

## **Minutes: MA Food Policy Council Meeting**

Friday, March 10, 2017, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

UMASS Amherst, Campus Center Room 165

In attendance:

Jeff Cole, Federation of Massachusetts Farmers

Senator Anne Gobi

Amanda Kinchla, UMASS Extension Science Department

Representative Steve Kulik

Commissioner John Lebeaux, MA Dept. of Ag Resources Commissioner

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

Vivian Morris, Nutrition & public health expert

Frank Martinez Nocito, designee: Dept. of Transitional Assistance

Lea Susan Ojamaa, designee: Dept. of Public Health

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

Danah Tench, designee: Dept. of Environmental Protection

John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center

**Call to Order:** Commissioner Lebeaux convened the meeting at 9:39 AM and started with a presentation from MA Far to school.

A quorum was established and meeting called to order.

FPC members and those in attendance introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes:** A motion to accept the minutes was made by John Waite, seconded by Frank Martinez-Nocito and passed on unanimous voice vote.

### **Officers Reports**

A review of White Paper from the last FPC meeting was discussed. FPC members received the White Paper after the previous meeting and had been asked to comment. Jeff Cole suggested that the paper was perhaps too academic in tone. He had not submitted his comments prior to this meeting. He and other members were asked to send comments by e-mail to Bonita to comply with the Open Meeting Law. Additional discussion: The MA Local Food Action Plan and the Harvard Food Plan were dovetailed together in the Paper in a complementary manner. Might there be a more distinct role for the Food Banks, especially around the topics of expiration dates? For DPH, operational considerations regarding expiration dates would need to be reviewed. In regards to the Food Code, is this too specific? Is this locking DPH into something that requires additional discussion? Commissioner Lebeaux will continue to work to get the Paper into a final form, to be accepted by the Council and posted on the FPC website.

Commissioner Lebeaux shared that the Administration appreciated the six points highlighted from the MA Local Food Action Plan. They noted particular relevance of Food Waste and the FINI project. This may result in looking back into the plan for implementation and action items on these two topics. He will seek a conceptual plan for how the FPC should proceed.

## Program

**Deep dive into institutional purchasing of locally grown and produced food:** What actions can FPC members support?

Increasing purchases of local foods is one of the MA FPC priorities that have been elevated to the Administration and General Court: *“Support increased purchases of Massachusetts grown and produced foods. The current focus is to support increased purchases of local foods by state institutions, public and private educational programs, and meals programs. Increased funding for state agency and institutional food procurement and standardized contract language for state and municipal purchasers, are also priorities.”*

**Overview and status of farm to school activities in Massachusetts:** Lisa Damon, Western Massachusetts Director and Simca Horowitz, Eastern Massachusetts Director, MA Farm to School

School gardens, curriculum connections, farmer visits, and farm field trips are all part of the program. Surveys and case studies help to tell the story. USDA *Farm to School* started collecting data about three years ago in a uniform way across the US. *Farm to School* is strong in Massachusetts, with some 422,072 student participants. Massachusetts schools spend more than \$10.2 million on local food annually, which doesn't include activity in higher education and institutions. Massachusetts survey results: Some 62% of surveyed school districts would buy more. Over 25% of farmers surveyed reporting increasing production to meet demand. 83% of the growers surveyed plan to continue institutional sales. 88% of New England distributors believe that their sales of local food to institution will increase.

The *Harvest of the Month* program highlights a local crop each month. Each year the number of schools participating has increased. There is a network with three working groups focusing on policy, education and supply chain. Opportunities for expansion: moving beyond produce and adding seafood through a relationship with the Division of Marine Fisheries is new. Many underutilized species are available and could fit well within nutritional guidelines. Regionally sourced ground beef is another opportunity for protein. There is also opportunity for dairy, whole grains and other local and regional products. *Farm to Preschool* (25% of MA schools are engaged) and *Farm to Summer* (10% of schools have these programs) also present opportunities and a chance to influence the preferences of young eaters. An innovative summer food service model provided food service at farmers markets. It's a direct connection with local growers and families to use SNAP benefits, providing healthy food access for the entire family. Challenges for producers include: price point, distribution, and access to the food service management company market. Challenges for institution include: price point, distribution and year-round availability.

**Case study K-12 - Local purchasing and promotion in schools and the summer meal program:** Madison Walker, Director of Foodservices, Greenfield Public Schools

Greenfield is a self-operated school foodservice business serving 1,100 students per day. The district has a high percentage of free or reduced meals. A personal goal to spend 10% of the budget on local products in three years was met in two years! A larger goal is an all-encompassing nutrition hub of the district to influence how young people think about food. Buying local in MA, New England and a radius of about 250 miles involves a lot of direct purchasing. A local beef and mushroom burger has been developed and plans are for it to be a larger part of the protein purchases. Conventional distributors are

asked what they have that's local but they aren't a large part of the ten percent. DoD Fresh is a federal program used by Greenfield.

Key stakeholders include the superintendent, principals/school administration, food service director and staff, students, parents and community partners. Administration and students both must be on board. Some great community partners, which include the Food Project chef program and a summer farmers market where meals are available with local growers highlighted.

We're composting 75-80% of our waste with a local farmer. Chicopee is a model for a great marketing campaign for students and parents.

Success takes time. Enough time to prepare is critical for success. In Chicopee, it took 20 years for the cultural shift. Local food ingredients take longer to prepare. In some cases, students have only 7 minutes to eat their meal - a major constraint, and money is always part of this conversation. 85% of the budget should be labor and food. Nice to think there is 15% wiggle room but often the 85% is exceeded.

Success is based on increasing budget. Connecting entitlement funds to both lunch and breakfast is important. Additional revenue to add local ingredients into breakfast items, such as muffins is ideal. NY State introduced legislation to incentivize local sourcing. Discussion: Does switching to a different kind of foodservice require capital investment? MA has a state equipment grant that can help with costs. Greenfield has a full service central kitchen model since the local schools don't have operational kitchens.

Discussion: School gardens connect as a learning place tied to curriculum and then utilizing the food in the cafeteria, cooking classes, and food programs. A nutrition hub is a good model to evaluate the image within school. Instructional time in the morning can be used for school breakfast. Some districts have been creative increasing the amount of time for lunch. Can products be made while produce is bountiful and frozen for later use in the year? Chicopee is making large batches and freezing them. Maine is making huge batches of tomato sauces and freezing them. To expand this, partners with storage capacity are important. Questions: As Greenfield has found more creative solutions, how have relationships been with local BOHs? In Greenfield they are great and are useful to partner on health issues. What about food safety concerns using produce from school gardens? If proper growing techniques are being followed, there aren't any issues.

### **Higher education panel, Partnerships that make farm to college successful**

Moderator: Rachel Stoler, Community Health Program Manager, Mass in Motion Coordinator, Franklin Regional Council of Governments

- Joe Czajkowski, Czajkowski Farm and Lakeside Organics of Hadley
- Margaret Christie, Special Projects Director, CISA
- Ken Toong, Executive Director Auxiliary Enterprises and Garrett DiStefano, Director, Residential Dining, UMASS Award Winning Dining Services

Rachel provided a background on the Franklin Regional Council of Governments which works like a county government where there is no government. *Mass in Motion* is a major program for active healthy activity and eating, as well as *Communities that Care*, focusing on youth health outcomes. The *Farm to Institution* is critical because institutions service many of the most marginalized populations in

Franklin County. Health equity is an important part of the program. On March 29, a gathering of food service directors will focus on procuring and using local foods including a menu costing exercise, a chef demo, and an opportunity for exchanges about best practices.

Joe Czajkowski: All farm food waste is going to go to a local digester producing electricity that can support 800 homes. Farm to Institution is very favorable; we're selling 12 – 15 million pounds and allowed the farm to transition out of 100 years of tobacco to produce. Farm to Institution supports open space and uses less energy for delivery. Schools that do the best are the ones that are the most sincere. UMASS, Chicopee, Greenfield and Worcester have been wonderful to work with. UMASS has made a sincere effort including reviewing seed catalogs and suggesting crops to grow. In addition, the state of MA has been very supportive of this program. Would like to see more with summer feeding programs since that's when growers have the most product. Adding value has been important. Barriers: On the federal level, farm workers cannot touch anything from another farm from a labor perspective, meaning a farmer can't add to products they grow unless the employees are moved to another category. Taking an EBT card means you're in interstate commerce. A lot of growers don't understand what exposure they have to these penalties. Case law in other states has gone in farmers favor. Someone in MA could do a real service by introducing the case law in our Federal Court District. FSMA may make tracking easier, but also complicates things for farmers.

Margaret Christie: CISA strengthens farms and engages the local community for thriving farms in western Massachusetts and connects state consumers with access to healthy food. CISA operates *Be a Local Hero* which has 475 farm and food businesses, 275 of which are retailers and institutions. CISA is responsive to the needs of its members. Technical assistance, training and troubleshooting are part of what CISA offers. CISA has been in operation since 1993 and has many long-standing partnerships. In the wholesale market place, sales of vegies have increased, nearly doubling to 46M while direct sales increased 5M, so growth in the wholesale category is significant. A number of farms have focused on direct marketing as a priority, but as growth in those direct markets have slowed and competition increased, wholesale outlets have become more important to the stability of their business. CISA coordinated a 2015 – 2016 assessment of the wholesale market in the Pioneer Valley. The overall conclusion is that there is a lot of growth opportunity, but it's a fragile market in terms of the global food system. CISA is working with four local colleges in collaborative opportunities to source more local and regional products because they have some similarities with the same number of meals (so they have similar scale). Schools are interested to invest in infrastructure e.g. sinks, more counter space, and staffing - training, additional staff and supports. If you're selling more meals you have a larger budget and are serving more kids. Serving more students with less administration is being challenged on the federal level. The creativity of foodservice directors is always impressive.

Expanding school breakfast should be a priority. Colleges are thinking about it too, including getting more students on the food plans. On-going support from CISA, Farm to School and other groups is expensive. Providing more support would be good.

Food safety regulations need to be scale appropriate and based on science. Not all local BOH have this expertise. There is a nice concentration of people who are interested in making this work.

Ken Toong and Garret DiStefano have a number one ranking in the US for college foodservice, with a food budget of \$25M including \$3M for food from New England. UMASS is part of the *Real Food Challenge* and the *New England 50 by 2060 vision*. UMASS talks about sustainability with parents and students, who appreciate a focus on local. UMASS budget: if there is anything remaining, it's used to

build future programs. Students are surveyed twice each year. Food satisfaction is very important as well as is the power of food to build community and wellness. Local healthy sustainable purchasing has been increasing, with a goal of 84% foods being local by 2020. Students are eating more plant based proteins and local produce, local meat, dairy (working with Walden Farm) and some chicken as well. A strong relationship with our local farmers has been key. The market was flat in terms of increase in number of students but there is double digit growth in demand for local food. For the students, the number one priority is humanly-raised, followed by local.

U-Mass spent \$2M buying chicken last year. This year's focus is on poultry processing and marketing. Processing is an issue for protein providers. This is a supply side issue where more capacity/faster processing is needed. Farmers now grow birds that are bigger than what we need. There are some 18,000 birds a year are being processed in MA. UMASS could go through that amount in two weeks. If prices can come down with more efficiency, farmers should be able to sell the smaller birds that we want.

UMASS is starting a delivered meal/food program called *UMass Fresh* which will include a high amount of local ingredients. UMASS is a nine month business with lower participation in the summer, but that's when growers have lots of produce. *UMASS Fresh* will be promoted to alumni. Frozen items can be used throughout the year. The company Little Leaf, out of Fort Devens, is doing in-house growing. Price is right behind quality. UMASS is planning for 1,000 *UMASS Fresh* kits by the fall, while they are now doing about 200 per day. The program takes advantage of UMASS culinary excellence. Consumers at UMASS are eating 21 pounds of fish per year, seven more than the general public. Goals: Double poultry consumption and increase NE- sourced dairy (30% of produce is now locally sourced).

Discussion: How can the FPC be of assistance? UMASS: The simpler it is to do business with the farmers the better. FSMA is under the guise of food safety, but it looks to be excessive, especially in relation to the risk. Joe Czajkowski mentioned 150 new pages of regulations at the federal level, "if you're actually doing the work, it's confounding and the regulations are not consistent." Almost a third of Joe's time is spent on regulatory issues. Now farmers are going to have pesticide masks checked by physicians to see if they fit properly. Suggested that MA challenge some of the federal regulations in court, some of which were written in the 30's and out of sync with current markets. For example, USDA is encouraging food hubs which at the farm level conflict with labor laws.

UMASS has a student farm program which students need to apply to and which provides food to the dining services. Students run the farm and do all the business and production planning. It's a three semester program including working with dining services and their chefs. The garden program also sells to Big Y. It is USDA Organic and in two locations. There are also five permaculture gardens on campus that provide food to the campus.

**A review of current legislative priorities and recommendations for moving forward:** Lisa Damon and Simca Horowitz

There are policies to support expansion of *Farm to School*. There are many places within the food plan that make recommendations for expansion of *Farm to School* activities. There is pending legislation – farm to institution bills were passed recently. The national Farm to School network has info on all state legislation. This doesn't include the appropriation process.

Looking ahead, other states are working on these topics and have successful strategies and solutions. Supporting technical assistance is a focus by many states as well as *Farm to School* grant programs for schools.

Not all school foodservices have a strong relationship with their local BOH. There is a lack of awareness that there is standard guidance of food safety guidelines from USDA. We heard this a lot from educators in the school garden area. Guidance and technical assistance for local BOHs would be very helpful.

Q. Should/can DPH have a policy that produce from school gardens is designated as an approved food source?

It's important to educate boards of health and foodservice directors about garden produce. *Seeds of Solidarity* has a book about this for foodservice directors.

Ken Toong suggested brainstorming for a protocol to work with local farmers through a more formal agreement such as a multiyear MOU, rather than a handshake. UMASS uses Fresh Point for produce and can dictate the amount of local, and UMASS purchases up to 25% of the produce directly.

Discussion: Can the farm season be expanded using frozen products? There has to be open and fair competition in the bid language. It is happening in MA but not at scale. Issue at Federal level is volume of food/contracts. National companies who supply helped write the bid language, which is skewed to huge volumes which means the quantities required to get into the commodity program is generally well beyond the means of local businesses such as the Western MA Food Processing Center, who has blast freezing capabilities. However broccoli looks like an opportunity. There are warehouses where other commodity items are stored that might support this. Food for schools used to come to four regional warehouses with monthly deliveries. Now the food goes through conventional distributors and there are more frequent deliveries.

Regulatory issues are an enormous issue for farmers. Regulations are not applied consistently over time or over geographic region. The farm labor issue is that ag workers aren't subject to overtime. So differentiating farm work versus non-farm work is critical. There is no intrinsic reason that farm workers shouldn't get overtime. But Americans aren't willing to pay the price for food that would be required. It's more than a regulatory issue and we need to acknowledge the larger issue about the price of food and what we are willing to pay as a society for it.

The MA School Building Authority (MSBA) is a program that is fully funded through a portion of the state sales tax and is under the State Treasurer. Are there criteria that would help insure that new kitchens are full service? Is it part of the evaluation criteria? This is a state agency that hasn't been part of the conversation. It also relates to the school garden and having an exterior water source.

What abilities do schools and institutions have to NOT just take the low bid? Within the bid, scoring criteria may include location to the school, although price is a point that might be weighted more (compared to number of trucks in a fleet), but it's not the only factor used to make decisions. Within the RFP for K-12, it's often just price. A lot of schools have been using the same criteria for a long time, and don't have information on how to write a bid effectively to increase local procurement, instead of just the working with a broad line distributor.

Related announcements: MDAR will check with Crop & Pest Services regarding the federal worker act and annual application fit testing. The Food Safety Modernization Act is under FDA. States can choose to have FDA do all the assessments and inspections OR FDA can approve state designed programs. MDAR taking the lead for a state designed program and was awarded \$3.6 M over 5 years for education, outreach and implementation through MDAR's Commonwealth Quality Program. Expect a state delivered program to be more responsive and relevant to state agriculture. Legislation has been introduced to support MDAR doing inspections with an MOU with DPH for the Produce Rule.

### **New Business- None**

### **Old Business**

Mark Reil from Senator Fattman's office mentioned legislation so that food businesses would not be liable for food donations. A committee has been named regarding standardizing date labeling. There is a new house chair for the Ag Committee. Senator Ann Gobi is the senate chair. Representative Kulik shared that the first hearing on the governor's budget will occur this week. One will deal with agencies. The house will be gathering input from those hearings to release a budget on April 12<sup>th</sup> for debate. This includes earmarks for *Buy Locals* and Farm to School, typically part of the amendment process.

### **Announcements**

April 4, Agriculture Day at the State House

Upcoming FPC meetings:

Friday May, 19, 2017, Fish and Wildlife headquarters, Westborough: Focus on infrastructure,

Friday, July 21, 9:30 – 12:30: Focus on regulatory issues

September: Focus on FINI

April 5 – 7, Farm to Institution Conference, Leominster, <http://www.f2isummit.org/>

### **Public Comment**

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:46. A motion was made by Vivien Morris, seconded by John Waite and passed unanimously.

**M A S S A C H U S E T T S**  
**Farm to School**

**Massachusetts Legislative Review**  
**HD.1488 (2017 pending)**

### **An Act Relative to Healthy Eating in School Cafeterias**

- *Establishes pilot programs to support schools in upgrading their kitchens to do more scratch cooking*
- *Provides mini-grants for farm to school programming*
- *Sets parameters for a Farm to School Interagency Task Force*

### **H.2782 (2016)**

#### **Establishing MA Farm to School Month & Commending Farm to School Programs**

- *Designates October Massachusetts Farm to School Month*
- *Encourages the creation of a joint task force with Depts. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Agricultural Resources, and Public Health to spread farm to school statewide*

### **H.4919 (2010)**

#### **Promoting State Purchasing of Local Agricultural Products**

- *Requires the state purchasing agent to make reasonable efforts to purchase state-grown products unless the price of the good exceeds the price of products grown outside the state by more than 10%.*
- *Authorizes the procurement officer to award contracts without seeking quotations and allows individual purchases of less than \$25,000 to Massachusetts farm operations for the procurement of agricultural products, including fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy products, meats, aquatic products, crops, horticultural products and products processed into value-added products.*
- *Requires MDAR and the DESE to collect data from schools and food producers and work with programs that facilitate the acquisition of local agricultural products by public schools.*