

MA Food Policy Council Minutes

January 12, 2018: 9:30 – 12:30

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

In attendance:

Helena Fruscio Altsman , Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Jeff Cole, Direct to Consumer Marketing

Senator Ann Gobi

Amanda Kinchla, UMASS Extension Food Safety Expert

Rob Leshin, EOESE

Representative Hannah Kane

John Lee, Farmer

Commissioner John Lebeaux, Dept. of Ag Resources Commissioner

Commissioner McCue, Dept. of Transitional Assistance

Vivien Morris, Community Health and Nutrition

Mark Reil, District Director, Office of Senator Ryan C. Fattman

Eric Stocker, Distribution

Danah Tench, Dept. of Environmental Protection

Ben Wood, Dept. of Public Health

John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center

Sam Wong, Public Health Expert

Call to Order: The meeting was convened at 9:40 AM by Commissioner Lebeaux.

Acceptance of Minutes: A motion to accept the minutes was made by John Lee, seconded by Commissioner McCue and passed unanimously.

Officers Reports

Chair: Commissioner Lebeaux introduced Ben Graff, MA FPC Intern, Simmons, who is developing a White Paper on Regulatory Topics. Council members and those in attendance introduced themselves.

Annual report: Pursuant to MGL Chapter 20, Section 6(e), the Council must submit an annual report to the Governor, Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, House Ways and Means committee AND Senate Ways and Means Committee. Commissioner Lebeaux proposed sending a summary of the six meetings held last year as well as the White Papers that have been accepted to date: (Waste and Farm to Institutional Sales and those under development including HIP and Regulatory Topics). The report will be submitted to Council members for comments prior to submission. A recommendation was made to include the HIP presentation from the last Council meeting, easy to include with an electronic distribution. There was interest in providing the annual report to legislative members beyond those specified in MGL. A suggestion was made that it would be meaningful if legislative members of the Council could share the annual report with their colleagues.

2018 meeting logistics: Commissioner Lebeaux asked for feedback to consider having four meetings at the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, one in November at Tower Hill and one in November at the state house. A suggestion was made to have one of the meetings at UMASS. Any other suggestions are welcome. (The Worcester Train Station meeting site is no longer available).

One-on-one Council member discussions: Commissioner Lebeaux has had one-on-one meetings with many Council members about opinions, perspectives and expertise which have been important to inform the facilitated discussion later in this meeting, and will be checking for times to meet with additional Council members.

Old Business

HIP White Paper and Letter Review: The discussion on these documents was tabled until the next Council meeting, to allow for additional internal review. A few comments included a review of the definition of food insecurity. Who decides if the price is affordable? If information is available, show that the HIP program changed the purchasing habits of SNAP recipients beyond the incentive. The evaluation shows that additional SNAP dollars are being spent at the same HIP retail locations for additional food purchases, beyond the incentive. Quotes from SNAP recipients using the HIP program would illustrate how their food purchasing decision making process has been changed.

A discussion about the importance of promoting this aspect of the program and the long term sustainability followed, noting the increase in the pace of incentive redemption. Legislative members of the Council plan to request funding, and explained that information on the long-term impact and changes in purchasing would be helpful. A long term goal is to transition recipients off the benefit. The strong positive impact on the farming community has been well demonstrated. At a federal level, a definition of sustainability is continued purchases at the farmers markets, regardless of an incentive. A comment was made that everyone at every economic level would like to eat more healthfully, but in many cases it comes down to affordability and access.

Program: Food is Medicine Plan, Jean Terranova, Director of Food and Health Policy, Community Servings. Community Servings produces medically tailored meals that are delivered critically ill residents. The new statewide Food is Medicine Plan, funded by Blue Cross, aims to inventory related innovative programs and corresponding data across the state over 12 months and work to expand the health care sectors involvement and engagement in food as medicine interventions. This work has several intersections with the Plan. The survey being used has been vetted by the Harvard School of Public Health. Listening sessions will complement the surveys to understand how individuals are connected to resources. Outcomes will be part of a presentation of data at the 2018 Oct Food is Medicine symposium. The project planning council includes MA Public Health Association and insurers including Commonwealth Alliance who have been reimbursing for meals for a previous three years pilot. The outcome shows a 16% average monthly health care savings. Insurers have provided some grant funds, but for sustainability, cost effectiveness is important. Health care providers are also a part of the program, including medical practices and physician practices and Community Benefits providers. Question: How can this program support local food? There is a perception that local food is expensive. Community Servings get subsidized local food from Red Tomato. Many of the organizations have local food as part of their mission. To push it over the finish line, more data is needed. CSAs are a good place to make those connections via the HIP program.

Just Roots in western MA and Lands Sake in eastern MA has a CSA box for this purpose. Community Services is raising capital for a new facility to triple meal production capacity.

In the K-12 foodservice system, the higher probability for local foods being used is when scratch foods are used. Springfield has a large culinary facility with long term 100% USDA foods as well as open kitchen space as satellite kitchen foods – including 60 schools and Holyoke. Syracuse is watching very closely as part of a trend to move away from processed product. 68% of schools in MA report using local produce.

Program: Municipal Strategies to Increase Food Access, Heidi Stucker, Regional Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council: MAPC provides planning services for over 100 cities and town. This strategy guide has been distributed to MASS in Motion towns. Compliments were shared for the usefulness of the tool, and a suggestion that it be shared with all towns involved in a master planning process, as well as the upcoming MA Municipal Association meeting coming up in Boston.

New Business

Council member updates: The Office of Secondary and Elementary Education is partnering with Framingham state for webinars on school nutrition best practices. On February 14, Farm to School will offer an on-line webinar featuring three school districts talking about best practices to increase their consumption of local foods. The Western MA Food Processing Center had a ribbon cutting ceremony for their new facility, and shared appreciation for the funding support. UMASS Extension was awarded a USDA Food Safety Outreach Project grant for food safety education for small food businesses with a focus on Preventive Controls.

MA Food Collaborative Update, Winton Pitcoff, Executive Director: There has been a strong focus on the HIP program advocacy, and a campaign for support in the next budget cycle. Representatives Kane and Kulik and Gobi have been very helpful. As individuals, please find a way to support moving HIP forward. There have been gangbuster results - \$400,000 was projected but the actual amount is \$3 M. The Food Waste legislation has signs of moment. A new project focuses on how school food intersects with just about everything, and aggregating that information from around the state for collaboration and policy change. Brittany Peats was introduced, a new member of the Collaborative. Several Council members commented on the success of the Food System Forum, including the program, networking opportunity and the lunch with foods sourced from 33 farms.

Facilitated discussion for 2018 planning

Christopher Bosso, Professor, School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University

We forget sometimes how much is going on in Massachusetts and the high amount of activity. The Council has shown extraordinary effort in bringing this wide group of participants together to bridge the famous silos and promote the six priorities identified last year. Which of the six goals need more discussion? Should the Farm Bill be on an upcoming agenda, considering that 80% of the funding is for

nutrition programs? What about climate change, public education and cooking, food justice and equity issues and economic development opportunities?

Metrics, it's important for all the topics the Council has addressed. Understanding what types of metrics we want to invest in or leverage and would play back to the existing goals. There is an opportunity to understand more of those metrics and the milestones of all the work. Work to show causal relationships. Metrics are critical to show results. Who is going to coordinate? What are the metrics are fairly achievable? What data shows progress in the priority areas? What metrics can show change that promotes greater equity so the history of past discriminations in the current system can be addressed? Who is benefiting from food related work in the state? What kind of info is useful information to legislators? Metrics that show the impact on constituents is best. Metrics have to be packaged to be useful. Goals: It would be a mistake to move off the goals. It is crucial that we have consistency of goals and messages. Our challenge is prioritizing what we want to be working on and specific related goals. Don't want to get caught up in metrics. Which areas have the best impact for metrics, against the six goals for what we want to accomplish each year.

Consider follow-up and White Papers with new goals and strategies in them.

What is the Collaborative doing and what's the relationship with the Council? What discussions would be helpful for metrics or projects to move forward on the rubric of metrics? The metric isn't meeting the goal; it's what is showing progress.

The milestones documented on infrastructural data can help move us forward. It makes sense for the Council to house keeping track of progress towards the goal, and continue on the six areas to quantify progress and also show that someone's keeping track of this. The enabling legislation includes the Plan and goal and benchmarks and progress towards achieving the goal. In terms of capacity, it's tough for the Collaborative. Six agencies have economists on staff and have a smaller working group who would identify which metrics there are, a few targeted things that are already being done, can we sue as markets, are we getting there and if yes, how or why is it happening. Who can do this work? You don't need expert statisticians to talk about metrics in this context. In a discussion you can identify how might we meet these goals in a way that makes sense? If it's outsourced, then process might rule over substance?

There are a lot of academicians want to study something that's relevant and to connect researchers with the questions that have the capacity could be efficient. The goals are aspirational; however there are measurable objectives that are worth discussing. What are the objectives under the goals and the metrics? It makes sense to focus on the existing goals and move to metrics based on objectives. A task force was discussed but suggested that instead, using smaller committee. Capacity is an issue for state agencies. At the same time, state agencies collect a tremendous data on a regular basis. Understanding what the indexes already exist and could be brought back to the Council would be helpful. It makes sense to take stock of what types of data agencies already have.

There is a lot of data is out there already. The Council can run it through the filters of how it works with the Plan and shape how it gets used by the agencies and the broader food community who when writing

grants need info for the broader stakeholder community. Think about the three lenses - equity, environment, economics. If the Council has a simple matrix that keeps track of a few numbers on each of these things it would be a great product. Consider a metric for each goal or some options. The Council should focus on a few achievable goals in each area, in a simple and straight forward manner. What's a baseline and a goal?.

A suggestion was to focus on the fragmentation of market options for growers, and resources to support growing and market choices. A network to more widely share information about surplus produce would be helpful to organizations and could spur entrepreneurial businesses – zucchini bread and muffins if there is a surplus of zucchini for example. Understanding technology options to connect producers and consumers in real time would also be helpful, including an inventory of existing resources and public and private businesses performing this service. There are lots of disruptive retail changes including Amazon's purchase of Whole Foods. Billions of pounds of cardboard have an impact. DEP is going to launch a solid waste master reduction plan.

How Climate change does it relate to the Council? For climate, how it affects water usage and energy consumption are important. The Senate passed a climate adaption plan, so there is considerable interest on the part of the Administration and farming is included. DPH is their climate change plan which includes access to food during emergencies. There could be a tie in with multiple state agencies. The City of Boston has done work on this. Master planning is about resiliency. How does climate change affect food system resiliency, especially during emergencies?

Advocacy: With blended membership, agencies cannot advocate within the administration and in general. How can we better engage the administration? More advocacy by non-agency members? How can the Council better amplify its voice? NGO members could be more vocal but haven't had a path unless it's through the Collaborative, but then the Council loses its opportunity. Could there be other ways to connect beyond the every two month meeting? Committees, etc... We haven't seen what that larger impact could be. Agency members have restricted roles. USDA relies on Farm Bureau as its advocate. Is that the kind of reality that you want? To rely on the Collaborative – to do what the Council can't do... Open Meeting Laws are construed by some as an obstacle.

Advocacy can be defined many ways. This body is here to create recommendations which are a way of advocating. The issue is tactics and how you go about that process. Perhaps the current systems functions as well as it can function. How can the Council better get its voice heard? Or let others speak for it? Think about it not that this is better than that, the food system matters with the three lenses and that the Council is a champion for raising up all of these issues and let people know that the Council exists and then people will start coming to meetings and perhaps there will be more interest from the outside. We don't have to say this is more important and that the Council's existence lifts that up. The Council is the voice.

Communication: Could the Council engage in social media to share activities and progress? Get the word out internally and externally! A lot of it is just educating people. Should there be communication and advocacy at the federal level though the Governor's office and the national legislative group in DC?

This could be an agenda item. On a promotional level we're trying to get the word out on what we are doing and promotional rather than just spending time with a whole boatload of metrics.

Process comments: Legislation doesn't mandate that DAR is the chair, if there is interest from another Council member. The fisheries position to the Council has been stalled. The UMASS College of Food & Environment should be invited to future meetings. Extension could play a larger role. More awareness of the Council's activities would be helpful.

Public Comment

Kathleen Liang, W. K. Kellogg Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Agriculture Director, Center for Environmental Farming Systems from North Carolina A&T State University was in attendance and shared some comments, which she asked to have included in the minutes. She summarized that most of the discussion focus on (1) creating a matrix to capture measurable outcomes and (2) identifying variables to measure corresponding to each goal. She suggested consideration of the Council working on one goal at a time with specific objectives, a matrix for each objective, and a meeting to share outcomes, data collection, and analysis.

Key points discussed in the meeting included a need:

For matrix, indicators, variables, and data.

To understand and link the complex issues in food system.

To set priorities to achieve each goal in a timely manner.

To create a process to achieve goals, present/share measurable outcomes, follow up with the participants, and get feedback about future planning.

For Council members to generate action items to work with community.

To create small working groups.

To understand who else should be on the Council - higher education, researchers, U Mass College of Ag Dean/Extension Director/Experiment Station Director.

To work with researchers and students to assist the matrix, measurement, and impact analysis.

To increase fresh food access - how do we help local farmers to connect with buyers?

To understand what data do we need and how do we use data?

To improve awareness and promote community participation.

To work with local food task force.

To understand if we promote farmers to grow the same thing, what do we need to do to coordinate the supply chain activities?

To assist small entrepreneurs to create new value added products using local produce.

To focus on process - how do we communicate Council's role and progress with the public?

She complemented the Council saying that the format is very well facilitated, in an open meeting, open process, and open discussion. From her perspective, the Council is very balanced and well represented by a variety of members across public agencies, profit/nonprofit entities, and general audience. The Council links and integrates functions and services across sectors at state, regional, and local level. The Council has significant interest, passion, and commitment to serve the interests of MA and beyond. The Council has a focused mission and shared common goals and she looks forward to any opportunity for collaboration.

Announcements

- March 2, 2018, Maple Kick Off, Mill Brook Farm, Lenox, 10 AM
- March 16 – 17, MA Urban Ag Conference
- March 23, 2018 MA Food Policy Council meeting, Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Westborough
- March 27, 2018 Ag Day at the State House

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by John Lee, seconded by Vivien Morris and unanimously approved at 12:35 PM.