

MINUTES: May 17, 2019, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

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

In attendance:

Jeff Cole

Senator Comerford

Representative Daniel M. Donahue

Melissa Pullin, DTA

Commissioner John Lebeaux

Representative Hannah Kane

Rob Leshin

Eric Stocker

Danah Tench

John Waite

Sam Wong

Ben Wood, DPH

Noted that Commissioner McCue, DTA is in the audience

Call to Order at 9:46 AM

Introductions:

Acceptance of Minutes by Sam Wong and seconded by Eric Stocker. Passed on voice vote. Then DEP shared that they had last minute edits to be included, which are included in these minutes. The changes are not significant.

Council member updates

Commissioner Lebeaux: MDAR is a member of NASDA and its regional affiliate NEASDA including 10 Northeast states. Commissioner Lebeaux is the president and is hosting the regional meeting this year which includes discussion of the Food Caucus and the MA Local Food Action Plan, held the first week of May. Commissioner Lebeaux noted the Worcester Public Market in Kelly Sq. is due to open in July and will be a great opportunity for farmers and enhanced access to healthy food in the inner city. This is another great opportunity for our farmers and to make inner city access better. Stay tuned for the exact date.

DTA is happy to remind folks that HIP starts up May 25. There is a new posting for a HIP coordinator, please promote this opportunity.

Senator Comerford noted the leadership of Senator Gobi who filed a budget amendment for HIP which she is proud to support.

Jeff Cole: The Collaborative has a working group on mobile vendor permits that is looking to work with a collective of local boards of health to pilot a system for mutually shared paperwork and inspection processes in order to lower the burden on health agents and applicants in permitting while enhancing food safety.

John Waite: There will be a press release coming out soon about the Foo Trust awards of \$750,000 that will be provided to seven businesses across six counties mostly to retailers who will increase access to healthy foods in low income communities. Most of these funds should be awarded by June 2nd. The second RFP for the remaining funds of \$250,000 has been released.

Officer Reports

Officer Election discussion

The Bylaws require officer elections every two years. There is representation at this meeting from the 5 sectors making up the council. Commissioner Lebeaux reminded attendees that any member could be chair.

The Council opened nominations:

Representative Hannah Kane nominated Commissioner Lebeaux to be chair, seconded by Senator Jo Comerford. A motion to close chair nominations and elect Commissioner Lebeaux to be chair was made and seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Representative Hannah Kane nominated John Waite as Vice Chair, to replace Representative Steve Kulik who retired. It was seconded by Senator Jo Comerford. Discussion: John Waite noted it was helpful when Representative Kulik was vice chair and suggested Representative Kane might fill the role. Representative Kane noted the Food Caucus involves a lot of effort she needs to focus there. A motion to close the vice chair nominations and elect John Waite as Vice Chair was made by Senator Jo Comerford and seconded by Representative Donahue, and unanimously passed.

Jeff Cole was nominated as Secretary by John Waite and Representative Kane. Jeff commented that the diversity of the leadership doesn't represent the work that we do and is open to other suggestions. A motion to close the nominations and elect Jeff Cole was made by Representative Hannah Kane, seconded by Eric Stoker and passed unanimously.

John Waite asked for the minutes to reflect that as this leadership doesn't reflect the diversity of the system if other members are interested in being an officer, we would entertain resigning and having new officer elections.

New Council member Senator Joanne Comerford was introduced and shared some comments.

Program

Council roles and review of guide on advocacy v. lobbying: John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center and Nicole Negowetti, Health and Access Program, Food Law and Policy Clinic, Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, Harvard Law School

Nicole Negowetti shared information about government-embedded food policy councils. Most are grass roots coalitions or not for profits. She reviewed the composition of 13 other FPCs and how they are engaging in lobbying and advocacy. She noted Connecticut's Council is composed entirely of state agencies and there is current legislation to amend its duties. The local councils presented have

government serving as ex officio members who do not vote. More generally sometimes ex officio Food Policy Council members vote, sometimes not.

Recommendations for MA:

- 1) Discuss and determine internal roles such as how to resource state agencies to support the Food Plan.
- 2) Discuss role of caucus and collaboration with the Council
- 3) Evaluate structure
- 4) Develop plan to restructure as needed to achieve goals including possible amendments to the current by-laws

John Hopkins is interested to help with facilitation if the Council would like.

There was a discussion about an expanded MA council and if it would be helpful or duplicative, including having local food policy councils on the MA Food Policy Council. Any changes to the membership require legislative change. The legislation includes an advisory committee which hasn't been active since the food plan RFR was being developed. If the Legislature let go of the advisory committee and added some seats it would make sense. It's important to have diverse geographic and cultural representation from the state. Should the Collaborative be a FPC member? Perhaps the Collaborative and Council would have a joint session annually. Comment: It would be good to reiterate the challenges in the current structure to understand what needs to be changed? What doesn't work well in the current system?

Public comment: Diversity including geographic, cultural and ethnicity should be reflected in the council. Overall, action will require support from grass route community groups. Council connectivity to these groups will also help individuals to develop buy-in.

Representative Kane: The issue may be less about restructuring than being more effective with existing mandate and resources. Are we doing everything we can be and should be? An analysis first such will inform what tweaks to suggest. Comment: There is interest to be more actionable but when the legislation was written, there was not a Collaborative or Food Caucus. How can all the resources fit together? The Council is a strategic body which should aim to strengthen the whole food system. What isn't being done that should be done? The Caucus is transactional to push the recommendations and legislation. The Collaborative is highly focused on advocacy as well as feeding information. What would a flow chart look like that includes the advocacy organizations, the Collaborative, the local FPCS, and the Food Policy Council and the Food Caucus?

There isn't a Food Policy Council in every region. It doesn't mean that there aren't bodies that are doing advocacy work. It's not just Food Policy Councils that represent the food system and are doing policy work. Mass in Motion is an example and important to include as well.

Local food policy councils are enjoying the opportunity to get to network and getting to know each other to consider a role as a cohort. The FPC includes a local council on every agenda to make closer connections.

Who should be at the table discussion should also include what is the table about. What's in it for me is important? We've been fighting for three years to get fisheries but it hasn't happened.

The Caucus can be effective sales people to the legislature for the priority items for the MA Food System. The Caucus role isn't to figure out what is needed, but to know what to do. Legislative members of the FPC weigh in on what is needed and delivering the recommendations to all the parties necessary to create the change. The Council should be elevating the issues to be sure we have a strong food system.

A motion was made by Representative Hannah Kane and seconded by Eric Stocker to have the chair appoint John Waite to lead a committee to explore these topics and make recommendations. Jeff Cole, Danah Tench, Eric Stocker and Winton Pitcoff volunteered as members. Bonita will provide administration support. Nicole from Harvard Law will participate. The motion passed unanimously.

Food Caucus Update: Representative Hannah Kane

There are 69 members in addition to the six co-chairs. There is great statewide diversity across the state. This is the first in the nation! The Caucus is organized re: six legislative priorities with relevant bills each in farmland, economic development, and food access. In addition, the Caucus endorses legislation that it's not taking the lead on, including healthy soils and ag innovation, farm protection and viability, and farm to School to grants. There are 129 cosponsors for Senate budget funding HIP at \$6.5 M, though hopefully it will go higher. Caucus website: www.MAfoodsystemcaucus.com as well as a twitter page

The Caucus had its first tour starting at Meatworks, Westport; Seafarms, Westport; Wainer Family Farm, New Bedford; and Westport Rivers Winery, Westport. Policy discussions were included throughout the day. The goal is to have these tours around the Commonwealth in September. Suggestions are welcome.

Representative Donahue thanked Representative Kane for the Caucus support which is educational as well as important to bring colleagues up speed including asking for further capitalization for the Food Trust as well as administrative support. Representative Kane mentioned the importance of staff support which is a challenge considering this work is in addition to existing responsibilities. All staff from six co-chairs has been very important. Senator Comeford celebrated these efforts galvanizing both chambers to gather momentum, which takes strong organizing and dispatching. "We have huge gratitude to the House for this heavy lifting."

- Food as Medicine Plan unveiled: Kristin Little Sukys, Harvard Law and Jean Terranova, Director of Food and Health Policy, Community Servings

Jamaica Plain will have soon now 30,000 sq feet and right next to Sam Adams. There is an increasing awareness of health and food insecurity; a growing body of research that food as medicine interventions can lower health care costs and patient wellbeing; a transformation in our health care system that started in 2020 with Medicaid with funds designated for nutrition and housing support; and the MA Local Food Action Plan implementation that are all timely for the Food as Medicine Plan. The Report will be released on June 18, 2019 10:30 AM at the State House. There are 15 policy recommendations in the report. There is an interest to include local ingredients with current local sourcing. The survey had 244 respondents both providers and payers.

Question: Why is there reluctance from Health Insurers' with such a strong ROI? Answer: It's not reluctance but more an issue of priority. Changes to Medicare took priority. In 2020 Medicare will have some broader flexibility to cover home delivered meals to those with chronic issues. Pilot projects in CA and PA will inform further action. The program also has to be operationalized. We are also working for a pilot in MA. Ben Wood: This is a tremendous point for consistent data especially with screening questions. There should be a standardized screener. This could be an important for more systematic planning and evaluation and to standardize the screener questions.

Question: Which of these households have school age kids? Can other available resources for childcare be included? The map overlaps with USDA area eligibility maps. EOESE has plenty of resources of programs that are already funded through the Summer Eats program. The area eligible snacks can also be reimbursed at the free rate and could also be a promotional tool so you'd have more on-the-ground support. MA Health has not authorized providing meals for family members but just for the person who is sick. So this is a great point to recognize this gap. Commissioner Lebeaux complemented Community Servings Mission and how it works as being very inspirational. From a business perspective, why not invest properly to their bottom line that helps everyone?

New Business

MA Food System Collaborative Update, Winton Pitcoff

The legislators were thanked for their leadership around HIP with 19 co-sponsors in the committee. Two other asks: funds to UMASS for their soil lab, a small budget but very important. The second is food system metrics funds toward developing tracking mechanism to monitor progress re: key indicators. In the Council enabling legislation, "SHALL" is the language for these metrics. If funding is passed, the Collaborative will work with the Council for this projects. If the funds don't come through, a discussion about alternative approaches makes sense.

MA statewide food policy council program

Franklin County Food Council (FC2), annual inventory of actions towards recommendations in the state's Local Food Action Plan, Chair Jessica O'Neill

FC2 conducted an annual action inventory to total actions taken relating to the MA Local Food Action Plan. There are at least 26 local food policy councils across the state that could have an important impact to be able to understand what's been done and what needs to be done. 15% have taken action on 74% of the MA Local Food Plan items. This information needs to be leveraged to get more engagement and deeper analysis. It's important to consider how the inventory data will leveraged/used. FRCOG has a report on climate change and the Deerfield River: www.frcog.org

Question: To what extent could the Franklin Co of Governments be involved as a model to other regional planning councils? Comment: Planners need funding to be able to do this unless you can include it in MA in Motion. It is in the MA in Motion agenda and up to the local coordinators. It does come down to funding and other priorities.

Comment: Please include some analysis of the Ag Census at the next meeting.

Public Comment

Announcements

- June 18, 10:30 AM State House, Boston, Senate Reading Room, State Food As Medicine Launch Event
- Next Council DATE WILL HAVE TO BE CHANGED since legislators may still be in session: Friday, July 19, LSL South Rooms S330-S340, UMASS Amherst, Amherst, 9:30 – 12:30. Institute for Applied Life Sciences, 240 Thatcher Road, Life Science Laboratories, Amherst, MA 01003, parking available at Campus Center Garage.

Motion to Adjourn made by 12:20 made by Eric Stocker and seconded by Danah Tench. Motion passed on voice vote.

A Meeting of the MA State Food Policy Councils followed from 1 – 3 PM.