

Minutes: MA Food Policy Council
Thursday, July 14, 2016
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Worcester Union Train Station, CMRPC's Union Hall, Worcester

In attendance: Marion Browning, designee, Dept of Elementary and Secondary Education
Jeff Cole, Federation of MA Farmers Markets
Jana Ferguson, Dept. of Public Health
Helena Fruscio, designee, MA Office of Housing and Development
Amanda Kinchla, UMASS Science Department
Commissioner John Lebeaux, MA Dept. of Ag Resources Commissioner
Vivian Morris, Nutrition & public health expert, Boston Public Health Commission
Frank Martinez Nocito, designee, Dept. of Transitional Assistance
Mark Reil, District Director, Senator Ryan Fattman
Danah Tench, designee: Dept. of Environmental Protection
John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center

The meeting began at 9:47 AM. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Jana Ferguson, seconded by Amanda Kinchla and passed on voice vote. Helena Fruscio abstained.

Reports of Officers

Chair, Commissioner Lebeaux reviewed the FPC background and noted what is on the slate to be accomplished and resources at hand. He brought attention to the fact that the MA Local Food Action Plan is in the implementation phase and that at the last meeting a motion was made and passed to put Tier I priorities together and send to the state house. In conversation with Secretary Beaton, it was suggested that the priorities be shared with the General Court and Administration, according to the enabling legislation. This is an appropriate milestone in the work of the Council. Considering the timing of this meeting, FPC members should comment on the draft letter which will be delivered to the state house with tier I priorities.

Regarding the agriculture and land commission being proposed, Secretary Beaton is in agreement that if the veto is not overridden, MDAR will create such a commission that would be similar to the legislative language that exists. The body might be expanded from what was in the legislation but the makeup that was proposed would be honored. MDAR will fully support the commission. Last night Senator Gobi introduced an amendment to the Ag Omnibus Bill with nearly the same language. There is no difference in how the committee can work based on its creation legislatively or executively.

Discussion: Jana Ferguson requested time to place an edit into the letter to go with Tier I priorities. Jody L. Jellison, Director of Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at UMass Amherst suggested that "research" be added to the first bullet education section, considering that applied research is a foundation for food safety and market analysis. Commissioner Lebeaux asked for feedback to MDAR within one week. A motion to advance the letter with current edits, provided by DPH, and with a one week comment period for other FPC members was made by John Waite, seconded by Mark Reil and passed unanimously.

There is a lot of interest in the FPC recommendations, but as tier 1 priorities come in at 17 pages, it is likely that a summary document will be required to further clarify the document into the highest level priorities. Two approaches could be:

- 1) Each FPC member could provide their top 2 to 3 priorities but that may still yield 51 priorities.
- 2) We could go through an exercise to establish those that have the highest level of FPC membership support by numbers.

Discussion: Jana Ferguson volunteered that the five DPH actions could be whittled down to two since several are subsets. Winton Pitcoff summarized that FPC members developed priorities based on what they are already doing and asked what can be owned by the members that they aren't currently working to achieve, as well as items that cross agencies, and that the FPC can own through collaboration.

Commissioner Lebeaux will be meeting with the Governor's staff this week, and will get more clarity on what would be most helpful. A facilitated discussion at the next meeting may help with further winnowing the Tier I priority list. FPC members asked to review goals and be prepared to identify their highest priorities, with a focus on "overarching thematic elements" to move forward.

Noted that there is strong interest which should be utilized, while at the same time, each FPC member needs buy-in from their organization. Suggestions included grouping the priorities around the four main tenants of the plan.

There was a discussion about the Governor's regulatory review Executive Order 562, in relation to the MA Local Food Action Plan. The question was raised around what in the plan directly speaks to regulatory issues, and how does this process mesh with that initiative?

Each secretariat is responsible for their own regulatory review process and report to the Governor to keep, rescind or change. In many cases the review has taken place and public comment periods are happening or upcoming in anticipation of regulation promulgation. DPH for example, has reviewed their regulations in accordance with the Exec Order. They are speaking to other agencies as partners in this process. DPH covers food safety and food processing regulations, so they are working with DAR and DMF now.

Is there an opportunity for the MA Food Collaborative to promote awareness of the public review period? Could the FPC hold a meeting around regulatory hearings? From a practical perspective, it would be difficult since the public reviews are rolled out and scheduled in stages, but anyone is welcome to attend the scheduled public comment periods. Relevant stakeholder groups are notified, however the Collaborative could promote the public comment periods in general. FPC members were encouraged to share public comment period information with the Food Plan Collaborative.

Commissioner Lebeaux asked for discussion for a MA FPC resources inventory survey, a fundamental goal of the plan - (*Action 1.3.2.11: Develop an inventory of all state programs that relate to food and identifying synergistic opportunities for the allocation of State resources to best meet the goals of the Plan. The inventory could lead to further recommendations about State agency budget and administrative priorities, and efficient coordination among State agencies. The objective assignment might inventory some food programs that are not well known for example.*)

Discussion: Ideally, this would have been done in advance of the plan to show the landscape and how to advocate for the food system from the perspective of money, jobs, and other points of leverage. But

now is a good time in any case. There isn't a good detailed view of how the state invests in the food system, or if there are overlaps, gaps and priority alignment. A resources inventory could illuminate and provide best practices and information. It could take the form of a survey and interview. The MA Food Systems Collaborative agreed to do the nuts and bolts work to support this endeavor. Programs both directly and indirectly related to food can be included, for example tech assistance programs from EOHE. Examples of output: how many relevant grant programs exist and what level of funding is required? How many employees provide tech assistance or research or other relevant services? Commissioner Lebeaux volunteered to promote and advance the resources inventory survey with the secretariat to encourage participation.

A motion to endorse the concept of moving forward with a MA food systems inventory was made by John Waite, seconded by Frank Martinez Nocito and unanimously passed.

Program

Program: Winton Pitcoff, MA Food Systems Collaborative: MA Local Food Action Plan work on issues including energy and ag land, technical assistance, regulatory, and economic development

Much time is being spent on organizational development including fundraising and grant writing. The current focus is also on processes to determine priorities - for both the Collaborative and other sectors. There have been conversations to revive previous working groups as well as smaller task forces connecting on focused projects. The Collaborative website provided is seen as important and a developer has been engaged. The MA Society for the Promotion of Agriculture has provided funding for a useable version of the MA Local Food Action Plan. Being on line allows updates including new activities and to add contact information, who is working on the goal, and the progress – whether it be legislation, regulatory changes or other updates for each action item. The work is to promote, monitor, and facilitate what's going on with the plan. UMASS has provided an intern to work on metrics, for example, how much food grown in MA is being eaten by MA residents with a focus on supply and demand.

A facilitator has been hired to work on health regulatory work in order to facilitate more effective engagement between growers and regulators.

The Collaborative has been working with DTA and the HIP program including outreach to raise \$2 million. The Collaborative rallied for amendments to support legislation. They didn't pass but did build awareness. They are also has been following the Omnibus bill closely. The Farmland Action Plan is in the budget and in the plan as a priority. Having the right people at the table is important including non-government folks.

The Collaborative has been successful with fundraising through private foundations including Kendall, John Merck Fund, Merk Family Fund, Boston Foundation, Sudbury Foundation, and the MA Society for the Promotion of Agriculture. They all saw the plan and Collaborative as important and have provided resources through March 2017. Commissioner Lebeaux shared that there is great value to the Collaborative's work and asked that the steering committee be told that the FPC values their work.

Unfinished Business

Frank Martinez Nocito, MA Department of Transitional Assistance: FINI Status Grant, CSA program and the mobile market community of practice shared an update of the exciting initiatives at DTA relating to FINI and Healthy Incentives, and the latest metrics.

New Business

Eli Feldman, Clothbound: Workforce development in the foodservice sector relating to the MA Local Food Action Plan. Clothbound's focus is to capture and maximize the potential of restaurants to accelerate employment mobility. One in 10 people in MA work in restaurants (385,000) which generate over \$ 800B in sales. The sector often gets overlooked because it is fractured with 70% as independent operators. There is a crippling labor shortage in restaurants. 2015 is the first time restaurant spending exceeded supermarket spending. Restaurants are an important component in community development in current and new construction. This is important in regards to the economic development component of the MA Local Action Food Plan.

Member Announcements

Next MA Food Policy Council Meeting: Friday, September 9, Tower Hill Botanical Garden, 9:30 – 12:30

On August 8 at the Beverly farmers market there will be a tour including DTA, MDAR, DPH, Elder Affairs and FMFM to highlight the market as a viable point of access for SNAP and all benefits.

The Commissioner shared that legislation to increase FPC membership with the addition of DMF is moving forward.

Jeff Cole noted that the Local Food license plate is now available at registries. Those who registered may pick up their plates with chosen numbers; all others may get a randomly assigned number at the RMV starting in August. The plate is very attractive. Commissioner Lebeaux noted that anyone who would like to see it can come to his car in the garage.

Public Access- no further comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM with a motion by Vivian Morris, seconded by John Waite and passed unanimously.