Ana Food Planning & Policy Task Force. Together, these lay the foundation for this Resolution. Passage would establish a precedent among cities in New Mexico by exemplifying Council’s commitment to the health and well-being of children and adults in the Las Cruces area.

City staff is seeking authorization to proceed with implementation of a Farm-to-School Program in support of the SAP, Objective 8, which includes serving as fiscal agent to one or more local entities for funding application purposes, and entering into partnerships to further this goal. Furthermore, continued City participation will be contingent on the local agency(s) successfully applying for, and receiving, funding.

SUPPORT INFORMATION:

1. Resolution
2. Attachment “A”, Sustainability Action Plan Objective 8 “Support Local Food Networks”.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Is this action already budgeted? N/A	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	See fund summary below
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	If No, then check one below:
	<i>Budget Adjustment Attached</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Expense reallocated from:
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed funding is from a new revenue source (i.e. grant; see details below)
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed funding is from fund balance in the Fund.
Does this action create any revenue? N/A	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Funds will be deposited into this fund:
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is no new revenue generated by this action.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

The City agrees to serve as fiscal agent for any third-party grant or funding awards.

FUND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY:

Fund Name(s)	Account Number(s)	Expenditure Proposed	Available Budgeted Funds in Current FY	Remaining Funds	Purpose for Remaining Funds
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES:

1. Vote "Yes"; this will approve the Resolution, authorizing City staff to provide support and to form partnership arrangements with various entities, for the establishment of Farm-to-School Program(s) in Las Cruces and the surrounding area, and for the City of Las Cruces to serve as fiscal agent for those projects that successfully apply for and receive funding for such programs.
2. Vote "No"; this will not approve the Resolution. Therefore, staff will be required to pursue other options to implement this component of the Sustainability Action Plan.
3. Vote to "Amend" the Resolution and provide staff with further direction.
4. Vote to "Table" the Resolution and provide staff with further direction.

REFERENCE INFORMATION:

N/A

RESOLUTION NO. 12-203

A RESOLUTION FURTHERING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN THAT AUTHORIZES SUPPORT, INCLUDING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS WITH VARIOUS ENTITIES, FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FARM-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAM(S) IN LAS CRUCES AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, AND FOR THE CITY OF LAS CRUCES TO SERVE AS FISCAL AGENT FOR THOSE PROJECTS THAT SUCCESSFULLY APPLY FOR AND RECEIVE FUNDING FOR SUCH PROGRAMS.

The City Council of the City of Las Cruces is informed that:

WHEREAS, the City of Las Cruces Sustainability Action Plan, Objective 8 reads, "Support Local Food Networks" and Objective 8.3 reads, "Support efforts to create community gardens on school property"; and

WHEREAS, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers Farm-to-School Programs a key priority; and

WHEREAS, children frequently have access to unhealthy foods and drinks on school campuses, and one-third of third graders in New Mexico are now obese or overweight; and

WHEREAS, Farm-to-School Programs encourage consumption of garden produce in schools and at home, and school gardens provide hands-on experiential science, health, nutrition, and entrepreneurial education while supporting sustainable urban agricultural practices and food abundance; and

WHEREAS, Farm-to-School Programs can benefit small and mid-sized agricultural producers, provide direct market opportunities for beginning and socially-disadvantaged farmers with school cafeterias, and decrease the distance food travels to schools; thereby reducing energy used in transportation.

NOW, THEREFORE, Be it resolved by the governing body of the City of Las Cruces:

(I)

THAT the City acknowledges Las Cruces Public Schools and other local organizations for their efforts to improve the health of our children through school garden development, and authorizes staff to enter into partnerships to raise awareness of and implement Farm-to-School efforts including helping with school garden infrastructure and supporting third-party efforts to hire a Farm-to-School Coordinator in an effort to address long-term nutrition, health, and food supply for our children.

(II)

THAT The City of Las Cruces agrees to act as fiscal agent for any project which successfully applies for funding to implement Farm-to-School Programs.

(III)

THAT City staff is hereby authorized to do all deeds necessary in the accomplishment of the herein above.

DONE AND APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 2012.

APPROVED:

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk

(SEAL)

Moved by: _____

VOTE:

Mayor Miyagishima: _____

Councillor Silva: _____

Councillor Smith: _____

Councillor Pedroza: _____

Councillor Small: _____

Councillor Sorg: _____

Councillor Thomas: _____

Seconded by: _____

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



City Attorney

Excerpt from City of Las Cruces Sustainability Action Plan

Adopted by Resolution No. 11-182 on March 7, 2011.

Food

Objective 8: Support Local Food Networks

Why We Care

Food has traditionally not been a focus of local government interest in Las Cruces, but was brought up repeatedly during public input sessions. There is growing interest in the concept of community food security, which is concerned with how susceptible the food supply is to disruption by uncontrollable outside forces. These could range from contamination, to fuel-driven price increases, to disaster-induced shortages. Local food is generally considered more secure because the supply chain is shorter and less complex so there are fewer possible failure points. It may also be more sustainable by virtue of having traveled fewer miles from farm to plate. Agriculture is and has always been a cornerstone of the local economy, generating \$372 million in sales in 2006, so the opportunity is certainly there to produce more food for local consumption.

Current Conditions

There is little data on local food consumption within Dona Ana County, but at the state level, the numbers are fairly low. New Mexico imports about 95% of the food we eat from other states or countries, and exports about 95% of what we grow¹. There are many economic reasons for this that are beyond the control of local government, but there are some things we can do to increase community access to locally grown food.

For example, the City operates a Farmer's & Crafts market on Wednesday and Saturday mornings throughout the year. Saturday markets have more vendors (about 200 on average) and larger crowds (around 2000 typically, increasing to around 5,000 on the busiest holiday weekends. However, the majority of vendors are selling crafts rather than food. There are currently 39 active vendors of local, raw food, which includes produce, meat, and honey.

Progress to Date

The Farmer's Market is helping to provide low-income residents access to high-quality, healthy produce, which is typically a problem for people living near or below the poverty line. Among the 58 farmer's markets operating in the State, the Las Cruces market is responsible for fully 15% of all WIC redemptions, which is the federally-funded health and nutrition program for women, infants, and children.

There are three working community gardens in Las Cruces: the Fairlight Community Garden at the Community of Hope campus on 999 Amador, the corner of Tornillo and Spruce in the Mesquite neighborhood, and at the Alma d'Arte/Court Youth Center. There is also an effort underway to provide community support to establish and maintain community gardens on the grounds of four area public schools.

Further progress in developing local food networks will rely heavily on outside organizations, such as Mountain View Market Co-op, NMSU, the OASIS student group, La

¹ Dr. Mark Uchanski, NMSU Asst. Professor, in an April 2010 presentation, "Sustainable Food and Agriculture: Choices for the Future"

Semilla Food Center, the Food Policy Council, and the local Farm Bureau. The City will look to develop partnerships with these and other groups in an attempt to break down barriers that may exist to local food availability.

Internal Goals and Actions

Goal 8.1: Increase the amount of local food purchased by the City.

Action 8.1a: Support efforts to buy local food for the Las Cruces Convention Center.

Possible Partners: Global Spectrum, NMSU Extension Service

Lead section: Sustainability

Begin: Ongoing

Indicators: Local food purchased by weight and category, number of meals served with local food

Action 8.1b: Develop local menu options for the Sage Café near the East Mesa Recreation Center.

Lead section: Senior Programs

Support Section: Purchasing

Begin: 4Q 2011

Indicators: Local food purchased by weight and category, number of meals served with local food

Action 8.1c: Explore fiscal impacts of local food purchasing for Munson Center and eventually the new Central Kitchen. Share any findings with Las Cruces Public Schools and other local institutions.

Possible Partners: Las Cruces Public Schools

Lead section: Senior Programs

Support Section: Purchasing

Begin: 3Q 2012

Indicators: Local food purchased by weight and category, number of meals served with local food

Community Goals and Actions

Goal 8.2: Expand the amount and diversity of local food sold at the Farmers' and Crafts Market.

Action 8.2a: Enable acceptance of Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at the market. This will require a method of accepting EBT card payments, either directly at each vendor station, or at a central location that distributes tokens for transactions with vendors.

Lead section: Economic Development
Begin: 4Q 2011
Indicators: Number and value of EBT transactions

Action 8.2b: Change vendor rules to specifically allow produce from community gardens to be sold at the market.

Lead section: Economic Development
Begin: 1Q 2011

Action 8.2c: Create a promotional relationship with other regional farmers' markets.

Possible Partners: Southern NM Farmers' Market Group, La Semilla Food Center, Mountain View Market
Lead section: Economic Development
Begin: 1Q 2012
Indicators: Number and type of outreach activities

Action 8.2d: Hold regular cooking and food preparation demonstrations, including recipe sharing to encourage experimentation with a variety of local foods.

Possible Partner: NMSU Extension Service, Mountain View Market
Lead section: Economic Development
Begin: 3Q 2012
Indicators: number of events

Goal 8.3: Increase the number of community gardens within the City.

Action 8.3a: Support efforts to create community gardens at schools with agreements to allow conditional public use of these gardens. These gardens could create educational opportunities for the schools as well as supply healthy local produce to school cafeterias.

Possible Partners: Las Cruces Public Schools, Extension Office, Master Gardener Program, Keep Las Cruces Beautiful
Lead sections: Sustainability, Water Conservation, Parks & Recreation
Begin: Ongoing
Indicators: Number of active gardens

Action 8.3b: Identify and map available land that may be suitable for locating community gardens, particularly in areas with higher concentrations of multi-family housing.

Possible Partners: NMSU Geography Dept.
Lead section: Sustainability
Support sections: GIS
Begin: 3Q 2011
Indicators: number of suitable parcels, number of resulting gardens

Goal 8.4: Increase the amount of food produced on small private lots within the City.

Action 8.4a: Co-promote events and classes sponsored by the Master Gardener program to increase local knowledge about growing food.

Possible Partners: NMSU Extension Service
Lead section: Sustainability
Begin: 3Q 2011
Indicators: number of events, number of participants

Action 8.4b: Identify and remove zoning and other restrictions on urban agriculture, provided that potential nuisances can be mitigated.

Lead section: Development Services
Support sections: Sustainability, Codes Enforcement
Begin: Ongoing

Action 8.4c: Explore possible financial or utility incentives to help reduce the cost of urban agriculture. This might include special rates or rebate programs. Public education in gardening-related water conservation should also be emphasized.

Lead Sections: Sustainability, Water Resources
Begin: 3Q 2013