

Minutes: MA Food Policy Council Meeting

Friday, January 13, 2017, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough

In attendance:

Helena Fruscio Altsman, designee, MA Office of Housing and Economic Development

Jeff Cole, Federation of Massachusetts Farmers

Senator Anne Gobi

Representative Hannah Kane

Representative Steve Kulik

Commissioner John Lebeaux, MA Dept. of Ag Resources Commissioner

John Lee, Farmer

Rob Leshin, designee: Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education

Vivian Morris, Nutrition & public health expert

Lea Susan Ojamaa: Dept. of Public Health (will now be the official designee)

J Mark Reil, District/ Constituent Services Director, Office of Senator Ryan C. Fattman

Eric Stocker, Distributor

Danah Tench, designee: Dept. of Environmental Protection

John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center

Dr. Sam Wong, Local Health Department Representative

Call to order: Commissioner and FPC Chair John Lebeaux called the meeting to order at 9:45 AM.

He noted appreciation for the use of the facility and introduced Jack Buckley, Director, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, who shared comments about the building, which is the largest net zero energy conference building in MA. He gave a special thanks to the senators and representatives on the FPC. Attendees of the FPC and the audience introduced themselves.

Approval of the minutes: A motion was made to approve the minutes from the previous meeting by Representative Kulik, seconded by John Lee, and unanimously approved.

Officers Reports: Commissioner Lebeaux shared that the six priority areas highlighted by the MA FPC to the administration and general court have been acknowledged by the Governor's office, and next steps are expected. He welcomed Eliza Mellion, an intern from Simmons working at MDAR for the month, who has interest in food policy. Council members were asked to be thinking about considerations for upcoming meetings relating to the MA Local Food Action Plan priorities, including programs and outcomes and if the deep dive of today's meeting is a possible model for future meetings and FPC activity/actions.

Program: Deep dive into food waste! What actions can FPC members support?

Food waste is one of the six MA FPC priorities were elevated to the Administration and General Court before Thanksgiving: *Reduce food waste through state programs for farmers, restaurants, processors, schools and other institutions, and consumers. A current focus is to support the Commercial Food Waste Ban by developing policies and programs to divert food waste from landfills. Support for donation programs, conversion of food waste to animal feed, composting, and the development of anaerobic digestion facilities are also priorities.*

John Fischer, Branch Chief, Commercial Waste Reduction & Waste Planning, DEP: Commercial Food Waste Ban: Progress Update, new infrastructure development and an analysis of economic activity supported by the ban.

As a result of the Commercial Organics Waste ban which took effect on Oct 1, 2014, fresh and perishable foods are being donated and rescued more frequently. The ban is part of a comprehensive approach to drive investment to divert disposal and hopefully eliminate the need for new solid waste facilities. Food waste is the biggest portion of our trash.

Discussion:

Noted and agreed that benchmarks and measurable criteria are needed to achieve goals.

Q. Are composting facilities monitored for odors? Facilities regulated under MA DEP are monitored. A trend is that other NE states are adopting bans so there is some regional collaboration and cross border work. There isn't much material coming to MA from other states.

Kristina Stefanski, Director of Quality Assurance for the Stop & Shop New England Division and Roger Beliveau, Distribution Manager: Implementation, challenges, and updated procedures.

Stop & Shop New England has a food waste model including closed-loop backhauling from retail stores to a SE MA digester. There are 214 retail locations and a distribution center in Freetown, MA. Recycling has taken place for 20 years, working with local farmers and MA DEP within the store facilities. Their permit allows 90 tons per day and they're now at 60 tons. It's a clean and sanitary process - done in the warehouses with a quick turnaround time. Bins of material are tracked to know the amount generated from each store. Employees are trained and the equipment depackages materials. The liquid goes to the digester and solid material is screened out. Water is reused. A goal is zero waste by 2020.

Discussion: Empty trucks backhaul materials from the stores to the digester, so no extra trips are needed. The facility meets a triple bottom line. A company called Divert oversaw the project. The cost per kilowatt generated is being calculated.

Lorenzo Macaluso, Director, Green Business Services, Center for EcoTechnology, Recycling Works program : Food waste as part of the MA Local Food Action Plan background, recommendations and CTE's role

The organization has been focusing on waste reduction for 40 years. Waste reduction assistance for businesses and institutions with waste ban compliance and to maximize diversion opportunities is provided. CTE is fully funded by DEP, with a focus on one-on-one technical assistance. The presentation was tied to several of the specific goals within the MA Local Food Action Plan that intersect with food waste. After all this time, it's still important to build awareness of these programs.

Gerard Kennedy, Director, Conservation & Technical Assistance, MDAR: Food waste ban and composting, opportunities and challenges: how proposed regulations are intended to address current challenges by farmers.

Farmers have always been composters of both agricultural products and solid waste. The line is sometimes not clear. To take offsite materials may mean that the business is regulated by DEP. DEP and MDAR allow farms an exemption from solid waste exemptions. Dairy farms for example, need to take on solid waste for composting. The Ag Composting Registration program created a process to register on an annual basis, with a requirement that the operation be located on an agricultural unit, as well as follow compost guidelines. There are about 60 farms that are registered as ag composting operations. Four aerobic digesters in MA have excess capacity and are on dairy farms, three on APR farms and others are in development. The output is a soil amendment. The process allows farmers to diversify their income stream, partly from tipping fees and to sell that material or to save on soil amendments.

Discussion: What is the approach to nuisance complaints? There have been many adjustments after the hearing regulating to nuisance preventions. They are under review by MDAR. MDAR is also working to provide information about FMSA and manure regulations and how it relates to compost.

Winton Pitcoff, Director, MA Food System Collaborative with support from the Food Law and Policy Clinic at the Harvard Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation: Identifying potential policy priorities for action.

Waste is a topic throughout the Plan, and touches every part of the food system. Food waste is cyclic rather than linear. There are costs around surplus food such as storage, transportation, and food safety compliance. Tax credits could be offered for those who transport food for donation. MA could offer state-level tax incentives for food donations. Date labels on food products could be changed so that they could correspond to food safety. There are restrictions relating to date labels so it's hard to donate the food. MA could consider standardization of date labels. There should be statewide guidance on food donation, perhaps through an interagency task force. In schools, 25% of foods served are wasted, Thirty minutes is an optimal amount of time to eat and most schools have less. There are interesting offer versus serve models and schools conducting waste audits. It would be interesting to create a state-wide food waste challenge. An emphasis on education is important so that the public is aware of food waste and food recovery. An app called Food Spoiler Alert find places to donate food with a short shelf life. Education Resource: Keeping Food Out of the Landfill: Policy Ideas for States and Localities.

Discussion: The app is all about keeping materials out of the waste stream. If there is draft legislation relating to use -by, sell -by, expiration date legislation, it would be helpful. There are a few state representatives considering date label legislation.

Public comments: A regional EPA representative commended MA on food waste initiatives. In regards to compost, the regulatory review is still open and deals with a specific situation under active review. Senator Anne Gobi shared that Senator Chandler wants to be sure her concerns are noted and her support for the town of Northborough. Commissioner Lebeaux has been in contact with Senator Chandler to note the concerns. Stephanie Bacon from the public health department of Westborough described a situation in Northborough and asked what they can do. They would like regulations rather than guidelines and considerations for a buffer zone if an operation is close to a residential area. Senator Chandler hopes to file a bill relating to regulation.

Senator Donahue's office has draft legislation relating to liability related to donations, use by dates and the offer v. serve issue. Bill numbers have not yet been assigned. Language relating to expiration dates needs to be based on scientific information. This topic is being addressed at the federal level, as well as

by CT and ME. Could ServeSafe include food donation guidelines? It could potentially be an easy, low-cost opportunity for the state; however ServSafe is based on a national program curriculum. Perhaps MA DPH could develop policy guidance.

Commissioner Lebeaux thanked all the speakers and their contributions for a meeting with very strong content.

Discussion: A White Paper, based on the presentations today, could be generated for the FPC to accept and post. Representative Kulk suggested it could be valuable to legislators with initiatives that might become legislation. Senator Gobi agreed. A White Paper supports the MA FPC focus on six broad recommendations, with one relating to food waste. Winton Pitcoff offered to assist as needed with language relating to tax credits. The industry of waste diversion can be an economic engine. There are so many places where food and food waste intersect that will hopefully lead to further cooperation on any problematic issues.

The MA FPC decided to have a white paper or summary document developed, based on the discussions and coordinated by Eliza Mellion, Simmons Intern, to be reviewed at an upcoming meeting, discussed, potentially accepted and posted.

New Business

Comments on programming moving forward: The FPC agreed that it was a good framework to focus on one priority per meeting. At the next meeting, March 10 at UMASS Amherst, there will be a focus on the MA Local Food Action Plan priority relating to increased procurement of local foods by institutions and municipalities.

The FPC as a whole cannot lobby, however individual non-agency members can. In terms of lobbying to match funding recommendations with the MA Local Food Action Plan priorities, most decisions have already been made and the budget will be released January 25. This is the third budget which doesn't have a lot of program specificity or earmarks. They will be added by legislators during conference or as part of budget hearings. FPC priorities are important to be able to advise the administration and the legislature on policy and budgets.

Old Business

Announcements

March 3, Massachusetts Maple Kick Off, Friday, Steve's Sugar Shack, Westhampton, 10:00 AM.
www.massmaple.org/ Commissioner Lebeaux will tap the first tree of the season!

March 4, Saturday, 5th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference (UFC), Northeastern University Curry Student Center, Boston, is designed to advance the opportunities and address the barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving Urban Farming sector. Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us.

March 7 - 9, Sixth Biennial New England Agricultural Marketing Conference & Trade Show, Sturbridge, MA <http://www.harvestnewengland.org/events/>

March 10, MA Food Policy Council Meeting, Amherst

April 4, Ag Day at the State house

Check out the MA Local Food Action Plan through the newly updated and easy to navigate website:
www.mafoodsystem.org

Public Comment

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 12:03 by Representative Steve Kulik, seconded by John Lee, and unanimously passed.