

**Draft Minutes of the
Resilient Hartford Food Forest Committee Meeting
November 14, 2022**

Resilient Hartford Members Present: Earl Hatley, Carolyn Hooper and Laura Simon.

Others Present: Cat Buxton, Ruth Fleishman and Karen Ganey.

Staff Present: Matt Osborn, Town Planner.

A hybrid Resilient Hartford (RH) Food Forest Committee Meeting was held on Monday, November 14th in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall. The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

1. Food Forest Brainstorming for the Clifford Park Food Forest: Discussion recap of last meeting:

- Can/should Apple Corp be the overarching/umbrella group to oversee a possible community engagement coordinator position? And could that position be an outside of town hire? If/how to apply for grant(s) to support the position?
- How does this group create a model of community organization/participation to leverage to other similar, local projects. Can we create a plan to take forward that would also be supported by the Town?

Karen started by noting that at the 11/7 Food Forest Committee meeting, the group discussed how we can leverage other groups and projects with the Clifford Park Food Forest. She noted that the Food Forest Google Group has expanded to forty folks. She added that there was discussion about possibly hiring a coordinator for the Food Forest and other food-related projects. Karen noted that there is potential of involving other groups like the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources class or Boy Scouts with the Food Forest.

Karen reported that Vital Communities is sponsoring a resilience event on December 10th. Cat noted that Vital Communities has a history of work on the local food economy and food security issues and could be a resource. She will carry this discussion about a possible coordinator position to the upcoming Vital Communities meeting. She suggested developing a job description for a hired coordinator. Ruth noted that there is still a need for a volunteer coordinator for the Food Forest.

Karen noted the Food Forest success over the past 18 months. It has generated interest and enthusiasm but it needs to be sustainable to be successful in the long-term. There was discussion about who could help hold this project (organizationally, networking, volunteer recruitment and coordination to keep project(s) moving forward) until a coordinator is hired. There was strong sentiment that this person should be a Hartford resident.

Cat asked why RH is not taking more of a lead on the Food Forest. Laura noted that the Food Forest is RH's main project. Matt agreed and noted that in the last year, RH used its entire budget on the Food Forest. He suggested that once the Food Forest Committee and RH have come up with a game plan for 2023, we hold a community event to show what has been done and get public input about future plans. Cat responded that she likes the idea. She noted that the Upper Valley Agroforestry project has six short videos that could be shown. There was consensus that RH should be holding a leadership role since the Food Forest is a community driven project designed to create and foster more resilient local communities. .

Ruth noted that the Food Forest had created teams that haven't been very active recently. She suggested getting them restarted and reaching out to folks to sign up for a committee. She came up with the following list:

- Outreach & Neighborhood Liaison
- Fundraising
- Infrastructure (fencing, water collection, signs, storage)
- Growing (soil building, planting, pruning & general maintenance of growing spaces)
- Watering

Carolyn suggested that each team have a leader. It was also suggested that there be a Coordinating Team (made up of one person from each committee & ideally including someone from RH, Clifford Park neighborhood and the larger community). The Coordinating Team would meet regularly, send out updates to teams, RH to the whole group, announce work parties and whole group meetings). Work parties and other projects/events would include everyone. A team would organize a work party or other event and the whole group would be invited to help-out. The Committee agreed that we should pursue this structure.

Cat stated that the Town could do more to show appreciation of its volunteers and the work that Apple Corps has done on Town property. She noted that lawn maintenance personnel have caused damage to trees with their equipment. Carolyn suggested that maybe CAST or Town Sustainability Coordinator Dana Clawson might help mediate. It was also suggested that a training could be organized for park landscapers/mowers.

Matt noted that the Parks and Recreation Commission and Parks and Recreation Department are very supportive of the Food Forest project. Ruth, who attended a site visit with the Parks and Recreation Commission and Parks and Recreation Department Director agreed.

Regarding next steps going forward, Karen suggested getting more input and accomplish more connectivity to other food security projects. Ruth suggested sending out information about the work teams and invite people to join. Cat suggested that we rely on RH to sponsor the next discussion. Ruth suggested that RH regularly communicate about the Food Forest to the Food Forest Google Group.

2. **Next Food Forest Discussion:** Matt noted that Resilient Hartford will be meeting on November 30th and will be discussing Food Forest.
3. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.