

## Minutes: Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting

Friday, May 6, 2016 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Field Headquarter  
Richard Cronin Building of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
Southeast Conference Room, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough

In attendance:

Anne Gobi, Senator

Nicolas John, chief of staff, Representative Kulik

Commissioner John Lebeaux, MA Dept. of Ag Resources Commissioner

John Lee, Farmer

Rob Leshin, designee, Dept of Elementary and Secondary Education

Nico Lusting, designee, Western MA Food Processing Center

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

Frank Martinez Nocito, designee, Dept. of Transitional Assistance

Lea Susan Ojamaa, designee: Dept. of Public Health

Martha Sweet, designee, Direct to Farm Marketing

Danah Tench, designee: Dept. of Environmental Protection

Timothy Wilkerson, designee, MA Office of Housing and Development

Mark Reil, District Director, Senator Ryan Fattman

The meeting was **called to order** at 9:40AM by FPC Chair John Lebeaux.

Jack Buckley, Director of the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, welcomed attendees to the new facility and described major programs. Introductions were made of both the MA FPC and attendees. Vivien Morris was appointed as the secretary for this meeting.

A **motion to accept the minutes** from March 10 was made by John Lee and seconded by Frank Martinez Nocito and passed unanimously.

Commissioner and Chairman Lebeaux reported dates for the next two meetings: Thursday, July 14<sup>th</sup> 9:30 – 12:30 AM, Worcester Union Train Station and Friday, September 9, 9:30 – 12:30, Tower Hill Botanical Garden, Boylston. An electronic version of the FPC goals was sent earlier, however priorities for the Boston Health Commissioner were mistakenly omitted. The document will be updated and resent.

### **FPC Food Plan/Implementation Discussion**

Chairman Lebeaux summarized the process that led to the FPC list of MA Local Food Action Plan priorities document. He summarized the previous process and discussions to provide the list of FPC member priorities to the administration, general court and public, as well as a summary. Representative Kulik previously suggested that it would be efficient to have a document with priorities listed in tiers from each FPC member including contact information to be submitted to the Governor's office. He asked for recommendations for how to promote this document to legislators such as shared priorities and a smaller summary document with an appendix. He thanked FPC members for their heavy

lift on this process, since everyone has a full plate already. The next steps are important and will be very reflective of cross agency collaboration.

**Discussion:** A suggestion was made to include timelines; however it is difficult for state agencies to be in control of a timeline. If a refined list is made, some items with time limits could be identified to give some momentum to the process for rapid implementation.

Commissioner Lebeaux suggested that MDAR could develop a summary document to share with the FPC at least two weeks before the next meeting. There could be a vote to accept the document. A FPC member suggested lead time greater than two weeks would be better.

Commissioner Lebeaux suggested that the FPC consider: Action 1.3.2.11 from the Plan: Develop an inventory of all State programs that relate to food and identifying synergistic opportunities for the allocation of State resources to best meet the goals of the Plan. He suggested that this inventory could lead to further recommendations about State agency budget and administrative priorities, and efficient coordination among State agencies. This objective assignment might inventory some food programs that are not well known, and we could begin right away.

EOEHD has begun to map innovation throughout the state which will include data regarding the width and breath of food processing in the state.

A motion was made to advance the FPC priorities from the MA Local Food Action Plan to Secretary Beaton for discussion and in the interest of time, discuss a summary listing of priorities at the next FPC meeting. The motion was made by Senator Ann Gobi and seconded by Tim Wilkerson. Discussion: A point of clarification was made: for a future summary document, it would be helpful to eliminate repetition in the priorities list. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **MA Food Plan Collaborative** update, Winton Pitcoff

Winton noted his appreciation for the work that all has been done and is willing to help with summarization.

The Collaborative was invited to submit their list of priorities to the Governor's office for early action in February. A briefing to the Legislative Caucus was held at Ag Day and was tied closely to the Ag Omnibus Bill. The Collaborative has taken the lead to support fund raising to meet the match for the HIP grant, including the circulation of a sign on letter that generated 53 signatures to ask legislators to support partial funding in the state budget to help meet the match. Senator Gobi will sponsor the bill. Participants from the urban ag engagement process have been convened to hear updates relating to the Action Plan. An upcoming meeting will focus on the many areas of economic development in the Action Plan to identify public resources that could be more targeted towards the food sector and to build awareness of the available programs and services. The National Ad Council is focusing on food waste. The Collaborative plans to put a MA spin on the campaign. The Collaborative will hire a mediator for a priority project to resolve tensions between local BOH and growers. The goal is to have a framework by the end of the year. On the organizational development side, an updated website is in progress to make the food plan easier to find contacts, see program and as a portal for food system advocacy in the state. There is a strong steering committee and support from foundations. The overall mission of the Collaborative is to promote, monitor and facilitate the plan.

## **New Business**

Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante: H2736- An Act establishing the Executive Office of Food Resources and Security

Representative Ferrante described this bill which was filed to streamline the process for regulatory and efficiency of resources for MA growers and food producers. She will share a copy of the bill with FPC members. There may be opportunities to meet the legislation goals within existing frameworks.

**Discussion:** A streamlined approach is important, but how does it solve the compliance issues? An ombudsmen to handle all the non compliance issues would be helpful. Agencies with opposing policies could collaborative review criteria. Biotech and health services get immediate attention compared to growers and fishermen, though in many cases, the issues are more immediate and require a quick response. The food systems planning process identified some of these topics. A survey and analysis of all of the food programs in state agencies and a food policy coordinator position are included for example. State agencies have differences in contracting for example, and farmers and businesses getting different guidance from municipalities and agencies.

A significant problem is that many of the local boards of health almost have personality cults. It would be very helpful to have a mediator or ombudsman, especially in the situation of ignorant opinions which is extremely frustrating and expensive. The MA Office of Housing and Economic Development are working to be proactive and may create another ombudsman position. It's important to look for better ways to provide service at the local level. A uniform approach to permitting and streamline and making the process more predictable is critical.

## **Program**

Peter Allison, Farm to Institution New England (FINE) & Simca Horwitz, MA Farm to School:  
New England Farm to Institution Shared Metrics Project & the MA Farm to Institution Sales Report  
Farm to Institution connections with the MA Local Food Action Plan priority recommendations

Schools in general are looking to buy more local food over time. Around 21 - 17% of the food from those responding to the survey that was described is local. Hospitals are including contract language for local in the cafeterias and patient foodservice. All this information will be on the FINE website by early spring. MA Farm to School has been creative and successful with support from several partners including MDAR with a legislative line item, which hopefully will remain. Close to \$3M in sales have been generated for 22 MA growers through the Farm to School program, double since 2010. The number of farms reporting the sales has gone down which reflects issues of distribution and aggregation. More MA growers are filling the gap to aggregate and distribute products. Institutions want product year round and processed products can fill that void. State legislation encourages preferential purchase of local institutions. MA Farm to Institution cuts all across the MA Local Food Action Plan. In many cases, this work is ongoing but it's important that funding support continues.

Rob Leshin thanked Simca for the presentation and commented on the long term partnership that continues to grow. Trainings are coming at the end of the month on many relevant topics. On the procurement side, the USDA FNS NE Regional Office has a Farm to Everything program and a point of contact. All seven offices across that US have contacts. School food production is big business. Foodservice directors in MA are encouraged to run their operations like a business. Headway has been made for a more global approach. Some 80 - 90 of the over 400 school districts in the state use a

foodservice company, so the majority is run by independent operators. Procurement continues to be under review in the state and nationally. There is interest to expand sales from local growers.

**Discussion:** Connecting farms with institutions and creating access with low -income communities is important. What are some of the challenges regarding capacity and resources? The earmark from MDAR is about a third of the budget. To increase capacity across the state MA Farm to School is working on a statewide network for greater information sharing for all partners, and have included a leadership team. There is unlimited innovation and technology in the state and the network will help harvest and distribute that information. The MA Farm to School website and dashboards were complimented.

Considering the barriers, why are institutions still interested? FINE is asking those questions now - to understand which values are most important to which constituency. Education or local economic development may be reasons. It's not universal across the board - college is more driven to serve local compared to hospitals. Community benefits are a hospital obligation that perhaps could be met with local food. Successful models include Vermont, having integrated approaches across all three sectors with clear benchmarks. In Maine, local FPCs have been the drivers. RI has cracked many of the codes relating to procurement. In Oregon, there is additional reimbursement for meals with local ingredients – an interesting funding mechanism. Simca Horowitz and MA Farm to School were complemented by John Lee and graciously thanks for her work over the years and continued commitment.

### **Member Announcements**

Senator Gobi reported on the Omnibus Ag Bill that passed in the senate

Tim Wilkerson shared that the Rural Commission will meet on June 10th in Greenfield. He will report back for any synergies with the FPC and the MA Local Food Action Plan.

**A motion to adjoin** the meeting was made by John Lee and seconded by Rob Leshin. The meeting ended 11:35 AM.