

Eighth Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting

Friday, December 7, 2012 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM at the Trustees of Reservations' Doyle Center, Leominster, MA

In attendance:

Kerry Bowie, Department of Environmental Protection
Jeff Cole, Federation of MA Farmers Markets
Manny Costa, Costa Produce
Frank Carlson, Carlson Orchards
Andrea Freeman, Public Health Advocate representative
Katie Millet, MA Department of Education
Frank Martinez Nocito, Department of Transitional Assistance
Alex Rittershaus, Representative Ferguson's Office
Greg Watson, Commissioner, MA Department of Agricultural Resources

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 AM. Dave Altman, Conservation Specialist, welcomed the group on behalf of the Trustees of the Reservation with a brief overview, noting that Trustees of the reservation seek not only to protect land but also to maintain its productivity.

Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Katie Mille and seconded by Manny Costa. The motion passed on unanimous voice vote.

Reports of Officers:

- a. Commissioner Watson, FPC Chair, noted budget cuts, the hiring freeze /delay in Department staffing, and the difficult news of cuts in funding for Buy Local organizations.
- b. Vice Chair - none
- c. Secretary – none beyond minutes

Reports of Standing Committees

- a. Advisory Committee: The proposed annual report was presented by Cris Coffin. She noted committee work began in March 2012 with work related to the Grocery Task Force report, the committee recommendation that a broader perspective be developed regarding food access, and concluding with committee work regarding a FPC strategic plan. **A motion to accept the report was made by Manny Costa and seconded by Andrea Freeman. The motion passed on voice vote.**
- b. Bylaws Committee: The proposed annual report was presented by Jeff Cole. **A motion to accept the report was made by Alex Ritterhaus and seconded by Frank Carlson. The motion passed on voice vote.**
- c.. Nominating Committee: The annual report was presented by Manny Costa. **A motion to accept the report was made by Jeff Cole and seconded by Kerry Bowie. The motion passed on voice vote.**

Reports of Special Committees -none

Special Orders

Adoption of Annual Report: Commissioner Watson asked for a motion to adopt the annual report as a compilation of the Committee annual reports as well as the minutes of the FPC meetings, all of which will be posted online. **A motion**

to so adopt pending compilation and final review by the FPC in January by electronic means (and open meeting provisions) was made by Jeff Cole and seconded by Kerry Bowie. The motion passed on voice vote.

Elections of Officers: Officers serve for two years and no action is required at this time. Officers for the upcoming year will continue to be Chair: Commissioner Watson as the Chair; Representative Steve Kulik as the Vice Chair; and Jeff Cole as the Secretary.

Election of Nominating Committee: The Nominating Committee serves for one year. Commissioner Watson asked if there were any nominations and having none, if the current Committee would continue for another year. **A motion to continue with the existing nominating committee was made by Katie Millet and seconded by Jeff Cole. The motion passed on unanimous voice vote.** - Nominating Committee; chaired by Representative Kulik, Frank Carlson, Cheryl Bartlett, Frank Martinez Nocito, and Manny Costa.

Appointment of By Laws Committee: The By Laws Committee serves for one year. Commissioner Watson asked if there were nominations and being none, asked the current Committee to continue for another year. **A motion was made by Manny Costa to continue with the existing committee and seconded by Frank Martinez Nocito. The motion passed on voice vote.** Nominating Committee will be Jeff Cole, Representative Kulik and John Lee.

Advisory Committee Members: This Committee serves for two years, and no action is required at this time.

Unfinished Business and General Orders

Christa Drew presented a report from the Advisory Committee re: next steps on drafting a framework for a statewide comprehensive strategic food system plan focused on enhanced connectivity (networking) but not creating a new network, using a core team and advisory team approach. The report detailed a potential process for stakeholder and agency involvement, an estimated timeline over 18 months, the need for and potential availability of financial resources and a general framework for goals and objectives related to improving Massachusetts food and farm resiliency, and nutritional health. The plan includes four phases followed by two additional years of collaboration and looking for continuing funds. The implementation structure was discussed in some detail, including proposed roles and responsibilities of those involved including the project phases.

Christa thanked the philanthropic community for their generous support of the process .

Kerry Bowie moved that the recommendations/plan be accepted, pending receipt of budget information, in particular regarding income and expense related to the \$100,000.00 base. Katie Millet seconded motion. Extensive discussion followed.

The FPC was asked to make recommendations regarding the core team to ensure inclusive representation, including key legislators, in the process.

Noted:

Outreach must be actively made to stakeholders and allow for engagement in a manner comfortable for them.

The goals of the plan must align with the FPC legislation.

Inclusion criteria have yet to be established in terms of “core team” participants and for observers but the expectations are for a process that includes FPC members and requires cross sector participants.

Need to address the question: How do you balance the local food system with the greater food system?

We don't have all the right people involved yet and that certain elements, such as sustainable fisheries which is an important part of the food system, may be very difficult to address concurrently.

The private sector must be included.

The MA Restaurant Association, the MA Food Association and others will be invited.

The New England Produce Council should be engaged.

Many large retailers are interested in supporting local food and healthy choices and need to be included. Can DTA facilitate this?

The concept of the food systems includes community gardens, and micro/hyper local groups.

It is critical to bring people on as early as possible in the process.

A commitment from each FPC member to support these efforts and provide both leadership and work to our Advisory Committee is needed.

Concluded:

A "map" or list of group categories and definition of the elements of the broader committee would be helpful.

That FPC members can/should help with outreach.

Guidelines on communications between the FPC and the Advisory Committee, and FPC connectivity with the advisory team for the core team are needed as soon as possible and hopefully before March.

A Meeting with FPC members and Advisory Committee members in January is needed and a brief document to share and put on the website would be very helpful.

Approval of the plan is inclusive of the requirement that the FPC be included in the plan/implementation structure, and such must define FPC participation and commitment.

The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

New Business - none

Program:

Commissioner Watson introduced Dave Bishop and Chris Lawton, director of Knowledge Exchange, Farm Credit East, who presented data about "The overlooked economic engine, Northeast Agriculture "

Industries that directly contribute to/impact farms such as, sawmills and veterinary are included but not secondary, like restaurants for example. Main and Vermont are not included in the report since they are both serviced by sister credit organizations. Cash field crops can be described as row commodity crops e.g. silage. Ag retail is direct marketing though there is more to ag than fresh vegetables. Equine and livestock are included.

Note: The age of farmers or the number of new farmers not included since USDA tracks that data and that there are many definitions of farming and agriculture (which prompted FPC discussion regarding what agriculture is/is not and the multiple definitions present in MA law). This study purposefully broadly inclusive of the various forms of ag.

Farm Credit East has some specific programs targeted to young, beginning and small farmers, but as a total group. Support for beginning and young farmers is part of their mission.

The full study is available upon request.

Chris Lawton was invited by the FPC Advisory Committee to be a part of the data team for the statewide plan moving forward.

Good of the Order:

Upcoming FPC meeting schedule

March 1, 9:30 – 12:30, location to be confirmed

The program will include: A blueprint for urban agriculture, Boston Redevelopment Authority

Member Observations or points of discussion relevant to the work of the Council

Frank Martinez Nocito: The Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) is now in its 14th month of implementation. MA was the only state in the country to be chosen for this program, a cooperative agreement with USDA, that is measuring a 30% incentive for the purchase of fruits and vegetables. Five reports are forthcoming, including access points for SNAP recipients. An update can be provided at the March FPC meeting.

Jeff Cole: Ag Day at the State House is April 2. It is a good opportunity for the FPC to share an update. The Harvest New England Marketing Conference and Trade Show will be held February 26 - 28, 2013 in Sturbridge.

Commissioner Watson: The first Urban Farming Conference - "Cultivating Lands, Nourishing Communities, Building Businesses" will be held Saturday, February 9, 2013, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm at the Roxbury Community College Reggie Lewis Center in Boston.

Andrea Freeman: A Food Trust Report will be available in January with Grocery Store Task Force recommendations. It will be available on-line and on MPHA website.

Katie Millet: The MA Department of Education received a new grant from USDA for farm to school.

Public Access:

Betsy Johnson promoted the NE SWAG meeting which was rescheduled after Hurricane Sandy to February 10 - 12, 2013 in Saratoga: nefood.org In terms of the upcoming FPC statewide strategic plan, she asked if there is opportunity for observers to join conference calls? She noted that at every point when some people not involved, it can lead to pushback.

Commissioner Watson: Our plan is to be as open as possible.

Aaron Frederick works with food systems planning in Maine and Vermont. He advised to think big and start small. MA has an opportunity unlike any other state to be the food hub for the region. This process has a high level of complexity and \$100,000 is only a part of the total budget, but don't let that scare you. There is interest to support food systems planning.

Cathy Harragian, a small farmer from Sterling, noted that small and new farmers need to be a part of the process and feel comfortable with the process.

Courtney Bourns: The goal of the Kendall Foundation is to rebuild the regional food system. We are trying to do our part to organize philanthropic resources to organize support. We feel confident that private philanthropy will support the \$100,000. What we would ask is to see support from the state to carry the process forward as well. We can provide some early funding and believe that it is a good public private partnership. We look forward to doing our part.

Joan Squeri: Tiny groups that are impacting change are looking for an opportunity to sit at the table in this process. Special facilitation for small farmers and small stakeholders to engage is needed to equalize the playing field in a fully present way.

Cris Coffin: Ag Day at the State House is a good opportunity to reach out regarding the process and to engage legislators.

Chris Lawton: Farm Credit East is hosting a Winter Webinar Series on food hubs on December 17th. Check out farmcrediteat.com/webinars

Ruth Goldman: NESWAG has done a lot of work in the area of regional food systems. There is a lot of research which provides a way to think about work at the state level considering the 351 cities and towns and to make links to New England states and the Northeast.

Andrea Freeman: the Conservation Districts coordinate focus groups and one-on-one interviews, and could be enlisted to assist with outreach. She also thanked the Kendall Foundation for their support.

Commissioner Watson: Thank you to Christa Drew and the Advisory Committee for a job well done.

A motion to adjourn was made at 12:10 by Manny Costa and seconded by Frank Carlson. The motion passed on voice vote.