

Minutes

MA Food Policy Council
Thursday, November 10, 2016, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM,
Boston State House, 24 Beacon St, Boston, MA Room 428

In attendance:

Jeff Cole, Federation of Massachusetts Farmers
Senator Ryan Fattman
Brian Ferrarese, designee: Senator Anne Gobi
Helena Fruscio, designee, MA Office of Housing and Economic Development
Hannah Kane, Representative
Amanda Kinchla, UMASS Science Department
Representative Steve Kulik
Commissioner John Lebeaux, MA Dept. of Ag Resources Commissioner
John Lee, Farmer
Rob Leshin, designee: Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education
Jana Ferguson, designee: Dept. of Public Health
Frank Martinez Nocito, designee: Dept. of Transitional Assistance
Vivian Morris, Nutrition & public health expert
Eric Stocker, Distributor
Danah Tench, designee: Dept. of Environmental Protection
Commissioner Suuberg, Dept. of Environmental Protection
John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center
Dr. Sam Wong, Local Health Department Representative

Call to Order Commissioner Lebeaux, FPC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:43 AM. He thanked Sira Grant, legal counsel, Office of Senator Bruce Tarr, who was helped coordinate the logistics to have the meeting held at the State House. He has been a longtime supporter of the MA Local Food Action Plan, especially relating to commercial fisheries.

Introductions New FPC members Dr. Sam Wong, Local Health Department Representative; and Eric Stocker, Distributor introduced themselves. Then FPC members and those in attendance introduced themselves. This is a notable meeting with either the appointees or designees in attendance representing ALL 17 positions of the MA FPC.

Motion to approve the minutes A motion was made by Representative Kulik, seconded by Representative Kane and passed unanimously.

Officer Reports

Commissioner and Chair, John Lebeaux shared a presentation with a brief overview of FPC purpose, history and what's ahead. The focus of the meeting is on the current six summary goals from the MA Local Food Action Plan, to be advanced to the Governor. The timing is good for the FPC to amplify these broad goals as well as supporting programs, and link to larger policies. In addition, state agencies are

dealing with FY18 budget request documents, and have to organize a level of triage to understand program feasibility.

Priorities

1. Support programs that facilitate access to healthy foods for underserved communities. A current focus is to provide support to leverage the Department of Transitional Assistance's USDA/FINI grant award, known as the Healthy Incentives Program, which will increase use of SNAP at farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and for community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, providing fresh, healthy food for low-income families, and increasing sales for Massachusetts farmers. Additional examples include the MA Food Trust and the MA Food Ventures Program.

Discussion: Vivien Morris and Kristina St. Cyr from the MA Public Health Association explained the MA Food Trust Program could be supported with language in this goal. The FPC did not feel that stronger language stating that funding for the Food Trust should be released was appropriate, instead deciding to highlight the MA Food Trust, along with the MA Food Ventures Program. The Food Ventures Program is direct grants to support processing infrastructure. The Food Trust allows funds to be leveraged through loans, grants and technical assistance, administered by CDFIs that cover every part of the state. The \$6M in the bond bill hasn't been released. \$100,000 has been released for administration; however the capitol funds have not been released.

A motion to accept this goal was made by Representative Steve Kulik, seconded by Vivien Morris and passed unanimously.

2. Reduce food waste through state programs for farmers, restaurants, processors, schools and other institutions, and consumers. A current focus is to support the Commercial Food Waste Ban by developing policies and programs to divert food waste from landfills. Support for donation programs, conversion of food waste to animal feed, composting, and the development of anaerobic digestion facilities are also priorities.

Discussion: Include schools and other institutions. Be sure the goal is stated broadly and then one or two specific suggestion and appropriate benchmarks and measurements to be sure we are tracking our progress.

A motion to accept this goal was made by John Lee, seconded by Danah Tench and passed unanimously.

3. Support regulatory policies and practices that allow farms and other food system businesses to thrive. The current focus is to develop circuit rider positions at state regulatory agencies, subject to appropriation, to provide food business guidance in a non-enforcement capacity in an effort to aid in compliance. Additionally, circuit riders will provide support and guidance to local regulatory agencies.

This goal has additional costs. It would be difficult for a state agency to craft these positions without having it in the budget. The legislators, as the budget process begins, will stay on top of this on both the house and senate side to work with agencies and see how legislative language could be included. It's a timely recommendation. Not every local health department has the resources and technical knowledge for the work It makes sense to include support for local regulatory agencies as well.

A motion to accept this goal was made by Jeff Cole, seconded by Eric Stocker and passed unanimously.

4. Support and grow local food system infrastructure. The current focus is to target opportunities for growers, food processors and distributors to access capital, incentives, and technical assistance through agency partners and programs, private organizations, and universities.

A motion to accept this goal was made by John Lee, seconded by Amanda Kinchla and passed unanimously.

5. 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.

Discussion: Broaden the goal to include a wide range of institutions and support standardized contract language.

A motion to accept this goal was made by Representative Kulik and seconded by John Waite and passed unanimously.

6. Support educational opportunities for farmers and other food system workers. The current focus is to support Massachusetts higher education, UMass Extension, and vocational technical schools by developing and offering appropriate curricula to meet food system needs.

A motion to accept this goal was made by Amanda Kinchla, seconded by Vivien Morris, and unanimously passed.

And finally, though this is not a goal, the letter will promote legislative language to add a seat to the MA FPC for the Division of Marine Fisheries.

The goals and letter will be shared with the FPC prior to it being sent out to the Governor's office, with a deadline for response. Then individual members can be available to help the administration or legislator drill down into the weeds about these goals. Since the goals are broadly stated, FPC members can suggest specific suggestions and appropriate benchmarks and measurements to be sure progress is being tracked.

Commissioner Lebeaux asked the FPC if the letter to the Governor could be used for the annual report, due December 31. A motion to accept the letter to the Governor for the FPC's annual report was made by Representative Steve Kulik, seconded by Samuel Wong and passed unanimously.

Programming for the MA FPC moving forward to be discussed at the January 2017 meeting, as well as the response to the FPC's letter.

Legislative discussion led by Representative Steve Kulik along with legislative members in attendance including potential food/ag legislation for the upcoming session. Serafina Tezanne from Representative Paul Schmid's office also participated.

There is a focus on Healthy Vending (H 2005) and increasing processing facilities for meat and poultry. With the passage of Question 3, there is more interest in animal welfare issues. Relevant legislation (H713) would set up a board to oversee the establishment of standards for the welfare of livestock. Senator Gobi's office is focusing on drought topics. Senator Gobi received the Kale Blazer Award at the recent MA Farm to School meeting. Representative Schmid's office is focusing on the Ag Omnibus Bill, with a focus on including items with the strongest support. Other topics facing more controversy may be offered separately.

Considerations to add more legislative members were discussed. The consensus was that the current positions represent industry, government and the legislator well. Adding more legislators would tip the balance. In addition, as the size of the FPC increases, achieving a quorum can become more difficult.

Commissioner Lebeaux suggested consideration of MA Food Policy Legislation which would include a package of items relating to the MA Local Food Action Plan. In addition, he is in favor of MDAR changing back to the MA Department of Food and Agriculture, which more clearly represents the agency's work and constituents.

MA Food System Collaborative Winton Pitcoff discussed the on-going survey of agency members and promised to be in touch as initial responses will inform the process moving forward.

Program

The MA Food Access Index: Introduction: Heidi Stucker, Food System Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Speakers: Jamie Fanous, Caitlin Matthews and Lexie Raczka, M.S. Candidates in Agriculture, Food, & Environment and M.A. Candidates in Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning, Tufts University

New tool to find where communities are underserved and who. MAPC is working with DPH and MA in Motion on this research. For anyone interested in assessing food access in other Massachusetts communities, contact hstucker@mapc.org

Report:

http://www.mapc.org/sites/default/files/Food%20Access%20Index%20Score%202016_DRAFT.pdf

Presentation:

http://www.mapc.org/sites/default/files/MAFPC_November10_Presentation.pdf

New Business

Announcements

Lauren Abda, Founder + CEO at Branchfood, <http://www.branchfood.com/> Innovations in Food Tech for Health panel will be held on Wed, November 16, 2016, 6:15 – 8:30 PM. In addition, on December 1, 2016, join Community Tables, 12 - 1 PM where the focus will be on food and entrepreneurship.

The next Meeting of the MA Food Policy Council will be on Friday, January 13, 2017, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA

Agriculture Day at the State House will be on April 4th, 2017.

The Western MA Food Processing Center is celebrating 15 years on November 18th, 2016, and everyone is invited!

A regulatory review for the retail food code is in process at the MA Department of Public, currently in the comment period: mass.gov/dph, follow the link to regulations to the proposed regulations including the retail food code. There will be two public comment hearings on both sides of MA the first week in December. A memo highlighted the key changes - to adopt the 2013 FDA food code, is included in the MA Local Food Action Plan. Written comments are also welcome.

Public comments - none

Adjournment 12:19

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Representative Steve Kulik and seconded by John Lee unanimously passed.