

Minutes

July 19, 2018, 9:30 – 12:30 (Thursday) MA Food Policy Council Meeting, Richard Cronin Building of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Room 108, Westborough

Jeff Cole, Direct Marketing
Dr. Anna Goldenheim, Community based nutrition and public health
Representative Hannah Kane
Commissioner John Lebeaux, Dept. of Ag Resources
Rob Leshin, representing Commissioner Riley, designee, EOESE
Brittany Mangini, designee, Dept. of Transitional Assistance
Lea Susan Ojamaa, Dept. of Public Health
Billy Fredericks and Mark Reil, Senator Fattman's Office
Eric Stocker, Distribution
Danah Tench, designee, DEP
John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center
Sam Wong, Local Boards of Health

The meeting was **called to order** at 9:45 AM by FPC Chair and Commissioner John Lebeaux.

Introductions

Acceptance of Minutes: A motion was made by Representative Hannah Kane, seconded by Lea Susan, passed unanimously with one abstention from Danah Tench.

Officers Reports

Commissioner Lebeaux introduced Dr. Anna Goldenheim, newly appointment member of the Council in the Community based nutrition and public health position.

The Council's Regulatory White Paper draft is being revised with the leadership of DPH, with expectations to have a draft for the September meeting.

THE FPC Education White Paper is in progress, with a draft being written by Shani Fletcher and will be available for review prior to the September meeting.

Old Business:

HIP update, Brittany Mangini, DTA SNAP Director gave an update on the HIP program and the turbulent activities of the past few months. There have been many discussions about funding. It is currently fully active and funding support is being investigated. Nova Dia group is a technology company that helped develop a mechanism to use smartphone and tablets to credit EBT transactions. They were part of a USDA equipment grant and are used by the vast majority of MA vendors. Unique to MA is that the HIP incentive program has been linked to the MA EBT program to earn incentives in the moment, a

specialized technology program only supported by Nova Dia's system. MA was notified that they cannot continue past this month. DTA has been in touch with USDA multiple times each day who is working hard to support many states. New York is also at risk for being impacted significantly. USDA is well aware of the tremendous negative impact that could result. DTA's preference is that USDA, who crafted the equipment grant and selected this vendor, would solve this problem. DTA has spent many hours crafting every many options. USDA knows DTA want to get communication out as soon as possible to be sure that the program's functionality continues through the season. If there isn't a concrete a solution, DTA will have a have a backup. The topic was on New England public radio today. The message was that USDA is working on it. DTA's prefers not to have any disruption. USDA wants to maintain SNAP benefits as a top priority while HIP is a top priority for MA.

Markets are trying to implement their own solutions. Representative Kane was in DC with Congressman McGovern who is working on this as a priority. She suggested communication to the farmers to let them know there are collaborative efforts between DTA, MDAR, and FNS with USDA for a solution. She also suggested communication to legislations to let them know that there is an issue that is being addressed.

Representatives from the Worcester Food Policy Council and Food Bank shared that SNAP access at farmers market is their #1 priority. They have partners willing to come to the table cover some of those costs for a quick solution if needed or help with creative solutions, considering that this is a community issue

Community partners shared their disappointment to not know about current discussions when they are communicating with both clients and growers and that DTA is not regularly communicating with all constituents. This program is a priority for them and they stand ready to help as they can . Farmers are feeling very disheartened. There was extensive feedback to DTA that they must communicate with community partners, farmers, and legislators regularly about their efforts regarding HIP processing.

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

Food waste is one of the six MA FPC priorities discussed in January, 2017 and being revisited today: *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.*

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 food material from disposal to higher value uses. Food waste is the biggest portion of our trash. Over the past year much progress has been made.

Facilitation: John Majercak, President, Center for EcoTechnology, Recycling Works Program, Northampton, has been involved in food waste programs for the past 20 years including some of the

first pilot programs in the country. We have national experts here from our own back yard. He provided a background on the program including school recycling programs, farm composting with MDAR as well as MDAR's farm energy program. There is a new clean energy pilot for solar hot water. Recycling has resulted in tons of food waste being diverted with business tech assistance, workshops and some 70,000 visits to our websites, and 400 businesses using technical assistance. There are best management programs for different parts of the hierarchy. Check out our website. This is a regional market place, so we go beyond the MA borders. We need a big picture to know what the best perspective is. If you're a food waste junkie, there is a website you can go to. The state government sets the table for the policy and public capital investment and then we rely on the public sector.

Gerard Kennedy, Director, Conservation & Technical Assistance, MDAR: Food waste ban, opportunities and challenges: new proposed regulations related to composting

MDAR has a wide range of programs related to land use as well as food access and food security that advance the goals of the MA Local Food Action Plan. Composting on farms has always been done and is an agricultural activity. If you're taking in materials it's considered solid waste and an exemption is allowed as long as the facility is registered.

A benefit of ag compost is that there can be many decentralized places so that not one site is super critical. The down side is they're small low capitalized businesses, so some are run very well and other may need fine tuning. It's both an art and a science to do a good compost business. We want to increase the proficiency of the different operations.

Question: Does adequate technology exist to detect the source of an odor on-site? Response: DEP has a lab and that would be deferred to them. MDAR is very responsive and will make recommendations to manage the odor. Unusual odors usually mean something in the process is off kilter which requires an odor management plan. BOHs have very broad authority when it comes to dealing with these issues.

John Fischer, Branch Chief, Commercial Waste Reduction & Waste Planning, DEP: Commercial Food Waste Ban: Updated progress report including economic activity support by the ban, new opportunities and challenges in food waste management: anaerobic digester facility capacity growth; the growth in fresh and perishable food donation; and a focus on up-front food waste reduction.

DEP is the main architect behind these programs and policies and is a recognized nationally – the MA Miracle! We've been working on this for decades and especially in 2014 for the commercial organics ban, based on the Organic Action plan from 2012. Gathering data for 2017, expect compost to be the same but ag to have increased dramatically. There are strong economic benefits in addition to environmental outcomes. There was 150% economic growth from 2010-16 with expectations for continued growth. There are many things that can be done to add value to the food waste.

The goal is to meet businesses where they are at – what do you want to do, not let me tell you what you should do! The goal is to use a lot of common sense, track and analyze the waste – what is it, how much and why and look at the patterns. School waste opportunity is more than most would think! Boston College cut their waste by 50% with a \$500,000 savings! Food waste that doesn't have to go

anywhere – the waste is gone and the business is most efficient. The results are incredibly compelling – there are massive opportunities to reduce waste.

There is growth in food rescue operations and effectively getting those items to people who can use them – same day food donations has dramatically increased at least 33%. There has been an increase in haulers that separate out packaging from food. Having a program in place is step one, implementation is step II.

Growth is expected to continue for aerobic digesters. There is a lot of material remaining from smaller businesses. As hauling routes get densified to fill the trucks, the more efficient the collection and the shorter haul distance help lower the cost working on a compliance, tech, and enforcement strategy. We now have enough capacity, but we need more food diverted to support the capacity that maybe could include some below the ban. Now we're trying to get the diversion to keep pace with the capacity. And we'll shift our focus to the top of the hierarchy, and rescuing fresh and prepared food. We're also rolling out a solid waste master plan. We know food waste is an important material. It's the number one material in our trash.

Question: When Boston College saved money by purchasing less food so less would be discarded, did it affect local, regional or national purchases? Answer, the saving was from the actual reduced food purchasing costs, and the waste cost for disposal. On the supply side, there are new models with gleaning and value added processing. There are other markets for the food that might have been purchased rather than having them thrown out.

Is there tension among those looking for food material? No, there is still a million tons of food material in our trash. Nationally, we believe it's not a big tension right now since there's so much waste in the system and many opportunities to get food to these facilities.

Comment: Buying tomatoes locally reduces waste because of the source of the product. Local food may contribute be less waste than what's brought in. It makes intuitive sense because spoilage is a big part of the waste, not just overproduction. Local food typically is not devlieverd in clamshells so it may help reduce packaging materials.

Case Studies:

Carolyn Brunis Luc, Director of Advancement, Daily Table, Boston

A new way of looking at what food waste means is important as opposed as considering it only waste material. A new concept started in 2015 was started by the former Trade Joes president with a focus on food access in low income communities. There is a lot of food waste. How do we take one problem to solve another? It's not that people are hungry; it's the types of food that people are eating. A unique aspect is access and being able to shop in a retail venue. Creating an environment where consumers can shop in a retail environment and choose the food they want. People can choose what to eat rather than eat what they're told. The foods are all nutritionally based to create guidelines for foods that are provided in our store with certain sugar, salt and fiber levels.

There is so much waste based on sell by dates. There was interest in selling these products but there was community pushback that limited the amount of recovered food. We do work with local farmers and have about 425 products in two of the stores. It is difficult to receive donations with a goal of being self-sustaining. Our percentage of what we buy is 80% but recovery is 20%. Some retailers want to donate foods high in sugar and salt for example. We receive 25,000 lbs of donated food a week. We have a commissary kitchen. Anything with a short code is sold quickly. If the food doesn't look good – crooked carrots for example, it's prepared into side salads and smoothies etc. Our suppliers are great. They see providing a donation as not a value add. We're trying to focus on a food acquisition specialist to start those relationships. We work with vendors that can give us deep discounts. We're interested to become self-sustaining.

Comment: The way the Daily Table operates and the overall positive attitude and sense of dignity is commendable. It's an excellent model and what you're doing is excellent.

Ben Harvey, Vice President, EL Harvey and Sons, Food Depackaging Operation, Westborough

El Harvey and Sons has been recycling waste over the past 70 years. Now they're helping businesses meet the organics waste ban. Depackaging is the newest venture. Depackaging facilitates are critical to be able to supply enough material for anaerobic digesters. There is still a million or so tons of food that is available. There may be more room for depackaging infrastructure but we're still at a rapidly evolving system so it's not a mature infrastructure. Investments need to be made thoughtfully. We don't facilities to move forward and fail. And connecting it with the MA Local Food Action Plan – the new folks in the room were value added processors of what would have been called wasted foods. The Daily Tables of the world are what's the newest.

On a national level there is a group there is a group looking to standardize use by dates and what they mean to put some clarity between the terminologies on the labels (which actually depends on the product). Our main focus is educating them in subtle ways to enable people. We don't go into those topics. There is potential to change the regulation. It would reduce by 30% the amount of materials coming into our facility. It is a huge opportunity. When we come across those issues, we pull code products and have those items composted.

Investment: We're invested \$750,000 in depackaging in addition to support from DEP. With these types of equipment grants, it helps to take some of the risk out of it and we want to be sure it's a good use of public funds. The first time you buy this equipment you need to spend a lot of time and then you have to work out of the kinks. We've seen that those grants make a big difference in these fledging businesses.

Question: Could food rescue be sustainable financially without having to rely on volunteers? Is there a subscription or fee for service model that could work? Could that be turned around – you have to manage your food properly – could you pay food rescuers to pick up the food and how could that be done. Lovin Spoonfuls needs are focused on operational costs which we can't really support.

Foundation Funding has been very important with a focus on growing philanthropic connections to reduce food waste. There may be a fit for other types of investors. With the social enterprise, non-

profit and for profit are merging. There is interest to become a self-sufficient social enterprise. Glass and oysters are materials that cannot be depackaged.

New Business - Council member updates

Rob Leshin:

- On June 21 MA Farm to School had a policy planning meeting with a wide range of stakeholders to include a new outreach campaign including challenges and policy solutions. USDA announced their 2018 awardees including 2 school districts from MA: Amherst and Pelham with an award of \$31,000 to build three local teams for seasonal menus.
- Red's Best, a sustainable seafood company was awarded \$ 100,000 to further their Farm to School education efforts throughout the state to increase local seafood consumption at schools and education at school assemblies.
- Monday July 30, will be the seventh annual Food Rocks Tour with Congressman Jim McGovern which will cover 350 miles in western MA. Project Bread and local officials will get a chance to see the summer meals program up close.
- A New partnership with UMASS to find solutions to rural western MA summer challenges for free meals to high need teens will focus on one of their food trucks to deliver meals. With one truck operating three days/week, w over 600 free lunches are being delivered to nine sites. Opportunities for expansion are being explored.

John Waite shared the news of their award from the MA Food Trust, along with LEAF, and their appreciation of the program.

Senator Ann Gobi provided updates via her FPC designee from the live budget discussions relating to HIP, Buy Locals Product Bread, Farm to School and the Dairy Tax Credit.

Public Comment

Announcements

September 21, 2018, MA Food Policy Council Meeting, 9:30 – 12:30, Richard Cronin Building of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Room 110, Westborough

November 1, 2018, MA Food Policy Council Meeting, 9:30am-12:30pm, Room 428, Boston State House, Boston MA 02133

Adjournment was at 12:11with a motion by Jeff Cole which was seconded by Rob Leshin and passed unanimously.