

Minutes MA Food Policy Council

March 29, 2019, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Richard Cronin Building, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Room 108, Westborough

In attendance:

Jeff Cole, Direct to Consumer Marketing
Representative Dan Donahue
Billy Fredericks, Senator Fattman's Office
Amanda Kinchla, Food Safety Specialist
Commissioner John Lebeaux
Rob Leshin, designee, Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education
Commissioner McCue, Dept. of Transitional Assistance
Lea Susan Ojamaa, designee, Dept. of Public Health
Erick Stocker, Distribution
Danah Tench, designee, Dept. of Environmental Protection

The meeting was called to order at 9:49 AM by chair and Commissioner John Lebeaux.

Acceptance of Minutes: A motion was made by Commissioner McCue, seconded by Danah Tench and unanimously passed.

Officers Reports

Officer Election discussion will be postponed until next meeting to allow non-agency members to be considered who are not present at this meeting.

Council member status: Senator Joanne Comerford is replacing Senator Gobi, and will attend the May meeting. Representative Daniel M. Donahue, replacing Representative Kulik was introduced. He is working with Representative Kane and others on the Food Caucus and enthusiastic to be a Council member.

Council member updates:

The Department of Environmental Protection is working on a solid waste master plan. The planning process has started and a schedule is on the agency website. Anyone interested in participating in this process can check the schedule for subcommittee meeting dates. A draft of the master plan is expected this summer with a fall public hearing and with an opportunity to comment on the draft in the fall. The final plan is expected to be out in early 2020 including any regulatory changes.

Lea Susan Ojamma will share a presentation with the Council on MA in Motion after the Jun meeting. DPH has a focus on providing access to affordable, healthy food.

Rob Leshin's office has sent notifications to 72 school districts re: After the Bell Breakfast, for proposed model (s). Some 300 schools are impacted. The program is implementation is flexible, including a second chance breakfast, grab n go, etc. Technical assistance is being provided with Project Bread. Half of the impacted schools have responded with a proposal and a second reminder went out to increase the number of responses. May 31 is the implementation date. EOESE will work with districts as they implement this. For example, Boston had 93 schools that weren't in this program. Efforts are ongoing to help them get a plan in place.

The transition of the direct certification system using the MA Database system is now live. There have been some bumps along the way for this virtual gateway system for students for free and reduced food systems in place of paper applications that are being addressed. The program works well with other program application deadlines. EOESE is considering an expansion of tech assistance on after school meals in a variety of offerings across child nutrition programs.

Commissioner John Lebeaux focused on interagency projects relating to the Council. The ongoing partnership with DTA and the farming community continues to be a priority. MDAR Worked with DMF for first Massachusetts Avenue at the Boston Seafood Show. Ag Day at the statehouse included many Council members, Buy Locals, UMASS and other partners. MDAR worked with DOR re: dairy tax credits and information to develop an economic snapshot of the distillery sector. Craft beverages are an avenue to a slightly different audience.

Program:

Implementing Everett's Community Food Plan:
Emily Nink, Development Coordinator, and Everett Food Policy Council.

The Everett Food Policy Council is in development. Everett is the sixth most densely population and most diverse city in the state. They conducted a community food assessment in a health and equity and racial equity framework. The City was a project partner including food security, school food, urban ag and food recovery. Their Food Plan was launched in June 2018. The current focus is on implementation.

A store survey included info from nearly every food retail outlet in Everett. No alternative food outlets like CSAs or farmers markets are available. Fruit and vegetable offerings are limited. Many retail venues are inundated with ads for alcohol and tobacco. Commissioner McCue offered info on the number of retailers that are SNAP certified and accept EBT. There is also a lot of turnover of retailers in Everett.

On DTA's website is a map that identifies the number of SNAP recipients by zip code, available for anyone working on these issues.

Shoppers had low levels of satisfaction with quality, freshness and other issues. There was high self-reported food insecurity. Households spent as much at convenience store as supermarkets every month. The small retailers have high prices and low opportunities for other types of venues. The school district has 100% free meals.

Emily used a program called SHOWED to photograph images and incorporate change statement comments. The report has ten high level goals with sub recommendations and action steps.

A focus is coordinating urban ag in the city during rapid gentrification. Supporting food businesses and workers is also important. The Everett FPC will determine priorities from the goals. The mayor is on board. Question: Was transportation addressed as a strategy re: access to food? The bus doesn't even go to the Stop N Shop. Transportation is a challenge. Question: Where did the funds come from? Funding came through MAPC. They also provided technical assistance. The City had matching funds and there was also support from NE Grass Roots Environmental Funds. Question: How was the high school engaged? There was an existing relationship through the Garden Club. The students did the primary data collection. Question: Should MA have different metrics beyond physical distance from retailers? Time perhaps would be important. Everett is unique with much congestion. Question: Did you ask if they might be willing to engage in a Peapod type of system? We asked if they spend any money on delivery. And the answer was mostly no.

- Video: USDA Farm to School grant- the power of local
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qeIgNNzETxg> Rob Leshin

The 2017 application was accepted for the FY 17 Farm to School grant. Partners included Project Bread highlighting kids and teens and Farm to Summer Eats to use Project Bread's website as a one stop shop for this program. MA Farm to School was also a partner. It's really Farm to Everything. A goal was to better track participation. There were mini grants for summer food service sponsors. The intention was to be inspirational, insightful and relatable. There is power in sourcing local in the summer months when there is great supply available. The USDA video was used at the summer kickoff in January for Summer Eats. An intention was to debunk some myths and highlight and showcase systems and emphasize that it isn't difficult to procure local ingredients or thru a farmer or existing contractors. Let's Get Started is another video to reference resources www.meals4kids.org/summer eats connecting 60,000 meals per day in the summer.

The UMASS FOOD Truck is a Council success story. At a Council meeting at UMASS the idea came together. The food trucks Baby Burke I and II are being used and also one with Bentley.

- Video: HIP in Massachusetts: Nourishing Families, Sustaining Farms
<https://youtu.be/RSfWDvtACao>

HIP campaign highlights include new partnerships such as Blue Cross. Legislative support has been strong. Lobby day with included 70 advocates delivering popcorn on the cob grown by the Food Project. A briefing attracted 42 staffers and the video was unveiled.

New Business

MA Food System Collaborative Update: The video has helped to get the word out though it isn't reflective of the people who use it. A second video will be completed this summer that better

represents the diversity of program. The intent of the video is to get some of the user's voices directly to folks who make decisions. The American Heart Association funded the video.

With financial support from the Merck Family fund, a program was set up to address the changing demographics at farmers markets as a result of the HIP campaign. Former MDAR Commissioner Greg Watson, an early farmer's market supporter presented at a first session with 40 participants. A second session is planned. Greg is developing toolkits and resources for farmers markets. It's a self-selecting group who attends, so efforts are in place to push the information out to all market managers in the state.

Jeff Cole joined the Collaborative recently and organized a program on mitigation of climate change. Forty stakeholders participated. The meeting focus was on existing resources to compare the issues and resources to be able to address some of the issues.

Farmland access group, food waste, food vendor reciprocity for licensing at multiple towns, work with local food policy councils, and new work from Franklin Food Policy Council and a statewide checklist for who is doing what to track on-going progress on the plan is in-progress. We have a small grant to benchmark food system indicators.

With the legislative session are budget requests including HIP, investment in UMASS soil and plan lab, soil to absorb carbon and water. We're working with landscapers and golf courses who are interested in this work. We're asking for funds for metrics to expand upon the work that's been done. Questions to address: Is dairy tax helping? What about the estate tax? Is it keeping farms in production over the long term? There is continued support for Buy Local and Farm to School as well as some 80 bills that touch on the food plan.

A survey for priorities identified five including HIP; board of health consult with Ag Commissions re: ag regulations; food donation and civil liability protection and tax credit to encourage donation of food; development of a farmland action plan; and to promote urban ag and horticulture to allow cities to adopt optional property tax breaks for those growing food. The Collaborative has been writing white papers for three years and now have 60 organizations that have signed on. A focus is to build the capacity of organizations that typically haven't been able to weigh in.

Question: MA is one of the few states in the country seeking clarification on sell by dates. Was this a topic on the Collaborative's list? Answer: Representative Kane introduced this topic when she learned about it at the Council meeting. It ended up being buried in Committee. It was reintroduced again this year. Interstate commerce issues can be complicated. A national effort and solution is needed.

Commissioner McCue commended Winton for the video and sensitivity about the consumers featured that happen not to reflect the composition of the SNAP case load but were reflective of the tight timeline and location options for the filming. A follow-up video can be more reflective of this audience. Within the Collaborative, this was an important topic of discussion.

Public Comment

Announcements

- MA Food Policy Council meeting, Friday, May 17, 9:30 – 12:30, Richard Cronin Building, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Room 108, Westborough

Adjournment: A motion was made by Commissioner McCue, seconded by Eric Stoker and passed unanimously at 11:11 AM.