

## **Minutes**

MA Food Policy Council Meeting Agenda

Monday, February 3, 2014

Tower Hill Botanical Garden, Theatre Room, Boylston 9:30 – 12:30

In attendance:

Cynthia Taft Bayerl, MA Depart. of Public Health for Commissioner Bartlett

Kerry Bowie, Depart. of Environmental Protection

Jeff Cole, Federation of MA Farmers Markets

Michael Hunter, Undersecretary, MA Dept. of Housing and Economic Development

Amanda Kinchla, UMASS Extension

Steve Kulik, State Representative

John Lee, Allandale Farm

Kate Millet, Depart. Of Education

Vivian Morris, MA Public Health Association

Bonita Oehlke, MA Depart. Of Agricultural Resources

Frank Martinez-Nocito, MA Depart. Of Transitional Assistance

Greg Watson, Commissioner, MA Depart. Of Agricultural Resources

The meeting was called to order at 9:44 AM by Chair Commissioner Watson who thanked Kathy Abbot for the use of the auditorium at the Tower Hill Botanical Garden. Council members introduced themselves.

**Minutes:** A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by John Lee and seconded by Vivian Morris. The motion carried on unanimous voice vote.

### **Reports of Officers:**

Commissioner Watson reported that Representative Steve Kulik was called out for a legislative meeting and is therefore unexpectedly unable to attend this meeting. He outlined the process regarding the FPC contract with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council which has been encumbered by the issue of not having full funding in-hand. He expects the contract to be signed this week. He noted Katie Millet, the FPC contract liaison between FPC and MDAR, has been very helpful and he thanked her for her work.

Commissioner Watson noted that some Food Policy Council members terms of service need to be addressed and that he will e-mail members about that process.

He suggested that the next FPC meeting include an update on the Healthy Incentives Program.

Boston Public Market status report: Fundraising has accelerated and the organization has met the threshold required to release state matching funds. A full report will be on the agenda for the next FPC meeting. Foods will mainly be sourced from Massachusetts with none from outside our region.

Urban Agriculture initiatives: An RFR released by MDAR with \$200,000 had 29 responses totaling close to a million dollars. The review team has narrowed the field to 9 really good proposals. The RFR is not the only effort on Urban Ag and it has inspired many communities to move on their own as urban areas across the state including Worcester, Lowell, Chicopee, and Framingham are looking at or have Urban Ag initiatives. These are consistent with the goals of the FPC particularly around food access and affordability. He notes there is still a gap between traditional ag production and the demand for local food in part because of the connection between nutritious local produce and health and there is the need for us to respond to the demand along with continued issues with loss of agricultural infrastructure in the state. March 8, 2014, will be the Second Annual MA Urban Ag Conference [https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/baltimore-farm-network/HWs1X\\_zaMb8](https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/baltimore-farm-network/HWs1X_zaMb8)

He noted the finalization of regulations on commercial food waste that requires operations with more than 1 ton of food waste per week to remove that waste from the landfill stream and initiatives around “Healthy Retail” including DPH interest in such initiatives.

### **New Business:**

Marc Draisen, Executive Director of the MAPC introduced the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) organized team that will facilitate the statewide food strategic plan. Julie Conroy, Sr. Principle Planner for MAPC, Mary Praus, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Land Use Planner; David Elvin, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission; and Senior Planner Alex Risley Schroeder, MA Workforce Alliance. He noted the collaborative nature of the effort and stated the focus of today’s presentation is on process.

Julie Conroy, Sr. Principle Planner for MAPC provided the process overview. She noted MAPC is a facilitator and the work is to be done through wide participation of MA constituents. She described overarching principles of food system plan development and desire to facilitate full stakeholder engagement. She noted issues with conflicting regulations and lack of infrastructure. Several previous planning projects of relevance were described, noting the effective process of the Metro-Future planning and the work in the PVPC Food Security Plan [http://www.pvpc.org/resource\\_center/projects-plans.shtml](http://www.pvpc.org/resource_center/projects-plans.shtml); Franklin Country Farmland and Food shed Study [http://www.frcog.org/services/landuse/landuse\\_zoning.php](http://www.frcog.org/services/landuse/landuse_zoning.php); an MAPC facilitated plan for communities north of Boston- MAGIC <http://www.mapc.org/magic>. She noted that health and nutrition, regulations, zoning, workforce development, aquaculture and fishing, climate change, as well as data collection for establishing benchmarks are all important elements. There are many regional variances in Massachusetts to consider as well as questions such as; How much local food is there? Is there enough? Where is the available farmland? How do farmers know what to grow? What needs are there for farm connections to value added processing? How does this work relate to the New England Food Vision; seeking to produce 80% of our food locally by 2060? She stated that the scope and funding of this RFP/contract doesn’t allow for every element to be addressed and plans implemented, therefore there will be the need to identify the more critical aspects of the MA food system. She presented 7 key overall elements of a food system: Consumers, Producers, Processing, Distribution, Retail, Food Access, Environment, and Workforce.

A discussion followed about the role of the FPC and the Advisory Committee as stakeholders in the planning process and Working Groups. It was agreed that selected members of the FPC Advisory Committee and Food Policy Council would be part of a MAPC organized separate food systems planning Advisory Group as, not representatives of the FPC and also part of the Working Groups as relevant. Representation will be added to address gaps that exist, in distribution and retail for example. The intersection of agricultural production, health, social and racial equality must be included, with realistic statewide representation. It was noted that

there must be just the right number of participants; not too few and not so many as to make work impossible.

The MAPC's separate Advisory Group will be central to planning and take advantage of existing expertise. This group is expected to be developed by March or April and is not subject to the Open Meeting Laws. It was suggested that the charge to the Advisory group be very precise and clear and that perhaps the work on DPH's Chronic Disease Plan might provide a model.

MAPC will regularly report to the FPC at their meetings. The Food Policy Alliance is interested in being considered to have a role as a backbone organization in the execution of the plan.

The MAPC and the FPC were challenged to find opportunities in the process design to engage those not at the table, and to consider support for growers, small community based NGOs and small food business owner to participate. Water resources and food terrorism were also brought up, though in terms of managing expectations, some topics will have a higher priority for a central focus in a food systems plan in terms of leverage, policy, the project budget and the timeline.

The FPC and MAPC were challenged to define the role if any of the Advisory group and FPC Advisory Committee post planning.

MAPC noted that it will be/is critical to the planning process to set a date that the Food Plan will be published including specific policy recommendations. These provide one basis for evaluation of the plan and resulting actions. They also noted that due to budget and time constraints there will be the need to focus on critical issues and that disagreement around those is likely. In that process there are 2 options compromise and making choices. MAPC anticipates it will need to make recommendations on compromise or choice on a case by case basis.

It was stated that it will be imperative to articulate assumptions in the choice/compromise process.

The Food Safety Modernization Act is of huge significance for the farming community. It's not clear what the implications will be for both growers and processing;

MAPC has a stakeholder engagement process in mind with their community engagement specialists to help build the process.

It was agreed that the FPC should make plans to brief the legislature on our progress.

Comments from the public reiterated the need to "tap into unheard voices" and not overlook the impact and potential to tap into economic development, not only in relation to the Food Plan, but also the planning process.

A motion to adjourn was made by John Lee and seconded by Kerry Bowie at 11:50 AM. The motion carried by voice vote.