

Minutes: Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting

Tuesday, September 8, 2015, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

100 Cambridge Street, Rooms C & D, 2nd Floor, Boston

Marion Browning, Dept of Elementary and Secondary Education

Jeff Cole, Direct to Farm Marketing

Jana Ferguson, Deputy Director, Dept. of Public Health

Amanda Kinchla, UMASS Extension Food Safety

Representative Steve Kulik

Commissioner John Lebeaux, MA Dept. of Ag Resources

Commissioner Jeff McCue, Dept. of Transitional Assistance

Vivian Morris, Nutrition & public health expert, Boston Public Health Commission

Commissioner Martin Suuberg, Dept. of Environmental Protection

John Waite, Western MA Food Processing Center

Timothy Wilkerson, Ombudsman, MA Office of Housing and Development

The meeting began at 9:50 AM.

Reading and approval of the minutes: Representative Kulik made a motion to approve the minutes which was seconded by Commissioner Jeff McCue. Motion carries on unanimous voice vote.

Reports of Officers: Chairman and Commissioner Lebeaux thanked FPC members who traveled from western MA to attend the FPC meeting in Boston. He noted the work that has gone into the food plan, the opportunity for FPC to comment and the public unveiling of the plan on Food Day, Oct 23, 2015 with opportunity for further public comment.

All FPC members introduced themselves. Guest Commissioner George Peterson, MA Dept. of Fish & Game, was recognized and Jason Wentworth, new deputy Commissioner at MDAR was introduced.

Rep Kulik shared comments about this important time for the FPC, based on stimulating discussions over the years to get to this point in the MA Food Systems planning. He also recognized the FPC Advisory Committee and thanked FPC members for their commitment moving forward.

Unfinished Business

Statewide Food Systems Planning: Winton Pitcoff, MAPC lead facilitator, gave a history of the MA Food System Plan. Advisory Committee and Working Group members in attendance were acknowledged. The main goals of the food systems plan were reviewed including the chapters, matrix of goals and recommendations, and actions. Upcoming deadlines include Food Day on October 23, when there will be a public release of the draft plan and request for comments. On Dec 4th a draft is due to the FPC and on December 23, the final plan. There is still time for agencies to submit comments and Winton offered to meet with agency staff as needed. Included in the final plan will be a statement of existing conditions, a matrix for sorting findings and recommendations, and a section on metrics to measure the health of our food system.

Some 60 individuals and organizations have provided comments on every section. Questions were asked about the process for differing strong opinions. In many cases there has been a facilitated discussion with the individuals. Only two issues are unresolved at this time. The result has been a plan

that succeeds in delivering a consensus plan that is composed of meaningful and actionable items. In order include all input; differing opinions will be catalogued in an appendix.

Though the plan is organized by sections, systemic themes have emerged.

- Need for education, research, and technical assistance.
- Need for regulation to be reviewed and fine tuned through a regular process that is open and transparent.
- Need for Economic Development creating sustainability
- Need for equity
- Need for environmental consideration
- Need for networking, communication, collaboration – especially important as we move into implementation.

Commissioner Peterson thanked the group for including fisheries as a part of the plan and the opportunity to collaborate moving forward. Several FPC members applauded the work completed on the MA Food Systems Plan. Representative Kulik shared the same sentiment and noted the opportunity to move forward apart from federal fishing regulations.

John Wait commented on the strong networking that is already happening as a result of the engagement process and Working Groups.

Commissioner McCue commented on the strong process and positive status of the plan. An early implementation task can be to look at procurement policies in state agencies to be able to increase purchases of local products. He emphasized metrics were important to be able to measure progress.

Vivien Morris shared that the work has been outstanding and has met expectations as a robust plan with has equity held throughout. Continuing the Working Groups in some form should be considered, as well as a focus on local community involvement.

An implementation discussion ensued which covered possible models, working structures, noted some existing networks and opportunities for further networking, stated the need to be sure there is grass roots involvement along with FPC, state and local agency, and legislative activity , and the need for metrics and targets:

Amanda Kinchla mentioned the importance of the FSMA rule being out in terms of a point of transition which will require state and regional planning efforts. Educational and technical assistance initiatives are needed to help small growers and processors through this phase. Though many growers will be exempt, their customers will require a plan. Retailers require food safety documentation.

Jana Ferguson noted the wide range of the Food Plan scope and was interested to hear how some of the intractable positions were addressed. She emphasized the need for networking where there are overlaps and opportunities to collaborate for education and technical assistance, considering that food safety is a critical component of the viability of the food and ag system.

Commissioner Suuberg commented on the plan's strong education and outreach focus, considering the agencies interest in stakeholders including municipalities and associations regarding use of food waster including anaerobic digestion and promoting compliance.

FINI Update: Frank Martinez Nocito, Department of Transitional Assistance: On April 1, DTA was awarded a USDA Grant through FINI - an interdepartmental effort with DTA and MDAR and a broad coalition of statewide partners to expand the pilot HIP project to service participants statewide, building off a national best practice and a first in the nation with a new incentive to SNAP clients. Project design - this will be a 100% match for each SNAP dollar spent at farm stands, farmers markets, mobile markets and CSAs. The incentives are calculated and applied to clients EBT cards and would be available immediately. The maximum benefit will be tapped on monthly bases on a household side, 40, 60 or \$80. The overall HIP project goal is to reduce barriers to participation barriers at these four points of sale, and inform opportunity for future programs. FINI is currently in the planning and start up phase with a five year grant with some overlapping phases. The implementation will begin on April 1, 2017 for three years. While the focus is on fresh produce, canned, dried or frozen product is eligible. The program ends March 2020. There are a number of stakeholder meetings coming up at the end of the month and the schedule will be forwarded on if anyone wants to sit in. Webinars will also be available. FINI will be included on the next FPC agenda when there can be more focus on this initiative. DTA feels fortunate for the partnerships in this statewide initiative. Several FPC members commended DTA for this initiative.

New Business

Update on the MA Food Trust: Next steps were provided by Maddie Ribble, Policy Director, MA Public Health Association, a broad and diverse membership group across the state comprised by folks who care about food access. The MA Food Trust Program has passed but has not been funded yet. Other states are being used as models on how to comingle funds.

The initial focus had been on food retail but this program is much broader and looks at many other food ventures. Flexible financing to meet community needs for new retailers and jobs in low and moderate income facilities with loans, grants and technical assistance are included. Data shows many communities don't have strong access to healthy food. Over a million MA residents live in low and moderate communities - in almost every rural community and many urban areas. The program awaits funding appropriation.

Member Announcements

MDAR, Rose Arruda: Food Day at the State House, Friday, October 23 Announcement of Food Plan, There are over 600 Food Day related activities being planned across the state this year, including the release of the MA Food Systems plan at the State House 9:30 - 11:30 AM, followed by a discussion about the plan at the Boston Public Market kitchen "Let's Talk About Food," 12 - 1 PM. Last year the Food Plan was kicked off on Food Day, so it's come full circle.

Commissioner Lebeaux suggested that the FPC may accept rather than adopt the MA Food Systems Plan when it is completed in December, since there may be some conflicting points of view. The next meeting of the FPC will be after final draft is delivered to the FPC. There after the next work will be implementation plan. It will take a life on its own and some things will happen organically, but the FPC should find a number of recommendations that we have consensus on as priorities and how we may put them into action.

Public Access

Betsy Johnson, Springfield asked about the Food Trust and how it overlaps with the 5 year old Pioneer Valley Loan fund which has a process for applications, assessment, granting awards and raising private funds. The Food Trust is being respectful of donors that support existing programs

Courtney Bourns, Henry P. Kendall Foundation commended the progress that's been made with the MA Food Plan. One of her questions has been about implementation. We have been supporting these processes in the 6 states. Knowing that it is owned is very important. What will be the FPC's ownership of the plan? What would be the process and some of the foundation funders are going to discuss some models and we can help share some models.

Rep. Kulik asked for regional examples.

Vermont was citing as having a strong plan housed in the VT Sustainable Jobs Fund. In RI, the FPC has no agency representative but there is an auxiliary agency council so there are two distinct councils working to create goals together.

In New England, no two states and plans have been the same. MA plan will look different than other plans with more narrow goals. A dispersed model with a several key players that are working on key parts that will stay connected might be how it will work in MA. There are some non government goals as well as some that are only for agencies, so there will be a need for outside advocacy relating to legislative issues.

Tim Wilkerson: October is National Manufacturing Month with a focus on the story of the rebirth of manufacturing in MA. He seeks food processors that allow visitors to their facilities to be involved with this promotion that will have specific activities.

J Harrison, Food Project, commented that the information gathered for the Food Plan was well done and hopes there will be a correlating sharing process on the other side of the plan, and offered his assistance.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:51 PM with a motion made by Representative Kulik and seconded by John Waite which passed unanimously.