

Draft Minutes

**MA Food Policy Council hybrid meeting**

**Friday, May 12, 2023**

9:30 – 11:30 AM

Live: **MDAR conference room, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, 225 Turnpike Rd, Southborough, MA 01772**

Remote - Zoom Meeting

In attendance:

Doug Botelho, Office of Representative Donahue (remote)

Bill Fredericks Office of Senator Fattman

Jared Freedman, Office of Senator Comerford

Representative Hannah Kane

Torry Stamm Katsiroubas, Distribution (remote)

Amanda Kinchla, UMass (remote)

Commissioner Ashley Randle, MDAR

Rob Leshin, ESE (remote)

Bobby Malinn, MEOHED (remote)

Mackenzie May, Direct to Consumer

Kirby Lecy, DPH, for Jessica del Rosario (remote)

Caro Roszell, Healthy Soils (remote)

Danah Tench, MassDEP

Ayn Yeagle, Community Health

Brittany Mangini, DTA Associate Commissioner of Food Security and Nutrition Program

John Waite, Food Processing (remote)

Absent: Phoebe Walker

The meeting was **called to order** at 9:44 AM by Acting Chair Mackenzie May.

**Acceptance of minutes:** A motion to accept the minutes was made by Danah Tench, seconded by Ayn Yeagle and accepted by voice vote: Doug Botelho, Bill Fredericks, Jared Freedman, Representative Hannah Kane, Torry Stamm Katsiroubas, Amanda Kinchla, Commissioner Randle, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Mackenzie May, Kirby Lecy, Caro Roszell, Danah Tench, Ayn Yeagle, Brittany Mangini, John Waite.

**Officer Reports:**

**Election for Chair:** A motion to nominate Commissioner Randle as chair was made by Representative Kane, seconded by Mackenzie May, and accepted by voice vote: Doug Botelho, Bill Fredericks, Jared Freedman, Representative Hannah Kane, Torry Stamm Katsiroubas, Amanda Kinchla, Commissioner Randle, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Mackenzie May, Kirby Lecy, Caro Roszell, Danah Tench, Ayn Yeagle, Brittany Mangini, John Waite.

Special vote to establish a Nominating Committee. Vice Chair May shared that the Committee serves for one year. The vote for new Committee members typically takes place at the annual meeting. The

Commented [TD(1)]: One of these was remote right?

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Committee is needed to fill three open positions on the Advisory Committee, for broader representation and ease in meeting quorum. A motion to establish a Nominating Committee was made by Danah Tench, seconded by Ayn Yeagle, and passed by voice vote: Bill Fredericks, Jared Freedman, Representative Hannah Kane, Torry Stamm Katsiroubas, Commissioner Randle, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Mackenzie May, Kirby Lecy, Caro Roszell, Danah Tench, Ayn Yeagle, Brittany Mangini, John Waite.

Council Vice Chair May is also chair of the Nominating Committee. Nominating Committee candidates were solicited. A motion for the Nominating Committee to include Rob Leshin, Ayn Yeagle, John Waite, and Caro Roszell was made by Danah Tench, seconded by Ayn Yeagle, and passed by voice vote: Bill Fredericks, Jared Freedman, Representative Hannah Kane, Torry Stamm Katsiroubas, Commissioner Randle, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Mackenzie May, Kirby Lecy, Caro Roszell, Danah Tench, Ayn Yeagle, Brittany Mangini, John Waite.

**MA Legislative Food System Caucus:** Representative Hannah Kane

Rep Kane added two changes to the minutes: The Caucus legislative priorities for this session have been made by consensus. The MA Caucus now includes 159 members. The House budget includes funding for FSIG and HIP and language for unexpended HIP funds to roll over. The budget is in the Senate and amendments are being filed. The new Joint Committee on Agriculture, co-chaired by Senator Gobi and Representative Schmidt will hold hearings in May and a listening tour this summer. Dates will be shared when available. This new standing Committee has two chairs and 17 members. The Committee chairs and many members are also members of the MA Legislative Food System Caucus who provide important bi-partisan recommendations. The Caucus cochairs and Commissioner Randle met with EEA Secretary Tepper to provide a food system briefing. HIP advocacy day was held recently, and it was exciting to see so many supporters at the state house. An expected drop in tax revenues will have an impact on food system programs.

**Program:**

**Discussion: opportunities and processes for the Council to support food system legislation:**

Mackenzie May and John Waite.

How can the Council have a greater role in advocacy? Should the focus be on state or federal issues? How would the efforts be distinguished? At the federal level, it is impactful to have the Commonwealth represented. The goals supporting ending hunger are wrapped into strengthening the food system which provides an opportunity to weigh in on federal issues. What would be the process? In the past, letters of support have been written, noting that that state members have abstained considering that they have a prescribed legislation process through their secretariats. The non-state agency members represent the majority. When the Council hears presentations on programs or legislative issues, the Council can weigh in. This was the process after a HIP presentation before HIP was codified. The Council represents food system subject experts on a variety of complex topics. The state agency representatives can continue to provide education about current programs and pending legislation's impact on the food system, including federal and state issues. Q: What is most impactful? A: State hearings will be done this month. Written testimony can be submitted any time.

The Advisory Committee to the Council can also have a role, considering their on-the-ground voices and their focus on climate change and equity.

To gain clarity on the legislative and comprehensive multifaceted perspectives of this work, consider including the state's Food Security Task Force. It's important to share information with the new administration and learn their perspective. Supporting the USDA Farm Bill is important. Hopefully it won't be held hostage around SNAP and the new regulations. Writing letters and weighing in on what the Council is doing is one part of what can be done. Reframing the goals of the Council is important, with a multiyear strategic plan. Where are efforts needed? Who are the key stakeholders and issues. What is needed, a rule, a regulation, a law for example, and what needs to happen to fulfill it. Could the Council provide a legislative briefing? There have been many changes in legislators, who may not know about the Council's work. A subcommittee could develop a two-year strategy plan that can be regularly referenced. Mapping sessions could identify/confirm gaps and goals. There's an opportunity to educate the new administration on the state's food system work and the MA Local Food Action Plan. A subcommittee can recommend how this should be done. The state's Food Security Working Group and the Collaborative could be involved. Once a plan has been developed, listening sessions can be organized to bring feedback to the Council.

A motion for a subcommittee for a strategic plan for the next two years, as part of the Council's role to make recommendations and more of a direct line and regular communication was made by John Waite, seconded by Brittany Mangini, and passed by voice vote: Doug Botelho, Bill Fredericks, Jared Freedman, Representative Hannah Kane, Torry Stamm Katsiroubas, Amanda Kinchla, Commissioner Randle, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Mackenzie May, Kirby Lecy, Caro Roszell, Danah Tench, Ayn Yeagle, Brittany Mangini, John Waite. Volunteers for the subcommittee include Brittany Mangini, Mackenzie May, Representative Kane, Ayn Yeagle, Commissioner Randle, and Torry Stamm Katsiroubas. Commissioner Randle will send an invitation to find a date for this subcommittee.

### **Environmental Justice program**

Secretariat update: María Belén Power, Undersecretary of Environmental Justice and Equity, EEA  
A focus is to build power and advocacy at the grass roots level. Environmental Justice may seem new since it blew up after the pandemic but it's not. There are many environmental justice issues that overlap with social health determinants. As defined by the Commonwealth the criteria include income, racial identify, and language.

Carline Lemoine, Deputy Director of Environmental Justice, MDAR liaison. There is a statutory regulation for Massachusetts residents to have a clean and safe environment. Executive Order 552 requires each secretariat to develop and post a strategy. A draft Environmental Justice Strategy completed last year is being reviewed with agencies providing comments. This is a watershed moment for Environmental Justice initiatives with many federal funding opportunities. Q: Is there a general plan or initiative to encourage legislators to make a more permanent solution to restore state funds for the former COVID benefit? A: There is a commitment to reduce food insecurity including increasing SNAP benefits. Federal funding opportunities are being reviewed to support community food insecurity.

MDAR Initiatives: Rebecca Davidson, Strategic Initiatives Manager/Environmental Justice Lead  
Rebecca Davidson shared how the EJ policy is being implemented at MDAR. Language services, stakeholder engagement, access to information, and grants and metrics are priority area. All agency documents can be Google translated. MDAR programs and services brochures are available in multiple languages.

Comment: Tracking grants to document where grants are awarded and who gets them is appreciated.

Q: How can the grants provide a stronger benefit to socially disadvantaged farmers? A: It's early in the process but grantees are reviewing where to purchase from local farms.

**An update on the campaign for food literacy:** Brittany Peats, MA Food System Collaborative.

The program aims to ensure that K-12 students learn about the food system including nutrition, ag, food justice and culinary skills. Input was gathered from hundreds of stakeholders. Case studies were presented and recommendations. A steering committee was identified to guide a campaign. An Act to promote food literacy was introduced including topics, lessons, a trust fund, and a working group to guide the implementation of the program. A senate budget amendment is being filed today for teacher support. Plan to join the virtual lobby Day on May 15 at 4 PM.

Q: What role does the SNAP nutrition education program play in the development of this program? There is a lot of SNAP education (SNAP ed) money available. It's possible to submit a budget to expand staff which may be a streamlined approach. Can work for many school systems including those not on SNAP. A: SNAP ed is a great model. Pursuing anything to expand that programming is a great idea.

Q: What's the process for schools to get school garden funds? A: There are grant programs for school gardens including from MA Farm to School. School food service management companies often support school gardens. A challenge is supporting staff to manage the school garden. Comment: DESE is implementing a three-year grant program "[MA FRESH](#)" including 59 recent grants for infrastructure which could include school gardens. The program is in its first year of the three years, with \$300,000 in funding coming from the 2021 state APRA funds.

**Local Food Policy Council Grant and Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program update,**  
Commissioner Ashley Randle

MDAR coordinated the \$250,000 Local Food Policy Council grant program to enhance the work of existing and newly forming local food policy councils and food working groups across Massachusetts to accelerate development, increase capacity, and facilitate connections and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning to support the Massachusetts local food system, as well as build on the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan. MDAR entered into contracts with 17 local food policy councils, with a wide range of activities including food system assessments, community engagement, incorporating health messages with a Buy Local campaign, bylaws, and structure development, learning from other Councils, support for local food entrepreneurs, and work to be sure farmer voices are part of the food system discussion. Projects are expected to be completed by June 2023. At upcoming Council meetings, local food policy council grant awardees will be invited to share a summary of their work.

Last week, USDA announced funding for the **Resilient Food Systems** Infrastructure Program, with the NASDA Foundation in partnership with Cornell as the lead for the Northeast Region. The intent is to provide technical assistance, funding, and support for producers to navigate the food system and to expand market opportunity. MDAR will work to leverage existing partnerships including the Ag Innovation Center. Infrastructure grants will be available and funding to support work to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency. This program excludes meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, and landscaping products. MDAR is absorbing the program details to be able to apply for the funding.

**MA Food Policy Council Advisory Committee:** Andy Varela and Danielle Collins. Future meetings will be held at alternating times including early evening to accommodate member schedules and to enhance participation.

**MA Food Policy Council member updates**

Brittany Mangini: SNAP skimming has been an issue in the past. The first round of replacement benefits for those who had benefits stolen went out to 4,000 household. The plan has been approved at the Federal Level. The final round of pandemic EBT plans have been approved. Thanks to Rob Leshin for partnering on this project. Massachusetts is one of ten states in the country that was approved for meals for school age children.

Commissioner Randle: candidates are being solicited for the Council's farmer position.

**Announcements**

July 21, 2023, MA Food Policy Council meeting – remote

**Public Comment**

**Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Representative Kane, seconded by Mackenzie May, and passed by voice vote: Bill Fredericks, Jared Freedman, Representative Hannah Kane, Torry Stamm Katsiroubas, Commissioner Randle, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Mackenzie May, Kirby Lecy, Caro Roszell, Danah Tench, Ayn Yeagle, Brittany Mangini, John Waite.

Note: 39 people attended remotely, nine were in person plus three MDAR staff. The Ag Committee might be invited to attend a future meeting.