

**Minutes: Massachusetts Food Policy Council annual meeting
November 5, 2021, 9:30 – 11:30 am**

In attendance:

Representative Daniel Donahue
Bill Fredericks, Office of Senator Fattman
Amy Kershaw, Commissioner DTA
Representative Hannah Kane
John Lebeaux, Commissioner MDAR
Rob Leshin, ESE
Bobby Malinn, HED
Mackenzie May, Central MA Buy Local (partial)
Lea Susan Ojamaa, DPH
Commissioner Suuberg (and Danah Tench, MassDEP)
John Waite

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:35 AM by Chair and Commissioner John Lebeaux.

Acceptance of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes was made by John Waite, seconded by Commissioner Kershaw, and passed by voice vote: Representative Donahue, Bill Fredericks, Commissioner Kershaw, Representative Kane, Commissioner Lebeaux, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Lea Susan Ojamaa, Commissioner Suuberg, and John Waite. Commissioner Lebeaux welcomed Commissioner Suuberg and thanked him for his participation in this annual meeting which typically takes place at the state house.

MA Legislature's Food Caucus update: Representatives Hannah Kane and Daniel Donahue

The House voted last week on American Rescue Plan around priority areas including resiliency in the food system and support for the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG). The initial House bill is \$78M for this program. Some other items included in the earmark are \$15M for the Greater Boston Food Bank and their members, and \$1.9M to Project Bread to connect residents to SNAP. Separately, \$.5M is slated to help Gloucester to study the impact of climate change and food resources. There is also \$100,000 for NE Farm Workers Council for building capacity. In addition, there were many local priorities. Representative Donahue shared that legislation includes \$1.5M for Community Servings and \$500,000 for military families. Representative Kane thanked Rob Leshin for the partnership and the public signing event to celebrate legislation to support school meals and leveraging federal dollars. The Senate is working on ARPA funding. This work is carried by all members of the Caucus across the Commonwealth. Expectations are for more infrastructure funds to be available from the federal government.

Commissioner Lebeaux invited legislative members in attend to announce themselves and to share issues relating to the Food System. Comments included many thanks for the work of the MA Legislature's Food Caucus under the leadership of Senator Jo Comerford and Representative's Kane and Donahue, in addition to enthusiasm for ARPA work on the Senate side, and gratitude for partnerships to support food system work and legislation. Commissioner Lebeaux thanked all for sharing comments and joining the meeting.

Representatives:

Representative Natalie Bias
Representative Michelle Ciccolo
Representative Daniel Donahue
Representative Sally Kerans
Representative Tommy Vitolo

Senate staff office of:

Senator Sal DiDomenico, Christie Getto Young
Senator James Eldridge, Immaculate Mchome
Senator Fattman, Bill Fredericks
Senator Anne Gobi, Derek Silver and Lucas McDiarmid
Senator Adam Hines, John Gould and A.J. Enchill
Senator Jason Lewis, Zach Crowley
Senator Susan Moran, Tara Wilson
Senator Rodericks, Aide
Senator Rodrigues, Caitlin Rowley
Senator Bruce Tarr, Theodore Thomas
Senator Walter Timilty staff

House staff office of:

Representative John Barrett, Lisa Schifilliti
Representative Tackey Chan, Maeve Kidney
Representative Fernandes, Art Desloges
Representative Finn, Shayna Solomon
Representative Tami Gouveia, Emily Odgers
Representative Chris Hendricks, Karen Canfield
Representative Kane, Anna Darrow
Representative Mary Keefe, Kelsey Rode
Representative Paul Mark, Paige Dolinski
Representative Ngyugen, Christina Ekert
Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley, Chris Westfall
Representative Owen, Emerson Gagnon
Representative Sabadosa, Julia Mathis and Steven Mendoza
Representative Paul Schmid, Jessica Katon
Representative Stanley, James Zanghi

MA Food System Collaborative: Winton Pitcoff, Director. ARPA is of greatest concern and the Collaborative appreciates the attention it is receiving, including FSIG funds, conservation regarding urban ag and working lands, and farmers and food system workers being mentioned for premium pay for their work as essential workers during the pandemic. This wouldn't have happened without the MA Legislature's Food Caucus, organized just a few years ago and now with over 160 members.

The Collaborative is part of the team that will develop a state farmland action plan. An engagement process over the winter will study what is working including investments for access and protection, and to identify what is needed as a first step. There were many late summer and fall farm tours that connected legislators with farmers and farmers markets, to firsthand understand the good work being done and challenges. Legislators were encouraged to reach out to their agricultural constituents, and to growers to reach out to legislators for information sharing. The Collaborative met with the USDA

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) director about food incentive programs. Participants from around the country asked about the Massachusetts HIP program. Credit was given to leadership at MDTA and MDAR for this program. The Collaborative is working in Connecticut to develop a state food system plan. The Collaborative is working with NE feeding NE, with support from a USDA grant focused on producing more food in the region for a more secure food supply, especially in the face of climate change. Project research will lead to policy recommendations. If you'd like to participate in the quarterly calls, contact Winton at: winton@mafoodsystem.org

Program: Commissioner Lebeaux introduced Elizabeth Wiley, Executive Director, Marion Institute, who with a focus on racial equity and climate change and working with the Southcoast Food Policy Council, a program of the Marion Institute, presented key takeaways from their newly released 2021 Food System Assessment of Southeastern Massachusetts <https://www.marioninstitute.org/programs/sfpc/food-system-assessment> including the economic impact the region has on the state's food system.

Officers Reports – Chair: Commissioner Lebeaux shared an update on the Council's open seats with expectations that there will be movement since vacant administration staff positions have been filled. A bill was taken up by the legislature earlier this week which has moved to House Ways and Means to add a fisheries seat to the Council. For the Council's annual report, members were invited to share one or two pages that would be included as an addendum to describe the past year successes, challenges, policies and issues. It's been a remarkable year with food system disruption due to the pandemic. Commissioner Kershaw will develop a summary of the work of the Food Security Task Force. Danah Tench plans to include information on MassDEP's solid waste master plan.

Election of Officers -Vice Chair John Waite: Nominations were presented: Chair, Commissioner Lebeaux; Vice Chair, Mackenzie May; Secretary, Danah Tench. There were no nominations from the floor. Since there were no additional nominations and pursuant to Council bylaws, Commissioner Lebeaux confirmed this election as of the first meeting in 2022.

Commissioner Lebeaux discussed the **Nominating Committee**. The Chair of the Nominating Committee is the Council's Vice-Chair, John Waite at this meeting. The remaining four members were nominated from the floor. A motion by John Waite for the slate included himself, Danah Tench, Rob Leshin, Amanda Kinchla, and Mackenzie May. The motion was seconded by Representative Kane and passed by voice vote: Bill Fredericks, Commissioner Kershaw, Representative Kane, Commissioner Lebeaux, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Lea Susan Ojamaa, Commissioner Suuberg, and John Waite.

Commissioner Lebeaux discussed appointing three members to serve on the **Bylaws and Structure Committee** which include Danah Tench, Mackenzie May and John Waite who served on the committee previously and have agreed to remain. Anyone else who is interested can let Commissioner Lebeaux know, it's a great time to become more involved.

Bylaws and Structure Committee: Danah Tench shared that the new deadline for nominations for the **Advisory Committee** is November 30, and asked candidates to include which position they feel their experience best matches. There are discussions in progress with a philanthropic organization to explore stipends for Advisory Committee members.

Commissioner Lebeaux asked for a vote allowing the election of the **Advisory Committee** to move from this meeting to the next one. According to the bylaws this vote takes place during this annual meeting, however since outreach continues, the vote will move to the January meeting. A motion was made by

John Waite and seconded by Representative Kane with the following voice vote: Bill Fredericks, Commissioner Kershaw, Representative Kane, Commissioner Lebeaux, Rob Leshin, Bobby Malinn, Lea Susan Ojamaa, Commissioner Suuberg, and John Waite.

Commissioner Lebeaux commented on the tremendous support for the Council provided by Bonita Oehlke, but also recognized that she has other responsibilities in market development for MDAR. He shared his hope that the Advisory Committee might have some self-support. He discussed the possible stipend for Advisory Committee members, and how it's difficult relative to state law issues, though the opportunity is very much appreciated. John Waite commented that it might be able to work through the private sector.

MA Food Policy Council member updates: Council members share priority projects, topics, and issues relevant to their work, the Council, and the MA Local Food Action Plan

Commissioner Suuberg, complimented Danah Tench on her work for the Council and keeping MassDEP informed. He described MassDEP's on-going engagement process for the solid waste master plan. As initiatives develop, the Council will be informed. He mentioned Danah's new responsibility and title, head of the Clean Energy Results program, designed to link environmental protection with savings in clean energy through emissions reduction. Danah has been exploring connections to the food and agricultural industry. He complimented the Council's work. Commissioner Lebeaux shared that DEP has had important presentations in the past and looks forward to hearing more about this great work.

John Waite commented on the Western MA Food Processing Center's recent 20th anniversary celebration and appreciated MDAR Deputy Commissioner Ashley Randle attending. The Center has worked with over 500 businesses since then. He mentioned the challenge of supply issues lately, and how local has an important role in some of the distribution challenges.

Commissioner Lebeaux thanked John Waite for his work as vice chair. He also shared his appreciation to the Nominating Committee including John Waite, Mackenzie May, and Danah Tench. He mentioned that the FSIG has been extended until November 7 and looks forward to the program's long-term food system impacts. MDAR also received a grant for farm stress assistance.

Public Comment

Announcements

November 8 - 11, 2021 Northeast Sustainable Agriculture virtual ["It Takes a Region" conference](#)

December 3 – 9, 2021 Massachusetts Food System Forum: Reconnecting and Rebuilding
https://mafoodsystem.org/news/forum_2021_virtual/

January 28, 2022, Next MA Food Policy Council meeting

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Kershaw and seconded by John Waite with all in favor by voice vote: Bill Fredericks, Commissioner Kershaw, Anna Darrow, Commissioner Lebeaux, John Lee, Rob Leshin, Commissioner Suuberg, John Waite. **The meeting was adjourned at 11:07.**

Pursuant to the provisions for adequate alternative public access to agency hearings, set forth in Section 20 of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 and Governor Charles D. Baker's COVID Executive Order No. 1 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, dated March 12, 2020, which was extended by COVID Executive Order No. 69, Massachusetts Food Policy Council ("MFPC") meetings are being conducted through virtual means to allow real-time public access.