

Washtenaw County Food Policy Council (WFPC)
Meeting Minutes
May 10, 2023; 9:00 – 11:00 AM
Via Zoom

ATTENDEES

Council Members:

Present

1. Anna Taylor-McCants
2. Aubrey Lopatin
3. Jae Gerhart
4. Julius Buzzard
5. Keesa V. Johnson
6. Lauren Marquardt
7. Marissa Prizgint
8. Ann Hubbard
9. Mary Balog
10. Maya Grant
11. Sandy Pernecky

Absent

1. Caroline Sanders (Commissioner)
2. Damian Rivera
3. Markell Miller
4. Alex Canepa
5. Ava HaberkornHalm
6. Laura Wonch

WFPC Support Staff:

1. Ariane Donnelly – Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD)

Other Attendees:

1. Katje Armentrout: with MSU Extension
2. Louise Gorenflo: Food Access & Nutrition Policy Action Team (PAT) member

MEETING NOTES

1. Opening/Introductions

9:01-9:08 am

a) Council members share name, affiliation, seat, PAT/Committee, area of interest, and location of remote attendance (municipality, county, state).

Attendees shared their name, affiliation, seat, PAT/Committee, and area of interest. Council members also shared from where they are attending remotely (municipality, county, state). Council members in remote attendance:

- Ann Hubbard attending remotely from Ann Arbor Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Anna Taylor-McCants attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Aubrey Lopatin attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan

c/o WCHD, 555 Towner St., Ypsilanti, MI 48198

E-Mail: washtenawfoodpolicycouncil@gmail.com

Web: <https://www.washtenaw.org/1469/Washtenaw-County-Food-Policy-Council>

- Jae Gerhart attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Julius Buzzard attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Keesa V. Johnson attending remotely from Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Lauren Marquardt attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Marissa Prizgint attending remotely from Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Mary Balog attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Maya Grant attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Sandy Pernecky attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan

2. Agenda, Minutes Additions/Deletions/Approval

9:08-9:10 am

a) Previous Meeting Minutes (March)

- I. Motion: To approve March 8, 2023 meeting minutes
 1. **Motion: Marissa, Seconded: Aubrey**
 2. **Approved: Yes-11, No-0** (11 council members present at time of vote)
- II. Request made to list council members present/absent vertically (instead of side-by-side)

b) Meeting Agenda (May)

- I. Motion: To approve May 10, 2023 meeting agenda
 1. **Motion: Marissa, Seconded: Aubrey**
 2. **Approved: Yes-11, No-0** (11 council members present at time of vote)

3. Public Comment

9:10-9:10 am

- None

4. Executive Committee (EC) Report

9:10-9:43 am

a) Update on Strategic Planning Process 2023

- Received grant from the Michigan Local Food Council Network (MLFCN) to host a strategic planning process, which was last done in 2017. The draft request for proposal (RFP) was in the meeting packet for council members.
 - Goals of the strategic planning process include identifying a sustainable structure and re-examining priority areas for food system work
 - Strategic process would occur on a half day, in-person meeting, sometime in July/August
 - Grant ends: September 30, 2023
- Potential consultants to send RFP to:
 - Chuck Warpehoski (Change Works Consulting)
 - Lilly Fink Shapiro (lillyfinkshapiro.com)
 - Devita Davidson
 - Doug Campbell (current CEO at Hope; will be in transition in next couple of months)
- Jae will send RFP to listservs (like the food policy council listserv) and potential consultants.
 - Other council members: please share RFP directly with others.
- Timeline: Jae will email the RFP to the WFPC after today's meeting. Give 1 week for comments. Then EC will make final edits and send out to get this started.

b) Update on RE-AMP Grant for Climate Change

- We submitted a grant application for vermiculture composting at Staebler Farm County Park, but were not awarded the grant. However, the grant reviewers provided contacts for other organizations that might be willing to fund the project.
 - Aubrey reached out to other contacts. Unfortunately, the timeline for other funding opportunities did not match up with this project. Jesse Raudenbush from Starr Valley Farms is proceeding with the project anyways (self-funding). Aubrey is staying in touch with Jesse to continue to discuss future projects. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) has bigger pots of money. If anyone has ideas, we can make connections.

c) Update on New Member Onboarding Evaluation

- Markell and Ann have been involved in thinking about member retention and conducting evaluation on this.

- Looking to have more robust onboarding connection with members, especially since not meeting in person. Paired a new member with an existing member. Focused on connection and onboarding; now adding on recruitment and retention. Surveyed new council members and those who left their position prior to term ending. Asked 4 questions. Responses included issues related to recruitment/onboarding and structure/lack of clarity/purpose of meetings/etc. Many had trouble identifying how to engage/were not sure what they should be doing.
- Will review current posting form to ensure it reflects what the council wants. Will work with Ariane on this.
 - Timeline: will start review in June and complete the updated posting in early September (as turnaround with Clerk's Office can be quick).
- Want to create a new council member passport that lists ways to engage (with a timeframe). Ex: attend orientation, attend first council meeting, ask a question, etc. This would be a tool; we would not be checking in/monitoring it. Markell is creating a draft and will share for feedback.
- Thinking about hosting an in-person meet and greet event (so folks interested in applying can meet council members/ask questions)
- Will survey council members/PATs for what our current needs will be for 2024. Want to recruit members with needed skillset/expertise. Plan to do this in the fall.
- Everyone surveyed was personally asked to apply. So, want to have a strategy for recruitment, as well as encouraging community members to apply.
- Will consider returning to in person orientation with a remote option also available.
- Broader issues identified were beyond the current scope of this project, but some issues will be addressed with the consultant. Will share with EC/at meetings, as appropriate.
- Thank you to Ann and Markell for working on this! And thanks to Jae, Marissa, and Lauren!

d) Update on Healthy School Meals Initiative

- Will be joined today by Collin McDonough from the American Heart Association who will give a presentation.
- We are working on the approval process to lobby/advocate for it.
- Discussion:
 - Mary: Jordan Lindsay is a grass roots organizer that can support outreach efforts. Ann and I talked about how to assess/utilize our networks. Drafted email template. Wanted to confirm how we should label ourselves (i.e., community member vs. WFPC member). Will connect with Seema Jolly in Ypsilanti, too.
 - Keesa: Talking with food service directors fits within our policy agenda. What are the advocacy points; what do we want to address (i.e., procurement)? How does this fit within our local space?
 - Will talk about this after Colin's presentation.

e) [Tracking Our Work](#) - Aubrey

- Reminder: fill out the tracking form. This form is utilized for the annual report. Aubrey will continue to send out a reminder before every meeting to fill it out.

f) PAT's – who should be listed as main contact for each PAT?

- Food Access & Nutrition PAT: Julius
- Farmers PAT: Alex
- Keep the contacts currently listed for the other PATs.

5. PAT Updates

9:43-9:53 am; 10:47-10:53am

a) Food Access & Nutrition (FAN) PAT – Julius

I. Washtenaw Commons for Growers – Louise

- Louise: We are meeting next Tuesday to begin going through this work (see meeting packet email).
- Idea is for land to be held in common to provide some security and access to buy land for historically denied people in our community (such as black growers). Wanting to explore how this can be done. Second piece: how this would be managed.
- Wanting to have conversations with organizations that deal with landholdings on some dimension. Have identified 5 organizations and wanted to ask if anyone has a personal contact. Putting together a letter that want to send (because cold calls do not work). Louise will also send letter to Jae to send out.
 - Jae has some connections, and can make facilitated email introductions of letter, too.

- Keesa: suggested Louise connect with the Washtenaw County Black Farmers Fund (WCBFF).
 - FYI, the WCBFF does not hold land.
- Aubrey: suggested Project Grow
 - Louise: we have reached out to them. They are going through a transition.
 - Keesa: they do not hold land.
- Thank you, Louise, for your work in this space! We will help get you connections.
- b) Food Waste & Packaging WorkGroup –Aubrey**
- Had a group visioning session through support offered for free by MLFCN. We are still having monthly meetings. Hoping to have a presenter that can come to a WFPC meeting to talk about composting.
- c) Planning & Zoning PAT - Marissa**
- Cynthia and I met last week. We are moving from talking about doing a planning resource for planners and their offices. Did a thorough review of resources on drive. Isolated four areas on what to work on: farmers markets, purchase and development rights, things surrounding urban agriculture, and vacant land use. Will knock those out one by one until we have a complete guide.
- d) Farmers PAT**
- Lauren: the Farmers PAT met last Friday. Discussed what we want this PAT to do. Talked about revisiting the survey and talking with farmers to re-confirm that these are still the same barriers. Figuring out how to talk with the Board of Commissioners. Discussed recruiting more people (like Katje).
 - Ariane discussed the PAT google group.

6. Presentation: Healthy School Meals for All

9:53-10:47 am

- Collin McDonough from the American Heart Association presented about Healthy School Meals for All.
- Pre-K thru 12th grade: no cost school meals for all of Michigan children.
- Legislation ultimately decides the budget, but Governor provides recommendations. We asked this to be included in executive budget recommendation in Feb.
- During the time between Nov & Feb.
 - No Kid Hungry Michigan
 - We have been working on this hand in hand since then.
- In Feb: inclusion of funding mechanism. Also included \$1 million to cover school meal debt (estimating it will be closer to \$2.5 million, so will be asking for this).
- Looking to introduce language to make this permanent.
- We have identified a House and Senate sponsor. We are at 90 groups/individuals who have signed onto this coalition.
- As of last week, both the House and Senate included \$160 million and \$2.5/\$3 million for school meal debt elimination. Want to include full funding to ensure every district gets their meal debt elimination.
- Looking to have this legislation introduced in the next couple of weeks. Eight other states either have this funded for the current school year or have permanent budget for this (such as MN, NM, IL). We are falling behind, and we are letting our kids/families down. Those eligible for free or reduced meals are highly stigmatized. No cost school meals for all would increase attendance, increase test scores, and reduce stigma. Studies have shown that school meals are healthier than those brought from home.
- Views Healthy School Meals for All as a domino.
 - School, transportation, books, laptops: all of these are no cost to families; meals should not be either.
- Has a 2-page informational sheet.
- Stories are much more effective than just talking with someone.
- Website is not live yet but will be live this week. Will share that, too.
- Discussion/Questions:
 - Jae: we would love any resources you have.
 - Ann: I have been attending the coalition meetings. Do you know if there are legislators in Washtenaw County?
 - Collin: assuming we can get every democrat on board, we need 6 republican votes to fund beginning this upcoming school year. We are focusing primarily on the Senate right now: Jeff Irwin and Sue

Shink. Both have publicly stated they are supportive of this. The chamber that it is initially introduced in (the Senate in this case): get the most traction. Collin can get information for state representatives. We do have a target list, which will be shared in the email this week.

- Jae: if you have family/friends in other parts of the state, it can be helpful to educate them and have them reach out to their legislators.
- Collin: We are going to be relying to people on the ground who are willing to contact their legislators.
- Mary: can you speak to any conversations you are having on culturally appropriate food? Healthy is a loaded word.
 - Collin: we have heard this from multiple legislators. There is inclusion that would fund culturally appropriate/dietary restrictive meals (i.e., vegetarian, kosher, halal).
- Aubrey: I am curious about the implementation of this. How can they actually get food in students' hands before lunchtime is over?
 - Collin: we have been working with the food service directors, schools, and the Michigan Department of Education. There is some preliminary research in schools already implementing this that the line wait time has decreased.
- Ann: Michigan School Meals is the name of the coalition. Healthy School Meals for All is the name of the program.
 - Collin: the funding that will be tied to the '23-'24 school year will be supplemental (the only way to get this funded before October).
- Jae: the USDA was in southeast Michigan about 1 month ago. They gave Michigan huge snaps for this idea. They said this can help food service directors to have the supply of healthy food.
 - Collin: this strengthens school budgets (because they are not worried about payment systems, school meal debt, etc.). Food service directors want to be able to purchase fresh local produce; more healthy food; different fruits and vegetables.
- Jae: how does this relate to 10 Cents a Meal?
 - Collin: there is \$9.3 million within the budget for the 10 Cents a Meal program. Heard that schools are not utilizing this. It is not specifically addressed in this legislation, but it is a goal going forward.
- Mary: do you have any research on how schools that are currently implementing this program have anything to share?
 - Collin: will look and see if can find anything on this.
- Aubrey: why is the American Heart Association so strongly involved in this?
 - Collin: Research shows that the number one cause of chronic disease (like hypertension, cardiovascular disease) is poor diet. The American Heart Association is trying to mitigate chronic disease and is also interested in food security. Up to 1/3 of children are presenting with factors for chronic disease that are usually only known in adults (like high blood pressure). And for me personally, because this helps people. It can provide a transformational change that will help people live transformational lives.
- Hope to have budget signed into law by mid-June.
- Collin: I will follow up with information. Will be meeting with both sub-committee appropriation chairs.
- Thank you, Collin!
- The WFPC's next steps:
 - Ann:
 - 1) share the forms
 - 2) join individual groups; add yourself to the coalition form; collect stories. Start educating people; let them know
 - Jae: the WFPC cannot join the coalition without permission, but we can collect stories.
 - Ann: they want to hear from students.
 - Jae: Aubrey, your story was great!
 - Aubrey: is there any benefit to make school contacts aware of this (so they can be prepared for the rollout/implementation)?

- Mary gave a presentation to the Michigan School Health Coordinators Association. Danielle Dross is a school coordinator for Washtenaw/Livingston. Mary plans to reach out to them.
- Sandy: I am connected with EMU, and we have preceptors within the schools. I have a colleague who works with them. I can reach out to students who could do some volunteer work with this.
- Katje: Megan McManus at MSU's Center for Regional Food Systems has a great list. We all have been working together to get this information. I have contacts in Washtenaw County. If you give me information, I can distribute it out and/or give Jae the list of food service directors.
- Jae: we are pursuing asking Corporation Counsel for permission to advocate on this.
- Jae: how to do an educational campaign?
 - Mary: utilize the Farmers and FAN PATs to share information with farmers and others to make them aware of it.
 - Keesa: it is about value-based procurement. Is it fruits and vegetables, livestock, poultry?
- Jae: after a recent Cultivate Michigan event, heard that farmers have contacts with food service directors (all were vegetable growers).
- Mary: is creating an email template.
- Ann: we are working with the grassroots organization to make sure it is the most effective, concise, has the rationale/data. You do not have to be involved with the grassroots organization to participate.
- Mary: has been creating list of contacts.
- Create a list of where to send this out to; you will get info; you will send out.
- We could do a blog post.
- Sandy to reach out to M-Live author; Ann Arbor Observer. Could at least refer person to coalition.

7. Updates from Area Councils/Committees - Aubrey

10:53-11:04 am

a) [WFPC Liaison Assignments.xlsx - Google Sheets](#)

- Marissa: the Huron River Watershed is hiring a policy staff member and a watershed program associate.
- Ann: the Ann Arbor Township Charter Commission approved commercial kitchen space at food hub for a creamery. They will use milk within 40 miles of that location.
 - Jae: this is a great win for the local food system!
- Keesa is part of:
 - An equity collaborative, spearheaded by the Ann Arbor Community Foundation. Working with fiscal justice advocates to look at the City of Ann Arbor budget and how the City allocates funding. Will share report when community funding becomes available and how to approach it. Report should come out in 3 months.
 - Jae: we should have you be a presenter once that report comes out to give a deep dive.
 - The health equity committee with WCHD. Allotted a \$20,000 grant for a church to work on food sovereignty. They are building raised beds, etc. Great to understand County's process. Hoping in June can give report on this.
 - An equity health review: working with economic development organizations in Washtenaw County. Reviewing grants. Giving feedback on equity and access issues that prevent Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) groups from participating.
- Mary: gave a presentation last week about eating disorder prevention. I take a weight inclusive approach. Society emphasizes individual behaviors instead of systemic issues. Trying to advocate ways for school systems to take a systems approach when talking about health/food.
 - Jae: maybe you need to be a presenter at a WFPC meeting, too!
- Ann: the Good Food Summit is on Friday, 5/19. Hope to see you in person or on Zoom!

8. Round Robin

a) Things on horizon, important updates from Council Members

- Not discussed

9. Open Comment (Council Members and Public)

- Not discussed

ACTION ITEMS

- Strategic planning process:
 - Jae will send RFP to listservs (like the food policy council listserv) and potential consultants.
 - Other council members: please share RFP directly with others.
 - Timeline: Jae will email the RFP to the WFPC after today's meeting. Give 1 week for comments. Then EC will make final edits and send out to get this started.
- New member onboarding:
 - Will review current posting form to ensure it reflects what the council wants. Will work with Ariane on this.
 - Timeline: will start review in June and complete the updated posting in early September.
 - Markell is creating a draft of a new member passport and will share for feedback.
 - Boarder issues identified were beyond the current scope of this project, but some issues will be addressed with the consultant. Will share with EC/at meetings, as appropriate.
- Review actions items listed in the "Presentation: Healthy School Meals for All" portion of the minutes.

RECORDED VOTES

1. **Motion 1:** To approve March 8, 2023 meeting minutes
 - a. Approved: Yes-11, No-0
2. **Motion 2:** To approve May 10, 2023 meeting agendas
 - a. Approved: Yes-11, No-0