

DRAFT—N.B. THE FOLLOWING MINUTES HAVE NOT BEEN APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION
MINUTES FROM PUBLIC MARKET COMMISSION SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISH AND SEAFOOD MEETING

Wednesday, August 31, 2011 3:30pm

100 Cambridge Street, Conference Room B, Boston, MA

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Mary Griffin, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, Chair, designee of Secretary Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; Nancy Caruso, resident of Boston, recommended by Mayor Thomas M. Menino; Jacquelyn Indrisano, representing state Senator Petrucelli ; Lauren Shurtleff, Planner, designee of the Executive Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority.; and Bill Tuttle, Deputy Director for Real Estate and Asset Development, designee of Secretary Jeffrey B. Mullan, Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

Subcommittee members absent from the meeting: None.

At 3:35pm, Chairwoman Griffin called the meeting to order.

a. Introductions

Commissioner Griffin introduced herself and gave a brief overview of the project. Other Subcommittee members introduced themselves.

Ms. Griffin invited any public comments before starting the agenda.

Mr. Bernie Feeney of the Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association indicated that he and his association had been actively following the progress of the market and intended to be there.

Mr. Tuttle asked him to clarify what “being there” meant.

Mr. Feeney gave a brief overview of the Lobstermen’s Association and indicated that member fishermen would want to sell their product at the public market.

Ms. Griffin offered a brief sequence of events leading up to the meeting, including the Governor’s Executive Order establishing the Commission and other listening sessions to date.

Mr. Feeney said that the Association would want to staff a permanent year-round stall at the public market with a combination of staff and fishermen.

Ms. Caruso asked him to clarify if fishermen would be serving in the booth and, if so, how they would be selected.

Mr. Feeney indicated that the crux of a farmers market is that the producers have to be there. The Association would solicit interested fishermen to work at the booth on a rotating basis.

Ms. Caruso asked how the fishermen would sell there.

Mr. Feeney indicated that only a portion of fishermen would want to participate, and they would figure the schedule out accordingly.

Ms. Griffin asked if there would be an educational component.

Mr. Feeney said they would feature the biology of the lobster, how the fishermen operate and fish, cover the rules and regulations of the industry and what they are doing to comply.

Mr. Michael Gemy, a Haymarket vendor, said that he sells cherrystones and fish, and he was attracted to the project because there is a large clientele in Boston. He also indicated that he sells all types of fish in his business, mostly farm-raised.

Ms. Shurtleff asked if he wanted to sell 7 days a week in the market.

Mr. Gemy said yes.

Mr. Ray (last name inaudible) said that he works to operate fish stands too. He deals with a lot of farms, Scottish fish, Australian fish, and farm-raised black bass.

Ms. Shurtleff asked if these gentlemen had enough connections and knowledge to sell only Massachusetts-produced seafood.

Mr. Ray answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Griffin pointed out that this was an opportunity for nutritional education as well.

Ms. Elizabeth Fitzsimmons from the New England Aquarium asked about geographical guidelines for fish sold at the public market. She pointed out that there is no wild salmon on the east coast as an example.

Ms. Griffin indicated that a discussion of local would be an important part of the meeting.

b. Questions for consideration

Ms. Griffin asked the first question on the agenda, "What type of preparation does the fishing/seafood industry need to do in order to supply a year-round market in Boston with adequate product?"

Ms. Lori Caron of the Lobstermen's Association said it would be great to process lobsters on site. She said 60-70% of customers want value added products when it comes to lobster. The Association would like to sell live lobsters as well as prepared products (rolls, etc.)

Mr. Tuttle asked her to define process.

Ms. Caron indicated that it meant to steam and pick lobsters and said that they would need guidance from appropriate state agencies on how to do that correctly.

Ms. Fitzsimmons asked if a customer would be able to pick a lobster and have it steamed on site. The reply was yes.

Ms. Griffin asked how we prevent the public market from becoming a food court.

Ms. Caron said that there are very few places where one can buy a guaranteed local, Massachusetts-caught lobster freshly cooked for you. That is different than a food court.

Mr. Feeney said that the Association would highlight its whale-safe practices and the bands it uses to promote its practices. He said the Massachusetts industry was doing conservation things before the federal government mandated them.

Mr. Tuttle asked if the lobster in his local supermarket was from Massachusetts.

Mr. Feeney said probably not. There is a lack of retail distribution in the state.

Mr. Tuttle asked where the lobstermen sell their product.

Mr. Feeney said to wholesalers and by delivering to restaurants. The industry is very dependent on Canadian processors. He said 60-80% of the catch goes to Canada.

Mr. Philip DeNormandie of DeNormandie Companies asked if Massachusetts lobster sold at the same price as Maine lobster.

Ms. Caron said a lot of product from Massachusetts goes to Europe.

Mr. Eric Hickey from the Massachusetts Department of Health asked if 60-80% of Massachusetts lobster went to Canada, a statistic that was confirmed.

Ms. Griffin asked question number 2, “Where do you sell (and buy, if supplementing your production) your products now?”

Mr. Larry Dore from Globe Fish said his company supplies to the northeast, getting fish from New Brunswick, Gloucester, Boston, Maine, Nova Scotia, Hawaii, South Africa, etc. He also indicated that the industry already supplies a year-round market because the consumer wants fish all year and it his business could not survive simply on local New England fish. He said 97% of his products are fresh.

Mr. Tuttle asked if there was enough local product to supply the public market.

Mr. Dore said he thought 60-80% could be.

Ms. Caruso asked what types of fish.

Mr. Dore said pollack, haddock, cod, etc. Not all can be local, but the market could be more than 50% local.

Mr. Jared Aurebach from Wildfish, LLC said that the industry is trying to add traceability to the catch to ensure products are local.

Ms. Griffin asked question 3, “What types of products would the industry like to sell at the public market?”

Mr. Aurebach said local fin fish.

Mr. Gemy said that Boston’s diverse community would support all kinds of fish being sold.

Mr. Ray said he’d like to sell value added meals, which would be processed on site, a model more supermarkets are using.

Ms. Fitzsimmons suggested building a market for underutilized species to create a market to balance out the demand for cod and other fish under pressure.

Ms. Griffin asked about CSF (Community Supported Fisheries).

Ms. Angela Sanfilippo of the Gloucester Fishermen’s Wives Association said that her organization has struggled to educate folks about the program. She said that Massachusetts needs to showcase its product and too many people are using farmed product. She also said

people from different cultures who live in Massachusetts use the whole fish in their traditional cooking, including Chinese and Russian cooks. She said educating the consumer is the key. The GFWA CSF has generated \$1.7 million and created 15 jobs in three years.

Mr. Tuttle asked if the GFWA wanted to be in the public market.

Ms. Sanfilippo said yes, with local seafood.

Mr. Tuttle asked if she meant as a retail location or a CSF drop-off.

Ms. Sanfilippo said that the financials would be challenging at this time, and a model would have to be figured out later.

Ms. Griffin asked and Ms. Sanfilippo confirmed that the GFWA CSF was year-round, buying from day boats and big boats.

Ms. Griffin asked question 4, "What is the appropriate balance of fresh to prepared food in a public market?"

Mr. Feeney said vendors would learn as they go. Seasonality may affect sales.

Mr. Gemy discussed the rules and regulations when selling outside. Would vendors need their own equipment?

Mr. Lilienthal updated the group on some of the constraints on the building.

Mr. Tuttle asked about specific needs: water, drainage, cooking, etc.

The group said storage, ice, electricity, security.

Mr. JD Kemp of FoodEx proposed segregation, meaning keeping the shellfish separate from other items.

Mr. Hickey gave an overview of the different regulations that would need to be respected.

Ms. Caron said it could be more complex depending on the vendor's product.

Ms. Griffin asked question 5, "Given that the Massachusetts industry will be a priority, should the seafood for sale at the market be "Massachusetts only", "regional", "international/national" or a blend of the three? What defines those terms?"

Ms. Caron said the Commission would need to provide a very clear mission. Is it for the vendor? Consumer?

Ms. Beth Casoni of the Lobstermen's Association said that she had been working closely with representatives from the Department of Agricultural Resources on the Commonwealth Quality program. The market should say that a product is from Massachusetts with certainty and put Massachusetts products first in the priority list.

Ms. Griffin asked for a definition of Massachusetts-based. Landed here? Massachusetts is the home port?

Mr. Feeney said Massachusetts lobster means licensed in Massachusetts, with products needing to be landed in Massachusetts.

Ms. Sanfilippo said boats have permits to land in Maine. Her group is notified by boat which products are landed in Massachusetts.

Mr. Aurebach advocated for landed in Massachusetts and pointed out the potential trickle-down effect of that model, including creating jobs for ice vendors, fuel companies, unloading boats, tourists, etc.

Ms. Fitzsimmons said that the market would need to deal with the question from consumers of why there was no salmon for sale. She said that whether the discussion with consumers is why a certain fish is not available (because only local fish are for sale) or why imported fish are for sale (they are not local to Massachusetts waters, but consumers want them), the discussions will need to be handled well by the market so the consumer is appropriately educated.

Ms. Patti Fleszar of the Sacred Cod Fish Market indicated that swordfish from Chile has a different price than swordfish from Massachusetts.

Ms. Casoni said that the market should take whatever is caught that day and sell it.

Ms. Fleszar said that she would not be able to survive financially without selling tuna and swordfish because that is what consumers want.

Ms. Fitzsimmons asked if there was a Commission mission statement. She summarized the two big questions: is the market selling purely seasonal, local fish or providing for all a consumer's seafood shopping needs?

Mr. Feeney said that vendors should make specific commitments. Some days are better than others in the fishing world. Whenever possible the premiere products should be from Massachusetts, but the Commission should set up rules when and how a mix of non-local and local might work.

Ms. Fleszar said it could always feature local, but vendors could supplement with non-local.

Ms. Griffin asked question 6, "Are there opportunities for seafood cooperatives or other shared-risk models?"

Mr. Kemp asked what the purpose of the market is. Perhaps a cooperative is the way to go, as it would alleviate the need of a single vendor. It would allow more vendors to be part of the market without the single risk.

Ms. Griffin asked if community models already existed.

Mr. Kemp pointed out the CSF model and suggested cooperatives could be set up for the market by the operator.

Mr. Tuttle asked if there was a shellfish co-op.

Mr. Hickey gave some examples of shell fishing models on the Cape and south shore.

Mr. Aurebach said that his company sells multiple fishermen's product.

Ms. Griffin asked question 7, "What conditions would be necessary for you to market to restaurateurs at the public market?"

Ms. Caruso asked the assembled crowd if they would want to sell to restaurants, which was answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Caron said it would depend on different groups, but one should have the option.

Mr. Feeney said orders could be taken at the market, processed elsewhere.

Mr. Ray said that it is a concern to Haymarket vendors that if public market vendors are buying wholesale, they not do it at the Chelsea market.

Mr. Hickey indicated that farmer's markets are not licensed to sell to restaurants and that a DMF wholesale license would be necessary to do so.

A guest asked about parking considerations, and Mr. Lilienthal indicated that parking was the number one issue raised at every meeting to date. Further study would be required to finalize details.

Ms. Shurtleff asked about vendors' loading needs.

Mr. Gemy said vendors would have to lug it by hand.

Mr. Ray said they would have to manage that and figure it out.

Mr. Tuttle asked about the types of trucks they used.

Pickups and box trucks was the reply.

Ms. Fleszar asked how the Commission was going to determine which vendors got in to the market.

Ms. Griffin said that would be the job of the market operator.

A guest pointed out that Haymarket does not allow fish sales during the summer months.

Ms. Caruso asked Mr. Ray, his wife, and Mr. Gemy if they would continue to sell outside if they had space on the inside of the market, to which they said probably not. They would instead lease their license to a non-fish vendor outside.

Ms. Casoni asked about a vendor packet or some sort of guidelines for vendors.

Mr. Lilienthal indicated that the website www.mass.gov/publicmarket would be featuring that information during the fall and to keep an eye on that site for all updates relating to the public market.

c. On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Public Market Commission Subcommittee on Fish and Seafood adjourn.

The vote was unanimous.

The meeting concluded at approximately 5:02pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark M. Lilienthal

Project Manager and Staff to the Commission