

Minutes Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting

Thursday, December 10, 2015, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Hogan Center at College of the Holy Cross Suite B/C – 4th Floor
1 College Street
Worcester, MA 01610

In attendance:

Diane Bernazzani, designee, Dept. of Public Health
Kerry Bowie, designee, Dept. of Environmental Protection
Jeff Cole, Direct to Farm Marketing
Amanda Kinchla, UMASS Extension Food Safety
Representative Steve Kulik
Commissioner John Lebeaux, MA Dept. of Ag Resources Commissioner
John Lee, Farmer
Rob Leshin, Dept of Elementary and Secondary Education
Frank Martinez Nocito, designee, Dept. of Transitional Assistance
Vivian Morris, Nutrition & public health expert, Boston Public Health Commission
John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center
Timothy Wilkerson, Ombudsman, MA Office of Housing and Development

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 AM. Chairman Lebeaux asked FPC members and attendees to introduce themselves.

Reading and approval of minutes: The minutes will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting since they were mistakenly not brought to the meeting.

Reports of Officers:

Report from Chair Lebeaux:

The past two years' focus on the MA Food System planning has been an opportunity to champion the cause of the FPC and to take leadership positions on issues that will help to build and strengthen the MA food system. The MA FPC has an opportunity to be invigorated by this opportunity and work collaboratively for issues that have the greatest impact.

This is an important moment to thank so many people who have been critical in this process.

Thank you to our funders:

Henry P. Kendall Foundation
Boston Foundation
Eos Foundation
Island Foundation
John Merck Fund Merck Family Fund

Thank you to over 1,500 stakeholders including
The Food Plan's Executive and Advisory Committee

*Legislators especially Representative Steve Kulik and Paul Schmidt
And all the early work of the MA Food Policy Alliance*

Thank you to:

*Marc Draisen and the staff at MAPC including Winton Pitcoff
and the collaborating contract partners including
MA Workforce Alliance
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission,
Franklin Regional Council of Governments,
Project Bread and Fertile Ground*

And finally Christa Drew and the MA FPC Advisory Committee who were early architects of the plan we have today.

And thank you to anyone who was inadvertently not given proper attention for their contributions.

John Waite shared thanked Bonita Oehlke and MDAR for all the work regarding the food systems planning.

A few announcements:

Helen Caulton Harris has resigned, who held the position of Local Health Department Representative. We are grateful for her deep knowledge and of her participation in the MA Food Policy Council. We acknowledge that priorities can change or extenuating circumstances can dictate how time is spent. If you have suggestions for her position, please forward them to Commissioner Lebeaux and we will send them to the Governor's office.

Proposed Dates for 2016 meetings: (Additional meetings can be added according to need:)

*Fri. March 10, Boston area
Fri. June 3 (site tba)
Fri. September 9, Worcester area
Fri. Dec 2, Boston area*

Commissioner Lebeaux noted to the Council that they received a copy of the Food Plan last Friday as a PDF file, according to the contract. The contract has the final printed plan as a deliverable for 12.23.15 but it is ready and will be provided today.

Vice Chair Report: Rep Steve Kulik also shared a thank you to all the stakeholders for their contributions to the development of the MA Food Systems Plan.

Unfinished Business

Report from MA Local Food Action Plan Planning Team

Marc Draisen: Executive Director, MAPC

Marc Draisen thanked the advisors and executive committee for the food plan systems, members of the Council and the many stakeholders in the food arena, as well as Commissioner Lebeaux and former

Commissioner Watson who focused on the conceptualization of the plan with support from MDAR staff Tara Zadeh and Bonita Oehlke. He also thanked his team leaders including Julie Conroy and Winton Pitcoff, as well as the whole team. He described the plan and noted though local is a cornerstone, there are broad implications and topics and so represents a blueprint going forward for many constituents. He challenged stakeholders to take on yearly priorities. There are many recommendations. Those topics that remained controversial do not have definitive recommendations. If consensus wasn't reached the level of consensus that was reached is also identified in the plan and suggestions around moving forward to reach consensus may be outlined. The plan also identifies actions that require funding and those that don't.

Each member of each team went through each section and identified the more important points as they understood them for today's presentation. Marc Draisen introduced Winton Pitcoff, and noted that it was a pleasure and honor to work together and to produce a document ahead of schedule and on budget.

Winton Pitcoff, Project Manager Metropolitan Area Planning Council and the team provided an update on the plan including:

David Elvin, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Eric Hove, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Mary Praus, Franklin Regional Council on Governments

Heidi Stucker, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Alex Risley Schroeder, Massachusetts Workforce Alliance

Winton Pitcoff noted he will talk about process and then content. The process included the two week comment period which started on Oct. 23, Food Day. There was good feedback but not a lot, which means to them that much of the plan was on target. One goal of the comment period was to provide a chance for outlying voices to be heard. Comments from some 45 people and organizations are included in the plan appendix as a result of the comment period. The team responded to each and every comment. Food Day event was a strong event to promote the goals and increase awareness of the plan. After the State House event, there was a panel at the Boston Public Market kitchen on the food plan that was standing room only. The plan is a consensus document with 120 pages of goals and recommendations. Some good press was generated, especially in western MA. The Food for Good conference with US Representative McGovern, in western MA, included an opportunity to promote the plan and discuss it with the Congressman. A legislative tour at the Franklin County CDC was another opportunity. There have had a number of meetings about implementation to make sure the report has a long life beyond today.

Winton Pitcoff said that the key to success is a team that works harder and is smarter than you and has a good sense of humor. The team has coded and created a relational matrix of all the recommendations which received positive feedback. He noted it was hard not to check every box because all items are connected and everything that is represented in the plan is an entry point to the initial goals set out for the plan.

Mary Praus focused on food plan goals related to increased food production. Increased production relies on access to land. We have some of the most fertile soils and the most expensive land costs in the nation and perhaps the world. A focus on encouraging more land trusts and municipalities to lease conservation land that they own to farmers would be helpful as well as encouraging the use of suitable publicly-owned land for farming. The real estate market isn't working for farmers. The

recommendations in this section formed early on in the process. There are existing programs that peck away at these recommendations but there needs to be a state wide concerted effort. These goals are closely tied to food production, equity and economic development. People, especially in urban areas, need to have affordable access to land. Potentially, municipalities could see a modest income stream that could be invested back into the land. These are achievable and tangible in the short - medium time frame. There should be a clearing house for available land. MAPC is working with the Baker Administration on open and underutilized land, beyond land for sale.

Question: Is there an inventory of land. Answer: some lists but not all encompassing. Work is underway and a clearing house could be a useful part of a larger system. They are also looking at churches, schools and private holders of land that could be available for leasing.

Winton Pitcoff reported on the farming group, a wide collection of people. What stayed at the top of the list was education and UMASS extension. Some remembered the days when Extension provided many services. The most sobering statistic is that Extension is supported at about 1/3 of the funds that it received in the 1980's. There needs to be more resources for Extension, especially around new Regulations. As they are promulgated there is a critical need for education so producers understand what is needed to comply. UMASS was identified in plan as the best option to provide that education. Extension came up in every working group and it is implicit in the plan that additional resources are required to make it work. Significant Council comment ensued on the need for a well funded and functioning Extension and University (in general) system, and in particular to implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act.

Heidi Stucker: Increasing local seafood supply and distribution in MA with a focus on developing markets and supporting healthy marine eco systems are important. MA ranks third nationally for value of seafood landing. UMASS Boston provides much of the research on shell fish. They and Green Harbor are doing oyster restoration projects in Wellfleet. Using underutilized species and invasive species such as green crab will also be important along with developing familiarity of these by MA residents. Market development in fact is pervasive among all the groups. Implementation will continue to support on-going programs as well as expanding those opportunities and expand local seafood markets. The suggestion that fisheries be represented on the FPC was noted. Comment noted financial figures include both on shore and off shore production and the opportunity to sell local fish locally.

David Elvin: Food Access, Security and Public Health to increase the role of anchor institutions to be able to support non-profit hospitals to increase the community benefits they provide. 2/3 of MA Hospitals are non-profit and must support community health. Veggie prescription programs and similar programs are very important. Healthcare without Harm will be documenting 80 programs across the state. A healthcare representative should be on the agenda or be included as a member. Vivian Morris notes: Boston Medical is helping families, especially younger families, by teaching cooking skills. There is opportunity for Hospitals to incorporate teaching kitchens to teach how to take what is available and turn it into healthy dinner.

Eric Hove: Inputs working group. Focus on surplus food and increasing food donations and the resulting economics of job creation, environmental benefits from reduction of waste, and equity. One in six children in MA is food insecure. There is important work going on now but the potential is there to be more effective. MA has put in place the commercial organic food ban - almost a million tons a year. EPA has an inverted triangle to reduce food waste to landfill the smallest amount. First step should be diversion. At the top of the list: limit waste of food grown in MA.

Alex Risley Schroeder: Two workforce development themes. 1) The need to have stronger relationships across all food sectors. 2) Better use of existing workforce development services. The workforce training grant to improve skills for employees is a concrete way of supporting businesses. Long term - two actions to meet evolving conditions - build career pathways and shared labor pools. Career pathway development meets both business and worker needs. These pathways meet both needs. She notes the marketing in the plan, the total value of businesses in the food system, and the overall economic development inherent in the plan, and points out appendix X is the entire report on workforce.

Food Plan discussion

Strategies for implementation for extension can include new leadership coming to Extension. MAPC and other RPAs are interested in helping to pursue the advocacy for UMASS and have a role including public education about what we have lost.

Following the money in the plan and where resources are will be part of implementation and he notes the Boston Public Market and Commonwealth Kitchen as resources.

The timing is good. With new leadership it's possible to engage the board of public overseers and Dean Goodwin about the role that extension can play. And there is action item for the Waltham Station and support of urban ag and homesteaders. FMSA rule info has gone out which is also serendipitous.

Nine Buy Locals believe in educating retailer and growers including all end users.

The excel spreadsheet was very helpful, developed by David Elvin.

MOBD is involved in external engagement during state regulation review and overhauls - to amend, repeal or renew of the 1,700 regulations. MOBD will pull out every regulation impacting the food plan recommendations as part of a larger plan relating to the past 12 months that will be given to Administration and Finance. Compared to other states, MA is actually is not heavily regulated. It means a lot to be able to cite specific regulations that need to be tweaked or updated to reflect the 21st century. People understand the importance of this plan and everyone who helped to produce the report, including state agencies, should be congratulated.

Discussion ended and Commissioner Lebeaux asked for official action by the council.

Moved to accept the MA Local Food Action Plan as the completed final deliverable, prepared in accordance with the terms of the contract between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council was made by John Lee and Seconded by Representative Kulik. **The motion carried on unanimous voice vote.**

New Business

Implementation discussion

Cris Coffin, American Farmland Trust & Jessica del Rosario, MA Convergence Partnership

Implementation Discussion: There is an implementation chapter with three bodies: FPC, legislative caucus, and a collaborative body of engaged stakeholders. What is this collaborative body? The plan steering committee was engaged to think about this and propose the name of the body be: MA Food System Collaborative, whose purpose is to promote and facilitate the implementation of this plan by taking advantage of the momentum and engagement that has happened so far.

Between now and March is the creation phase with year one of action starting in March. For the interim, the proposal is to utilize those of the existing leadership, who choose to serve, as well as other people who have been engaged including the plan, to create a steering committee and advisory committee to lead organizing around implementation. A focus will be to round out the Collaborative to have the expertise and skills needed including racial, geographic and gender diversity. A proposed early focus for this collaborative is;

- 1) outreach and network building, building awareness of the plan, and education,
- 2) working with the FPC and legislature to advance early focus areas
- 3) work with partners across the state and develop a budget and then funding to work on plan implementation.

In the very short term, a fiscal agent will be secured as well as fundraising. Winton has been engaged for this interim period to maintain momentum and think through from process of planning to process of implementation including an RFR and a goal to have the person in place by the end of 2016.

A number of people have been involved in these discussions. The purpose is to foster implementation actions in the plan along with activity well beyond immediately communicating the plan. Work areas include a focus on opportunities and gaps, e.g. identifying where there are not organizations and networks already working and determining what can be done to advance those goals, and how best to support existing work. For example farm to school already exists so maybe there is no need for significant action except to partner where help is needed.

One of the first things is to identify who is doing what in the plan. Then understand where the collaborative best puts forth its efforts based on need and opportunity to focus. For example, one of the early things we might help with is working with the administration on the regulations. Other elements to resolve include clarifying the relationship with the FPC. This evolving conversation includes being supportive of the FPC and taking steps towards implementation and to advocate for FPC priorities. A close and constructive engagement with the FPC assumes there will be regular dialogue and discussions.

Discussion:

Comment from Jeff Cole: It was noted that previous speakers have said FPC should identify priorities. The plan's Executive Committee does not like the term priority and has said it is more helpful and accurate instead to identify areas of focus and that those areas should be generated through the metrics of reasonable, achievable, long-term, short-term, and importance to each of the main goals.

Response: Yes and there will be opportunities for new participants and significant projects with many stakeholders to move discrete parts of the food forward. This is intended to be broad and collaborative - see Jessica - Winton or Cris if you are interested. The funders who have made a commitment to help this collaborative move forward were thanked.

Question from Jay Harrison: What is the connectivity and communication for state level work? How will the community based work fall out? In Lynn for example, there is an effort to use some of these recommendations. How will grass level work connect with this group and the Food Policy Council?

Response: This is an early stage of implementation. We are in the early stages of figuring out how we want to be supportive of local efforts and how we can. You'll hear more about this but we are also interested to hear what you suggest. How can the collaborative be supportive of local efforts? Should listening sessions be considered?

Response: The process is not just about connecting groups with the plan but also lifting up some of the great work that is being done and connecting these groups - maybe communities of practice - creating those kinds of connections - and then building a base.

Question: What's the process for establishing costs in the plan?

Response: That will be part of the implementation process and will occur where there is leadership and champions. Some items are no cost as well as some with larger price tags.

Comment from Representative Kulik: This is very exciting and the collaborative could be very helpful. There has been a small group of legislators in these conversations and there will be outreach to have more. Grass roots efforts would help build legislative support, especially for low and no cost items in the short term. The legislative caucus has been rejuvenated now with 60 members and perhaps a subcommittee with food and land issues will help develop legislation. There may be constraints this year since revenue is coming in below expectation. The FPC and the new group can help with areas of focus. There is gratitude for taking the momentum from this plan to move forward.

Comment from Commissioner Lebeaux: It makes sense to strike while the iron is hot. There's a lot of enthusiasm. The Governor's office is interested in the plan. This is a multiyear process but it makes sense to get the ball rolling. FPC members should identify initial focus items. It's a short timeline, but with some areas of focus suggested the FPC can weigh in and vote on what to pursue, and publically discuss the plan with the speaker, senate, and the Governor. Winton is available as a resource and can help agencies or with the Council as a whole.

Comment from Tim Wilkerson: The Food System is evolving ways that can be identified by sectors as mature, emerging and start-up fields. It makes sense to think of using technology and think about how we can collaborate and also lead by finding holes for legislative leaders. Workforce development backbone can be supported by using the state's vocational schools.

Comment from Frank Martinez-Nocito: Continuing between the plan's Executive Committee and this new group will be helpful. What will be the future of the Advisory Committee to the Council?

Commissioner Lebeaux challenged the FPC for next steps. He asked agency and all members to review relevant sections of the plan and report out 10 - 12 priorities at the next FPC meeting. Agency members can identify principles in the plan that aligns with each agency.

Exploring synergies with the Massachusetts Food System Plan

Donna Lombardi, Director of Nutrition, Worcester Public Schools

Tim Gray, Food Service Administrator, Springfield Public Schools

Mark Jeffrey, Sodexo District Manager, Springfield Public Schools
Andrea Silbert, Eos Foundation
Scott Richardson, Northbound Ventures

Eos was an early funder of the MA Food Plan.

The work of school foodservices is cross cutting with all topics in the food plan with a focus to fight hunger in MA. What can be done significantly and sustainably in MA? Universal free breakfast before the bell programs are hard to implement and funding is needed. Breakfast in the Classroom is a game changer and Eos has a \$12,500 grant to any school for Breakfast in the Classroom.

Recommendations:

- 1) Help Eos get more school buy-in
- 2) Create no less than 3 school commissary kitchens using local food to bring economy of scale to local, healthy food preparation.

There are built in preferences for locally grown and limited availability of product for Breakfast in the Classroom programming. It would be helpful to strip away the nuances and create a healthy atmosphere. With the implementation of central kitchens there will be capacity to provide more scratch cooking and shift schools away from the pre-packaged foods.

Springfield is further along in a commissary process - bonded for a warehouse - to support Springfield school program that will incorporate student learning and reduce costs and logistics.

Sodexo envisions these commissaries as nutrition and training centers to support Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC). Sodexo is in the middle of a three year rollout plan. The challenge is a sustainable source of local products to support BIC. They have to be ahead of the curve to prepare breakfast and need new products that meet all the nutritional and other requirements. Most schools currently have no ability to dovetail farm to school other than putting an apple or other non processed food on the menu. In the field to freezer program; there is often inadequate freezer space and difficulty putting scratch cooking BIC to be able to serve breakfast the next day.

The foodservice industry is very low margin and even lower in schools. How can more local product be used and provide sustainability to farmers as well as to school meal programs? Scale is needed Regional assets may bring meaningful economics of scale for smaller districts. There will be a scan of assets, looking at existing capacity in existing facilities and other partnerships, with a highlight where the benefits and needs are to inform what distributors are looking for.

Rob Leshin thanked Eos and the presenters for introducing this concept to the FPC. He is supportive of this program and noted that Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). This is MA's 3rd year participation, based on direct certification. MA has 50 districts and 20% of students in MA attend a CEP school. Of these 200,000 students, 25% attend Worcester and Springfield Public Schools, a testament to their work and the need of the commissary discussion to be able to increase the quantity of the meals and increase the quality.

Question: Do the commissaries and their location relate to the supply chain? Do they need to be new construction or can they utilize existing dormant structures that would be fitted with new kitchens. Could City Fresh be a part of it?

Answer: Dormant properties in the city can be reviewed to try to utilize the assets that community has. They envision three regions in the state, organized to make the delivery of the food efficient. Private partnerships should be looked at.

Comment from Kerry Bowie: We don't want to cannibalize existing capacity and should consider a build out of existing infrastructure before building new.

Comment from John Waite: Each kitchen has its own set of resources. Seasonality of local produce, storage, transportation, and staffing are important. Some of these assets might exist in schools now. In Springfield it's a 12 month program so Field to Freezer is very important.

Comment from Donna Lombardi: As our structure strengthens, we can utilize root vegetables but storage facilities are required. For example, processed potatoes are no longer on the menu, her staff cooks fresh potatoes.

Tim Wilkerson commented that the MA Works Program may be source of funding for freezers.

Member Announcements- None

Public Access- None

Motion to adjourn made by Vivian Morris and seconded by Kerry Bowie at 12:45 PM. Motion carried on voice vote.