

Minutes: MA Food Policy Council, November 1, 2018
Room 428 MA State Ho, Boston 9:30 – 12:30

Helena Fruscio Altsman, designee, EOEEA
Jeff Cole
Billy Frederick, Senator Fattman's office
Dr. Anna Goldenheim
Henry Kahn, Senator Gobi's office
Amanda Kinchla
Representative Hannah Kane
Representative Steve Kulik
Commissioner John Lebeaux -MDAR
John Lee
Rob Leshin
Commissioner McCue, DTA
Associate Commissioner Lindsey Tucker - Dept. of Public Health
Commissioner Martin Suuberg- DEP
Eric Stocker
John Waite

Call to Order at 9:45 Am

Commissioner Lebeaux asked for introductions, and noted a visiting fellow from Morocco in attendance, under a State Department fellowship.

Acceptance of Minutes: A motion to accept the September 21 minutes as presented was made by Representative Steve Kulik, seconded by John Lee and unanimously passed.

Officers Reports

Chair LeBeaux: Thought the Council typically doesn't have refreshments, today's treats are courtesy of Rep Steve Kulik. The donuts are from Hager's Farm Market and the cider from Clarkdale Fruit farm in Deerfield.

MDAR Assistant Commissioner Ashley Randle was introduced. She shared information about herself including that she is a member of a fourth generation dairy farm from western MA. Commissioner Lebeaux shared his enthusiasm for Ashley as a new member of the MDAR staff.

Future activity for the Council: Adding seats for fisheries and UMASS Extension, metrics for measuring progress and advocacy of the Local Food Action Plan. In the meantime, UMASS Center for Food, Agriculture and the Environment is always on the invitation list of Council meetings as well as the Commissioner of Fish and Game. Thank you to Story Reed from Commissioner Amidon's staff for attending today.

Commissioner Lebeaux presided over recognition for longtime Massachusetts food system champion and FPC member Representative Steve Kulik, for his commitment and long term leadership to the

Massachusetts food system and the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. As a member of the legislature and as vice chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, he's played a key role in the formation and direction of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. His insights and guidance were critical in the development of the MA Local Food Action Plan, accepted by the Council three years ago, which was the first comprehensive state-wide plan in over 40 years! And prior to that, he was instrumental in the development of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council over ten years ago, as well as the years of planning that preceded the Council. He received a plaque, mounted on farm field stone, from the Council. Representative Steve Kulik commented that he has loved participating in these meetings with a great turnout by the members and the public and everyone who is connected through the MA Food system. He has found the meetings to be very inspiring. "It makes me feel that there is a lot of good in the Commonwealth and it needs to be supported." He said that it's been wonderful to be a part of the MA Food Policy Council and wants to keep in touch.

John Waite also shared comments: " In addition to being on the Council, Representative Steve Kulik is from my district and seems to be everywhere across the 19 towns." He helped with support early on for the Western MA Food Processing Center, and presented a basket of foods from the kitchen which started small and is now quite successful.

Old Business:

Education White Paper discussion: Rob Leshin suggested that there might be an addition on commercial and food service worker education/training. Commissioner Lebeaux suggested that a foodservice focus could be a separate paper or an addendum. A motion to accept the White Paper as presented was made by John Lee, seconded by Eric Stocker and passed unanimously.

Program:

Commissioner Lebeaux noted the Council is pleased to have food policy councils across the state participating today and moving forward, will always have an agenda item for the councils. The Massachusetts Food Policy Council looks forward to working together to support advocacy issues and whatever opportunities there may be for collaborative efforts.

Brittany Peats, MA Food System Collaborative offered a bit about this work. She noted a common agenda for connecting Statewide Policy Issues and Advocacy. The Collaborative has convened FPCs twice and found it a good opportunity to solve and address common challenges and well as updates for relevant legislation. A current topic is to identify how their work can overlap with a common project on equity at farmers markets. She introduced the presenters:

Jessica O'Neill, Executive Director, Just Roots and the Franklin County Food Council, now in its fifth year, was born out of a 3 year USDA funded project. The group is made up organizations rather than individuals. A goal was to attract to attract the busiest people. A quarterly meeting was found to work best. Currently, there is a local food action plan annual inventory.

Lisa Robinson, Coordinator, Shape Up Somerville, which is part of the health and human services in Somerville. Their non-traditional approach has a focus on food security and health equity. It was one of

the first community based programs for child hood obesity, using an innovative environmental approach. Included is a volunteer run community meal serving soup. HIP Advocacy was part of the food security work. The group has published a Community Food System assessment which took 18 months. A focus on food rescue and recovery will turn into a plan to align with the MA Local Food Action Plan. Transportation access is at the core of food access. Another project has been working to decrease sugary drinks to have it align with the sugary drink tax discussion that's happening in particular with youth of color. A goal is to include more information about sustainability and equity in the food system.

Mass Farm to School: Using State Policy to Advance Farm to Institution Work. **From the Plan:** *“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. “*

Simca Horwitz, and Lisa Damon, Co-Directors MA Farm to School. They provided an update on efforts and recent work re: policy to increase farm to school activity in legislation with a focus on the impacts of the program in local schools including education and health benefits www.northeastfarmtoschool.org

Using local food is perceived by students to be better than pre-plated food. The students consume more and meal participation rates have increased. Moving from frozen pre-plated meals to freshly prepared meals have added 80 jobs. Worcester, serving 20,000 meals a day to a diverse population, is a great example of how school food service can make tremendous impacts including workforce development.

School gardens, nutrition education farmer visits and field trips are also a part of the program. USDA Farm to School Census www.farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov documents increased growth in these areas. MA schools spent more than \$10.2 M on local food. And there is still room to grow. Harvest of the month has its highest rate of participation with 170 schools yet participating, with room for growth. Actions are tied closely to the Plan which offers the framework. What sort of policies could catalyze more farms to school activities? A review of models in other states has been helpful. Policy priority is greater public investment in Farm to School. A focus is a Massachusetts farm to school grant programs with a priority on high need schools. A farm that's too small for supermarkets may be interested in working with schools. Smaller farms are working with smaller schools while they scale up. Some 25% of farmers had done some sort of increase in production including season extension.

Comment: There is a need for training but infrastructure for scratch cooking is also important. Check the MA School Building Authority to see how new school construction can be incentivized to be built with kitchens.

Case Study: Chetna Naimi, Partnership Director for Codman Academy School, Dorchester. This work is a good way to see who you are impacting and where/how changes being made. Health and education go hand in hand. Everyone at this school receives free lunch. There is a strong wellness policy and a strict junk food policy. Dorchester has one of the highest health issues in the state. They work in close partnership with Daily Table and Project Bread, as well as Haley House, thanks to a Farm to School grant.

A plan for a sustainable nutritious food service is in progress. There is a school gardens with training for students to learn to cook and many other programs, for example, the foodservice workers eat with the students. There is also a two-week internship in the kitchen for all of the students. School garden foods are used in the kitchens. Evaluative data is being collected to show how funding can be a springboard for a school. Lessons learned include that a solid plan is needed, partners matter, funding matters, and very importantly, buy in matters.

New Business

MA Food Collaborative Three Year Progress Report and activities update, Winton Pitcoff

Three years ago on food day the MA Local Food Action Plan was released. Three years later the Collaborative worked with 40 organizations around the state to show their progress in relation to the Plan. Much of this work was ongoing even before the plan was written. The report was issued in June, written by Brittany Peats. The latest report focuses on the public sector, which shows a lot of progress, as well as gaps. This report will be distributed around the state house today. Agency staff was thanked who helped gather information for the report. In other news, the Collaborative is adding two more staff.

Winton is the director of the MA Maple Producers Assn. He noted that at the recent international maple syrup meeting in Concord NH, Massachusetts won more awards than any other state. Awards were won by the largest and one of the smallest maple producers in MA, a good example of the scale of the MA Food System.

Building the Massachusetts Seafood System, Jack Wiggins, Senior Research Fellow, Urban Harbors Institute, UMASS Boston. Ongoing research is focused on the local system, funded by the MA Seaport Economic Council. Ninety percent of the seafood Americans eat is imported. An ongoing study is analyzing the system to identify how to grow. Seafood is a major asset to the Commonwealth and the protein is underutilized. In some cases due to stock decline but in other cases due to lack of knowledge by consumers. The state recognizes the important of this resource. UMASS is working to pull the work accomplished together for more efficiency. The Baker Pollito Administration's economic plan identifies seafood as a key economic cluster.

The MA Local Food Action Plan has a chapter addressing seafood. We needed to understand the problems were and how could the government help. It's a similar set of issues noted in other sectors including a lack of coordination; fishermen are not typically collaborative people. There are opportunities in traditional markets and emerging sections. Look across elements in order to make a dent in the issue and grow the economy. A focus is to increase collaboration across the various pieces of the industry and relevant investments. There are strong models from NJ and Rutgers with a major innovation center and also the state of Maine and the development of Portland. A second grant in progress for the next step to connect the universities as well as study other issues such as fishermen particularity in the Cape Cod area losing access to wharfs. We're looking to private foundations to support efforts in Gloucester to support collaboration with public and private sector.

The MA Food Trust Program has started: an update by Gabriella Mora, Advisor, LEAF and John Waite, Executive Director, Franklin County CDC

The MA Food Trust Program was launched Oct 30, 2018. It can be described as a nonprofit community development financial institution (like a non-profit bank). There is much information about food access and connections to equity, public health and economic development. Healthy food retail can be a link to support healthy communities. The program has been based on a strong advocacy campaign that has resulted in the MFTP legislation, with a \$1 M budget in 2018. Healthy food financing is a proven national model. There are about ten states that offer similar programs now. The implementation in MA is an innovative model with two administrators. The program starts with a pre-application.

John Waite: Seventy five percent of the funds are for loans and 25% will be for grants and technical assistance. Flexible financing is important and can help with attracting other finance. Grants are from \$5,000 – 25,000 and are meant to supplement other funds as well as support technical assistance with good management such as consultants. This was in the local food action plan, so we can check off that it is started. Now it needs to be implemented to be successful. Rose Arruda was acknowledged for her role at MDAR as the point person for this program and for “keeping it moving.”

Council member updates

Commissioner McCue shared his appreciation for Representative Kulik at an event earlier in the month, but again stated DTA’s appreciation for his support. He also thanks legislators for support that made it possible for DTA to access an additional \$1.04M to support the HIP project, which brings the total to \$5.04 M dollars this year. To be fully funded, some \$7M would be needed, without taking on any new retailers. About 4% of SNAP recipients are using the HIP benefits. A new HIP fact sheet is out with current data. An upcoming announcement will describe when additional funds will be available for HIP redemption for the best opportunity for SNAP recipients as well as growers. DTA is working to have a predictable model to allow the ag community to have adequate planning time. Mobile Market Plus, which processes SNAP and has HIP functionality, is possibly going to continue based on discussions with USDA, NY State and national farmers’ markets groups who have been working to find ways to have a viable equipment program.

A motion to support the MA Farm to School grant program was made by Represented Kulik, seconded by John Waite and passed unanimously. John Waite asked that the next meeting agenda include discussion on how to more strongly connect local food policy councils and the state Council. At the next Council meeting, how state agencies can participate in this type of action will be discussed as well as a focus on fisheries and UMASS.

Public Comment

Franklin Co Food Council and Just Roots are in the midst of an evaluation of a CSA farm share program as a health intervention. Program research has been ongoing the past two years. An analysis is forthcoming.

It's worth noting that the growing season has been difficult this year. CISA has an emergency, no interest, farm fund. This year there have been 9 farm applicants.

Commissioner Lebeaux shared his appreciation for attendees across the state for making the trek to Boston, and noted the importance of meeting at least once a year at the state house to provide better access to the legislative delegation. He appreciated the Council legislative members who invited their colleagues to attend, and noted the many legislators, staff and members of the Administration coming in and out of the meeting. He noted the results of connectivity such as a farmers markets accepting HIP for the first time in Fall River due to a legislator attending last year.

Senator Bruce Tarr was acknowledged for hosting the MA Food Policy Council meeting in room 428 of the state house. Senator Tarr said that it is important to understand the critical connection between the state legislature and constituents, which happens naturally at the state house. "The Councils' issues dovetail with food security and also boost our economy for jobs that are not mobile. It's very important that we maintain our identity as an ag state as well as a state with a strong seafood constituency. As the Council works through details of the MA food system, know that your work is valued and that we look forward to supporting it. It is important that the benefits of nutrition from locally produced products are available to everyone including those on a fixed income." Senator Tarr shared that he agrees with the important recognition for Representative Steve Kulik.

Announcements

Nov 8, 2018, Waste Wise Forum, Westborough

Dec 6, 2018, MA Farm & Sea to School Conference, Setting the table: Communities Creating Change

Dec 12, 2018, 2nd Annual Massachusetts Food System Forum, Leominster

Jan 25, 2019 Friday, MA Food Policy Council Meeting, 9:30 – 12:30 Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Westborough

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made at 12:29 by Representative Steve Kulik, seconded by John Lee, and unanimously passed.