

Minutes: MA Food Policy Council Meeting Agenda  
Friday, April 11, 2014  
Tower Hill Botanical Garden, Theatre Room, Boylston 9:30 – 12:30

In attendance:

Kerry Bowie, Depart. of Environmental Protection  
Frank Carlson, Carlson Orchards  
Jeff Cole, Federation of MA Farmers Markets  
Suzanne Condon, MA Depart. of Public Health for Commissioner Bartlett  
Manny Costa, Costa Produce  
Michael Hunter, Undersecretary, MA Dept. of Housing and Economic Development  
Steve Kulik, State Representative  
Kate Millet, Depart. Of Education  
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 9:40 AM by Commissioner Greg Watson, FPC Chair. A motion to approve the minutes was made, seconded, and passed on unanimous voice vote.

Commissioner Watson gave an update on the Boston Public Market which has made much progress. A RFR for vendors has been posted. He noted the house budget contains few earmarks and amendments close at 5PM today and that amendments are being filed to address Buy Local and MDAR funding along with trying to support the Senior Farm Share program. He also shared that he has been asked to be a part of AGree.org, non-profit representing large national foundations who would like to support sustainable agriculture domestically and globally. Philanthropy is now playing a more important role in agriculture including MA food systems planning, with strong support from our local philanthropic community. They are looking for an appropriate role for larger foundations to complement regional efforts. Buy Locals have played an important role. Food security is being mentioned more frequently. Jeff Cole asked if it made sense to create a FPC liaison working group to support of Commissioner Watson in his work with AGree? He was asked to make a motion to create the working group which was seconded by Frank Matinez-Nocito, and passed on unanimous voice vote.

FPC reappointments. The Governor's office has received notice of interest by current members with the exception of Frank Carlson and has accepted them. Frank explains that he is no longer a food processor and feels that an active food processor would be a stronger delegate. Commissioner Watson commended Frank Carlson and presented him with a certificate for his contributions of time, expertise and wisdom since the inception of the FPC.

Commissioner Watson noted that FPC officers now need to be elected. Representative Kulik nominated Commissioner Watson as Chair which was seconded by Jeff Cole and passed on unanimous voice vote. Representative Kulik was nominated for vice chair and Jeff Cole for secretary, seconded by Michael Hunter and passed on unanimous voice vote.

The role of the FPC Advisory Committee in relation to the FPC and the statewide planning process was discussed. The AC will continue to serve the FPC for upcoming issues and can also assist with the statewide planning process. It was suggested that the FPC also be open to other opportunities and committees as the planning process moves forward and that the Advisory committee provide advice to the FPC as to other individuals and groups that should be involved.

Representative Stephen Kulik shared a legislative update and that a senior farm share has been referenced in the House Budget. He is closely monitoring federal legislation regarding backfilling at the state level programs that are not being supported at the federal level and noted the limited capacity of the state in this regard.

New Business: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) status report

Julie Conroy reported that as of March 31, contracts with partners were in place. An RFR went out for an engagement facilitator for stakeholders to organize the scheme of meetings across the state and work with the Advisory Committee and Working groups, due April 30. This element is seen as one of the most important elements of the MAPC process. Draft communications plans including timing of communications are being developed for use with contract partners, with the Food Policy Council, with MDAR regarding contract issues, with the MAPC Advisory Committee, and external communications for the public. A press release is ready to go to announce that this project is starting. The team has been brainstorming about the MAPC Advisory Team and Working Groups. All of the FPC members will be invited to be Advisors on the MAPC Advisory committee, as well as a long list of many organizations with different levels of participation based on tasks. MAPC has a general list of organizations and sectors for the Advisory Team. For Working Groups, the food system needs expertise in areas of 1) social justice and food access, 2) ecological resiliency and 3) economics and workforce issues, with expertise that supports each of the food system sectors. Details are being added to the Work Plan. MAPC is also working on Phase II through an annotated outline of the Work plan for the process as well as the Phase II contract.

The groups may be connected with a liaison from the Work Groups to the AC and a contact on each workgroup to ensure that there is cross communication for policy consideration and other outcomes. The number of working groups needs to be manageable and provide an opportunity for 'cross fertilization'. The more working groups there are - the more staff time is needed for management and logistics and the harder it becomes to pay attention to opportunities and needs for 'cross fertilization'. There are 45 organizations that have been named so far. Ideally it will be flexible for someone to decide if they would prefer to be in a Working Group or an Advisory Group. How people are being recruited and selected hasn't been identified.

MAPC has included organizations that have had a lot of involvement in food systems issues. FPC members shared comments. The group should be diverse group including race and geography. Urban Ag audiences have showed strong interest.

MAPC expects to make recommendations and then get feedback from the FPC. An initial target is five Working Groups. The Advisory Team will be the group of experts to help MAPC think through the setup

of the working groups, and what is the best process for stakeholder engagement, and then the action and policy recommendations. Engagement can also occur through one-on-one engagement, attending producer meetings and other methods to engage stakeholders. There may also be special task forces that are a subgroup of Working Groups. Several academic institutions have contacted MAPC with offers to research topics of relevance, which will extend the network. The folks in the main working groups will have the most hats, however specialty groups and topics will be needed to be sure that all the basis are being covered. There will be a wide range of opportunities to engage depending on individuals' time constraints/ commitment.

MAPC communications plan will include use of their social media staff and will be incorporated into the Working Groups. An interactive web portal to engage folks is being developed. There are different age groups that respond to different ways to get information, however social media has to be fully integrated.

The total contract budget has \$40,000 outstanding, at \$310,000.00, from the RFR. MAPC will be clear about what is lost in the work plan and list those items outstanding for additional resources.

Stated that this project needs to reflect greater participation of the FPC and not rely on MDAR branding. Suggestions for a logo or other branding need to be discussed. All FPC members should have links to the FPC page and information. Background on the FPC can be promoted and is available currently on the FPC webpage.

A discussion followed about opportunities to make this team effort transparent, including promotion of agency collaborations. For example, there has been work between DPH and MDAR regarding the oyster industry. DPH regulates but also works with local health partners and food establishments and has led an initiative to streamline regulations. DEP and DAR recently participated in a food justice meeting at Harvard. Moving forward, each FPC member will be asked for a brief report and include collaborative efforts which will be critical for MAPC to hear about these initiatives. The goal is to ensure that it is publically know that we are making progress. In addition, MDAR will coordinate a calendar with on-going FPC member events. A group representing the FPC to respond to MAPC issues includes DAR, Representative Kulik, Katie Millet and Jeff Cole. MAPC will share documents with a response date, and can move on if the deadline isn't met.

A suggestion was made to review the portfolio of programs from MOBD and compare with entrepreneurial business needs in the food and ag sectors, as well as other agencies for collaborative opportunities.

Public comment: Noted that MAPC cannot expect all relevant parties to come to them and that they need to reach out and plan to attend meetings of other groups. A suggestion was made to consider seafood in the food systems planning.

Other Business

Frank Nocito Martinez, provided a detailed Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) update. This very successful \$20 million program is the first of its kind in the U.S, started in 2010 with a \$20 million award from USDA! Noted the need for 2 years of process for effective implementation and simple systems are best for operations and reporting. There are 5 evaluation goals: Causal impact (which has shown HIP increased fruit and vegetable consumption), general impact on SNAP clients, evaluation of systems and operation, impact on DTA, Xerox, and retailers, and costs. The latest report is available on the MDAR FPC page.

Cris Coffin, AFT, provided a brief introduction to New England Food Policy: Building a Sustainable Food System. This effort focused on land, resources, processing, waste streams, and regional collaborations and was built on work done by the New England Ag Commissioners. It has not looked at the whole food system nor at food access issues. Consensus is to include a more detailed presentation in the next FPC agenda to prepare for a larger discussion of the policy landscape.

Suzanne Condon, DPH, shared an update on Consolidating Food Manufacturing, Processing and Distribution Regulations, part of Governor Patrick's review of state regulations with an emphasis on the need for consolidation and streamlining. DPH is proposing consolidation of 9 separate sets of rules (and deletion of 2) related to food manufacture, food processing, and food distribution, and replacing them with a single, modernized set of food safety regulations that provides more standardization across sectors and a clear appeals process. The work has consolidated 240 pages to 5. A full report is available on the Public Health Council webpage. Once approval has been granted from the Public Health Council, there will be public hearings.

DPH is waiting for the final regulations on the Food Safety Modernization Act and any guidance related to incorporation into their regulations. National Food Allergen Awareness Week is coming up. MA is the only state in the country with food allergen legislation.

A question was asked about the status of the MA in Motion funding. DPH is reviewing the significant impacts expected due to the loss of approximately 50% of the funding under the Community Transformation Act. The state has been working to try to backfill programming impacted by the loss of federal funds, but we cannot expect the state to cover the full loss.

DEP has submitted a grant to CDC to look at Brownfields in western Massachusetts as well for urban farming soil remediation.

DTA announced a new pilot pending FNS approval for a SNAP system automated payment system so that recipients are able to participate in CSAs. This is also a first in the U.S!

A motion was made by Representative Kulik and seconded by Manny Costa to adjourn at 12:29 PM which passed on voice vote.