



WASHTENAW

COUNTY FOOD POLICY COUNCIL
HEALTHY. FAIR. AFFORDABLE. SUSTAINABLE.

Washtenaw County Food Policy Council (WFPC)
Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2025; 9:00 – 11:00 AM
Via Zoom

ATTENDEES

Council Members:

Present

1. Anna Taylor-McCants
2. Noelle Blasch
3. Andrew Paniagua
4. Chrissy Taylor
5. Keesa V. Johnson
6. Lauren Marquardt
7. Jae Gerhart
8. Julius Buzzard
9. Nicholas Pomante
10. Justin Hodge (Commissioner)
11. June Hollie
12. Preety Gadhoke
13. Crystal Lecoq
14. Peter Lindeman
15. Lunia Oriol
16. Brian Meko

Absent

1. Ava HaberkornHalm

WFPC Support Staff:

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

Other Attendees:

1. Mitchell Seymour (Pollinators Policy Action Team chair)
2. Jeff Tritten (Washtenaw Optimal Wellness)
3. Francesca Arielle Williamson
4. Jim Mogensen (Community activist)

MEETING NOTES

1. Opening/Introductions

9:00-9:29 am

a) Welcome new members!

b) Council members share name, affiliation, seat, Policy Action Team (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:

- Andrew Paniagua attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Anna Taylor-McCants attending remotely from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Brian Meko attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Chrissy Taylor attending remotely from Canton, Wayne 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>

- Crystal Lecoq attending remotely from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Jae Gerhart attending remotely from Sharon Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Julius Buzzard attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- June Hollie attending remotely from Brighton, Livingston County, Michigan
- Justin Hodge attending remotely from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Keesa V. Johnson attending remotely from Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Lauren Marquardt attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Lunia Oriol attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Nicholas Pomante attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Noelle Blasch attending remotely from Plymouth, Wayne County, Michigan
- Peter Lindeman attending remotely from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Preeti Gadhoke attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan

c) Icebreaker - Anna

- Council members participated in an ice breaker, sharing a food holiday tradition.
- From chat:
 - Lauren: Uh oh! new laptop. Can I do it by chat? If so, Lauren Marquardt, Economic Development Chair and Secretary, calling from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County
 - Keesa: Keesa V. Johnson, former Chair. I hold the racial equity seat calling in from Pittsfield Township Ypsilanti
 - Jae: Thanks Keesa!
 - Anna:
 - Yes June!!! Same for us!!
 - June hearted this message
 - A real fav
 - Justin: I LOVE French Onion soup!

2. Agenda, Minutes Additions/Deletions/Approval - Jae

9:29-9:30 am

a) Previous Meeting Minutes (November)

- I. Motion: To approve November 13, 2024 meeting minutes
 - 1. Motion: Jae, Seconded: Julius**
 - 2. Approved: Yes-16, No-0** (16 council members present at time of vote)

b) Meeting Agenda (January)

- I. Motion: To approve January 8, 2025 meeting agenda
 - 1. Motion: Jae, Seconded: Julius**
 - 2. Approved: Yes-16, No-0** (16 council members present at time of vote)

3. Public Comment - Keesa

9:30-9:34 am

- Mitch: Working on a community garden mapping project to get an idea of pollinator resources at these sites. Project Grow is participating in this project. Will also be co-teaching a course with Project Grow about companion planting (from pollinators' perspective). Has taken a pollinator champion course at MSU and working on modifying the slide decks to make more kid friendly. The Pollinators PAT will be more active in 2025.
 - Jae encouraged Mitch to share the date of the course.
- From chat:
 - Nick: crosspollination*

4. Executive Committee (EC) Report - Keesa

9:34-9:36 am

a) Importance of Tracking Our Work – Jae

- We track our work throughout the year so that we can more easily write our annual report and know what the WFPC has done. You can add items yourself onto the electronic form (see link). Council members and PAT members can fill out the form.

I. Tracking Our Work

- Please use this form to track your work with the WFPC (ex: anytime you talk with representatives, participate in anything policy-related, anything you do as a representative of the WFPC, etc.). This tracking form allows us to keep track of everything the WFPC does throughout the year and is utilized to create the annual report.

b) Annual Report - Review – Jae

- Hope to present to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (BOC) in March.
- Jae will share more about the annual report once it is drafted.
- From chat:
 - Jae:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScns3fVz3eLFq1MfwpANNmagtjmb3cul7VcBicgwCWNx9hMsA/viewform?usp=sharing>

5. Executive Committee Elections

9:36-9:41 am

Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Racial Equity Liaison, Policy Liaison, Secretary ([Bylaws](#))

- Nominated for positions. Approved Jae as Chairperson (13 votes), Lauren as Vice-Chairperson (13 votes), Julius as Racial Equity Liaison (12 votes; Keesa had 1 vote), Anna as Policy Liaison (13 votes), and Crystal as Secretary (13 votes): 13 Council Members present at time of election. Appointments made. Congrats and thank you!
- From chat:
 - Crystal: Crystal Lecoq - Secretary Nominee
 - Crystal: I apologize - what is the name of the nominee for Vice-Chair person?
 - Ariane: Hi! No worries! Lauren Marquardt
 - Crystal: Thumbs-up'd

6. PAT/Workgroup Introductions

9:41-10:00 am

a) Food Access & Nutrition (FAN) PAT

- Chrissy: We talk about different food access issues. Andrew has been working with Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA) to put food pantry information on bus line information.
- Andrew: School meals are raised as well.
- Jeff: Working on making sure various areas are aware of resources available. Putting together a resource list for our communities.
- Mitch: There are seniors who are SNAP eligible but are not participating in this program. Outreach for seniors is needed. Discussed with Commissioner Maciejewski about people to contact. The senior millage that recently passed should help.
 - Jeff: About 5,600 seniors in Washtenaw County are eligible but not participating.

I.) Michigan School Meals

- See above.

b) Food Waste & Packaging - Noelle

- Noelle: Co-chair with Heather Hutchins-Wiese.
- Restarted this PAT in Feb 2024. Have about 6 active group members. Working on gathering information around Washtenaw County (ex: what is currently being done on food waste and packaging at all levels (county, housing)). Met with Commissioner Hodge about county level policies.
- Meet on the third Wednesday of the month over Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join.
- In 2016 this PAT helped move a plastic bag ban for Washtenaw County through, but then the state banned the county from being able to do this. There were bills in the state legislature to repeal the 2016 law banning plastic bag laws at the end of 2024. Have not been able to follow-up but think this will need to be reintroduced.
- The policy agenda was helpful to use to decide what the PAT should focus on.

c) Inclusive Food Justice - Ava

- Not discussed as Ava is not present today.

d) Pollinators PAT - Mitchell Seymour

- Setting up a meeting schedule now.

- Looking into advocacy and policy related to pollinator friendly spraying practices. The Xerces Society has Bee City USA and Bee Campus USA programs, and Washtenaw County has more programs than any other county in Michigan. There are a lot of programs and foundation here (ex: the mowing frequency for county roads is actually very friendly from a pollinators perspective) but looking for the gaps here (ex: more education for residents needed; the greenspace initiative does not mean it is a pollinator friendly policy). Has a meeting scheduled with the Washtenaw County Resiliency Officer.

- Reach out to Mitch if you are interested in this work!

e) Planning & Zoning PAT

- Jae: This PAT does not have a current Chair. Prior project: working with rural townships about meat processing. Washtenaw County has a lot of local farmers and is great at selling local food, but we have a processing issue here. We educated municipal leaders about what is a small meat packing facility, what happens to the water, what are the smells/sounds, what does it look like, etc. We have some planning people new to Council. Would like to encourage you that if interested in leading this PAT/getting it started, to please reach out to the EC/Ariane.

f) Farmers PAT

- Jae: similarly, there is no current Chair for the Farmers PAT. Would love to re-launch this. Prior projects include education around the Food Safety Modernization Act and the Farm Bill (how it affects local farmers; produced videos).
 - Lauren: previously looked into this PAT (just a conversation, not to re-launch it) with a prior council member. Conducted a survey and talked with organizations that work with farmers.
- Crystal is interested in this PAT and will connect with Jae.

7. Understanding Our Reach

10:36-10:37 am

WFPC Liaison Assignments .xlsx - Google Sheets

- Jae: Liaison assignments started a couple of years ago to try to understand where our reach is. Not planning to do this now (we do not need more assignments).

8. Round Robin

10:00-10:31 am

a) Things on the horizon, important updates from council members

- Jae: 2025 will bring changes in the state and federal governments. Just finished a lame duck period where bills were either passed or killed.
- Justin: Suggests the WFPC pass a resolution of support for the plastic bag repeal. Then to have the BOC pass a resolution. Then work with the County lobbyist.
- Chrissy: Medicaid in Lieu of Services helps Medicaid recipients receive medically tailored meals, produce prescriptions, etc. It is technically in place, but no plan is ready to launch it yet. There is a big push for local community-based organizations to operate the programs. It would be great if Michigan had an 1115 waiver like other states.
 - Also tracking if Medicaid work requirements are going to come back.
- Andrew:
 - At the state level: the Michigan Agricultural Surplus System Program uses general funds from the State of Michigan which are given to the Food Bank Council of Michigan to purchase seconds (“ugly” produce) from farmers. Food pantries only need to cover the transport of the produce. It has worked out really well. Lots of great fresh, frozen, and canned produce. Want to make sure funding maintains or grows.
 - Federal: Farm Bill nutrition programs (including SNAP, The Emergency Food Assistance Program which provides food to food banks, etc.). No one really knows what will happen with the new administration and with a major proponent of the Farm Bill (Senator Stabenow) stepping down. Following what Feeding America recommends. Think movement around the Farm Bill would be in November at the earliest. Think the main objective with the new administration is damage control, because do not want to have cuts.
- Mitch: The Council on Environmental Quality released their second version of a tool to map things related to climate justice and health equity. It is a great research tool to learn what are the most vulnerable areas and the way that they are vulnerable. We have 17 census tracts in Washtenaw County that are considered vulnerable. Can use it provide baseline data. This was a Biden-Harris initiative (first released in 2022, next in 2024). Not sure if will continue.

- <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#5.19/39.339/-87.449>
- Jeff: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation also has a City Health Dashboard. (<https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/>).
- Peter: There is also the Washtenaw County Opportunity Index (<https://www.washtenaw.org/2480/Opportunity-Index>). It is about 5 years old. There were no food related criteria in the index, so there was discussion about adding that in.
 - Justin: The updates are complete; just waiting to roll it out. Would love to have members look at it. Hoping it has some food-related metrics.
 - Anna and Julius: Received email from Pam at the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) and will send/has sent feedback.
 - Justin: Have a contract with University of Michigan's Poverty Solutions. OCED is stewarding this process.
- Jae: The EC is working on increasing the WFPC's staff capacity. It is hard to get stuff done as a volunteer board. The WFPC accomplished a lot of work when the MSU Extension position had dedicated time to working on items.
- Crystal: How does this group decide what to focus on, prioritize actions, and make things happen?
 - Jae: It takes motivated individuals. It takes someone to say: I'll do it, I'll write the thing so we can send it out.
 - The EC decides the agenda for the WFPC meetings.
 - Anna: That was my question when I joined the WFPC. That is why we started with rewriting our policy agenda so PATs can have focused items. Also, there is usually a featured presenter at the WFPC meetings. If someone has an idea for a presenter, please share.
 - Crystal: Do we have a regular objective to report to the BOC/make regular demands of them?
 - Justin: The WFPC has an annual presentation to the BOC. The BOC liaison (to be determined at an upcoming BOC meeting) is responsible for keeping the BOC apprised of what is happening with the WFPC.
 - Jae: We can focus on county, state, and federal policy. Can bring resolutions to Washtenaw County.
 - Justin: There is a county lobbyist we can direct.
 - Crystal: What about other leaders like township trustees?
 - Jae: We can educate them! If we start advocating (ex: vote X on Y), then need to get pre-approval from the Corporation Counsel (the County's lawyers).
 - Justin: You can connect with the township trustees, but there is no obligation for them to respond to you.
- Ariane: Suggests Lauren meet with Crystal about secretary role knowledge transfer. Ariane will handle logistics to get Crystal set up as EC and Secretary.
 - Jae: Anyone is welcome to attend EC meetings (just need to know in advance in case quorum is reached). Jae will set meeting schedule.
- Noelle and Justin will connect about county policy.
- Jae: Is there a student available who could conduct a policy scan?
 - Justin: Can find a student.
- From chat:
 - Mitch: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#5.19/39.339/-87.449>
 - June: Thumbs up'd this chat
 - Preety:
 - Thanks for sharing. I work on health equity and am to see how we can apply these data towards our work on WFPC.
 - Interested to see
 - Jeff: <https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/>
 - June: Congratulations!
 - Noelle: Congratulations to the new board!

9. Open Comment (Council Members and Public)

10:31-10:36 & 10:37-10:41 am

- Jim: Works on gun safety and is on a steering committee for a gun safety in Michigan organization. Has access to gun locks to distribute. For example, wants to get gun locks into food pantries.

- Justin: Will be teaching class during the WFPC meeting times. How does that impact the WFPC if re-appointed to the WFPC?
 - Jae: You are very reachable and helpful, so it is okay if you cannot make the WFPC meetings but can attend the EC meetings and be reachable.
- Ariane: There is an Academic Health Department partnership between the Washtenaw County Health Department and the University of Michigan School of Public Health. If there is any interest in trying to recruit a student from this partnership, please let me know, and I can connect you to my coworker.
- Brian: Is there a Washtenaw County organization chart with bills at the state level that we should be paying attention to?
 - Justin: The Washtenaw County website is being redesigned. Suggest starting here for county government: <https://www.washtenaw.org/27/Your-Government>
 - Jae: Michigan Local Food Council Network listserv (https://www.canr.msu.edu/local_food_council_network/contact)
 - Andrew: The Michigan Alliance to Stop Hunger (<https://www.fbcmich.org/michigan-alliance-to-stop-hunger>) looks at state and federal policy.
- Jae: Will send the WFPC follow-up links from today's meeting and schedule the EC meetings. Please reach out if you have any questions/want connections made.
- From chat:
 - Justin:
 - FANTASTIC event!
 - Not just saying that since I was on one of the panels. 😊
 - Anna: reacted to this chat
 - Mitch: Thank you, Ariane! I have to hop off
 - Justin:
 - <https://www.washtenaw.org/27/Your-Government>
 - I'd say start there for county government.
 - Andrew: <https://www.fbcmich.org/michigan-alliance-to-stop-hunger>
 - Jae: jae.gerhart@trinity-health.org

10. Adjourn

10:41 am

ACTION ITEMS

- Annual report: Hope to present to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (BOC) in March. Jae will share more about the annual report once it is drafted.
- Reach out to Mitch if you are interested in the Pollinators PAT.
- If anyone is interested in leading the Planning & Zoning PAT/getting it started, please reach out to the EC/Ariane.
- Crystal is interested in the Farmers PAT and will connect with Jae.
- If someone has an idea for a presenter for the WFPC meetings, please share.
- Ariane suggests Lauren meet with Crystal about secretary role knowledge transfer. Ariane will handle logistics to get Crystal set up as EC and Secretary.
- Jae: Anyone is welcome to attend EC meetings (just need to know in advance in case quorum is reached). Jae will set meeting schedule.
- Noelle and Justin will connect about county policy.
- Justin will find a student to conduct a policy scan.
- There is an Academic Health Department partnership between the Washtenaw County Health Department and the University of Michigan School of Public Health. If there is any interest in trying to recruit a student from this partnership, please let Ariane know, and Ariane can connect you to my coworker.
- Jae: Will send the WFPC follow-up links from today's meeting and schedule the EC meetings. Please reach out if you have any questions/want connections made.

RECORDED VOTES

1. **Motion 1:** To approve November 13, 2024 meeting minutes
 - a. Approved: Yes-16, No-0
2. **Motion 2:** To approve January 8, 2025 meeting agenda
 - a. Approved: Yes-16, No-0
3. Approved Jae as Chairperson (13 votes), Lauren as Vice-Chairperson (13 votes), Julius as Racial Equity Liaison (12 votes; Keesa had 1 vote), Anna as Policy Liaison (13 votes), and Crystal as Secretary (13 votes): 13 Council Members present at time of election. Appointments made. Congrats and thank you!

CHAT TRANSCRIPT

09:06:46 From Lauren Marquardt to Everyone:

Uh oh! new laptop. Can I do it by chat? If so, Lauren Marquardt, Economic Development Chair and Secretary, calling from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County

09:09:35 From Keesa V. Johnson, MDes to Everyone:

Keesa V. Johnson, former Chair. I hold the racial equity seat calling in from Pittsfield Township Ypsilanti

09:11:59 From Anna Taylor-McCants to Everyone:

Yes June!!! Same for us!!

09:12:02 From Anna Taylor-McCants to Everyone:

A real fav

09:15:39 From Justin Hodge to Everyone:

I LOVE French Onion soup!

09:19:34 From June Hollie to Everyone:

Reacted to "Yes June!!! Same for..." with ♥

09:21:22 From Jae Gerhart, Trinity Health to Everyone:

Replying to "Keesa V. Johnson, fo..."

Thanks Keesa!

09:32:23 From Nick Pomante to Everyone:

crosspollination*

09:35:58 From Jae Gerhart, Trinity Health to Everyone:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScns3fVz3eLFq1MfwpANNmagtjmb3cul7VcBicgwCWNx9hMsA/viiewform?usp=sharing>

09:40:58 From Crystal Lecoq to Everyone:

Crystal Lecoq - Secretary Nominee

09:43:04 From Crystal Lecoq to Ariane Donnelly(direct message):

I apologize - what is the name of the nominee for Vice-Chair person?

09:46:08 From Ariane Donnelly to Crystal Lecoq(direct message):

Hi! No worries! Lauren Marquardt

09:47:25 From Crystal Lecoq to Ariane Donnelly(direct message):

Reacted to "Hi! No worries! Laur..." with 👍

10:10:30 From seymoure to Everyone:

<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#5.19/39.339/-87.449>

10:11:19 From Preety Gadhoke, PhD, MPH to Everyone:

Thanks for sharing. I work on health equity and am to see how we can apply these data towards our work on WFPC.

10:11:38 From Preety Gadhoke, PhD, MPH to Everyone:

Interested to see

10:11:55 From Jeff Tritten to Everyone:

<https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/>

10:12:11 From June Hollie to Everyone:

Reacted to "https://screeningtoo..." with 👍
10:26:59 From June Hollie to Everyone:
Congratulations!
10:27:21 From Noelle Blasch to Everyone:
Congratulations to the new board!
10:35:57 From Justin Hodge to Everyone:
FANTASTIC event!
10:36:18 From Justin Hodge to Everyone:
Not just saying that since I was on one of the panels. 😊
10:36:36 From Anna Taylor-McCants to Everyone:
Reacted to "Not just saying that..." with 😊
10:37:18 From seymoure to Ariane Donnelly(direct message):
Thank you, Ariane! I have to hop off
10:39:37 From Justin Hodge to Everyone:
<https://www.washtenaw.org/27/Your-Government>
10:39:44 From Justin Hodge to Everyone:
I'd say start there for county government.
10:39:57 From Andrew Paniagua (he/él) | Food Gatherers to Everyone:
<https://www.fbcmich.org/michigan-alliance-to-stop-hunger>
10:40:22 From Jae Gerhart, Trinity Health to Everyone:
jae.gerhart@trinity-health.org