

Washtenaw County Food Policy Council (WFPC)
Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2025; 9:00 – 11:00 AM
Via Zoom

ATTENDEES

Council Members:

Present

1. Julius Buzzard
2. Pretty Gadhoke
3. Jae Gerhart
4. Justin Hodge
5. Crystal Lecoq
6. Peter Lindeman
7. Lauren Marquardt
8. Brian Meko
9. Lunia Oriol
10. Andrew Paniaque
11. Nicholas Pomante
12. Chrissy Taylor
13. Anna Taylor-McCants
14. Kelly Wilson

Absent

1. Noelle Blasch
2. Ava HaberkornHalm

WFPC Support Staff:

1. Russell O'Brien – Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD)

Other Attendees:

1. Mitchell Seymour (Pollinators Policy Action Team Chair)
2. Dayna Popkey (Food Access & Nutrition Policy Action Team Co-Chair)
3. Lewis Hughes (MSU Extension)
4. Mark Spencer
5. Jeffrey Tritten (Washtenaw Optimal Wellness)
6. Alice Klein
7. Autumn
8. Chris Brown (Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels)
9. Georgia Frost (Field Representative Rep. Dingell MI-6)

MEETING NOTES

1. Opening/Introductions

9:03-9:15 am

a) 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:

- Julius Buzzard attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Pretty Gadhoke attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Jae Gerhart attending remotely from Superior Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Justin Hodge attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Crystal Lecoq attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Peter Lindeman attending remotely from Lansing, Ingham County, Michigan
- Lauren Marquardt attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Brian Meko attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Lunia Oriol attending remotely from Ann arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Andrew Paniagua attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Nicholas Pomante attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Chrissy Taylor attending remotely from Canton, Wayne County, Michigan
- Anna Taylor-McCants attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- Kelly Wilson attending remotely from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan

b) Icebreaker - Share a food combination that most people like that you think is wild or share the weirdest item in your fridge right now. - Anna

- Food Combination - Peanut butter and jelly, Thanksgiving plate with everything mixed together, pineapple pizza, and squishy vegetables.
- Items in Fridge – Old sauerkraut, too much oat milk, too much parmesan cheese, many different types of flour, frozen lemons, and old alcohol.

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

9:15-9:17 am

a) Previous Meeting Minutes (January, February, March, April)

- I. Motion: To approve January 8, 2025/February 12, 2025/March 12, 2025/April 9, 2025 meeting minutes

- 1. Motion: Jae Gerhart, Seconded: Julius Buzzard**

- 2. Approved: Yes-13, No-0** (13 council members present at time of vote)

b) Meeting Agenda (May)

- I. Motion: To approve May 14, 2025 meeting agenda

- 1. Motion: Jae Gerhart, Seconded: Nicholas Pomante**

- 2. Approved: Yes-13, No-0** (13 council members present at time of vote)

3. Public Comment - Jae

9:17-9:19 am

- Chris Brown, Supportive Services Director Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels, is attending the meeting today to talk about millage questions.
- Jeffrey Tritten, Washtenaw Optimal Wellness Director, is listening in and looking forward to the discussion.
- Lewis Hughes, MSU Extension, is listening in and will answer questions as needed.

4. Executive Committee (EC) Announcements - Jae

9:19-9:26 am

a) Budget Increase Request

- The request was sent to Commissioner Hodge and the Board of Commissioners (BOC) to increase the budget to \$12,000 per year. That would allow the WFPC to meet officially every month. Still in progress.

b) Outstanding Resolutions

- WFPC proposed two resolutions this year. “Resolution in Support of USDA Staff and Commitment to Small and Minority-Owned Farms” and “Resolution in Support of Prioritizing Food Services for Seniors in Washtenaw County”.
- The two resolutions have been officially submitted to the BOC and WFPC has been invited to speak at public comment. “Resolution in Support of Prioritizing Food Services for Seniors in Washtenaw County” already passed on April 2nd. “Resolution in Support of USDA Staff and Commitment to Small and Minority-Owned Farms” is in the board packet for May 21st. Russ will share public comment options with WFPC through email. In-person public comment was discussed as the best option. Please email the whole council if you are planning to make public comment.

5. Featured Presentation and Discussion: Senior Millage

9:26-10:12 am

Jae said the process is moving quickly. There were 2 options on the table, but it looks like now there is 1 option. That would allocate \$500,000 to Food Gatherers and \$100,000 to the Office for Community and Economic Development (OCED) for housing and other stuff for seniors. There is still opportunity to weigh-in on the final decision.

a) Meals on Wheels

- Chris Brown discussed three questions: What services are currently provided for seniors; How has funding changed, if at all, under the new Trump administration and what would the millage funding mean for your organization; Which of the proposals for managing the senior funds do you support and why.
- Meal delivery services, Safe at Home, Pet Program, and a personal care pantry.
- They haven’t seen any immediate changes with the new administration. They are not counting on federal funding next year because they haven’t received any information at all. Only about 10% of the budget is from federal funding.
- The millage would be critical to fill gaps in lost federal funding should that happen, and it will allow them to meet the growing needs.

b) Jewish Family Services

- Chrissy Taylor discussed how Jewish Family Services (JFS) work with seniors. They provide case management, transportation services in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, & Saline, and therapy services. JFS has always had a food pantry and now they produce their own meals and provide them to other meal programs.
- JFS lost ¼ of their operating budget in the first week of the Trump administration including refugee resettlement funding. There is so much uncertainty.
- Chrissy said OCED has been a fantastic partner and they know the space and players.

c) Food Gatherers

- Andrew Paniagua provided slides. Food Gatherers (FG) supports 140 partner agencies across Washtenaw County. They support the Neighborhood Grocery Initiative (NGI) which includes 9 senior living communities, VA Programs, FG Community Kitchen, Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels, and OCED.
- Statistics on older adults served were shared. 10,800 different individuals 60 years and older were served in 2024.
- Seven of the nine NGI sites are located in 48197/48198 zip codes and five are located in an Opportunity Zone. 1/3 of NGI residents indicate that FG is their primary source of food.
- Recent cancelation of some USDA-TEFAP funding represents about 15% of total food distribution and will cost \$2.5 million to replace. The Local Food Purchasing Agreement (LFPA) grant was eliminated. FG is monitoring changes to SNAP, food prices, and housing costs.
- FG recommendations regarding millage dollars: Support food access to seniors at food pantries and distribution points; Support nutrition programs via Meals on Wheels and congregate meals at senior centers.

Jae said the 2 proposals on the table are: 1) OCED houses the funds and distributes them. 2) A new department on aging would be created. Chris Brown said he supports whichever proposal moves the ball down the field and get

dollars out sooner than later. Chrissy Taylor said she agrees with Chris. They are big fans of OCED but if an office on aging is developed, they will work with them. Andrew Paniagua agreed with Chris and Chrissy and will support getting funds distributed.

Justin Hodge said some of the millage dollars were allocated at the last BOC meeting. Getting the money out is a top priority for everyone. There is less concern on the structure and more focus on getting the dollars out to the community. The office on aging is gaining the most traction.

Peter Lindeman asked for clarification on timing. Justin said there is some desire to possibly vote after a single reading and it could be done in June. The latest would be in July or August. Jae asked how the WFPC could weigh-in. Justin said WFPC could pass a resolution that would be included in the BOC packet. Addressing the speed of getting dollars out to service providers, innovative strategies, and WFPC staying connected regardless of the proposal chosen are recommendations for the resolution. The executive committee will work on drafting a resolution at their meeting tomorrow and circulate to council members.

6. Round Robin

10:12-10:42 am

a) PAT Updates

- **Food Access & Nutrition (FAN) PAT – Andrew**
 - Working through the policy agenda working document. Priorities include getting information out to the public and BOC about the work that organizations in emergency food access and assistance do.
 - They talked about food sovereignty and they have a volunteer researching what good practices municipalities already in place and how they could be replicated in Washtenaw County.
 - Food Forest type activities will be talked about at the next meeting.
 - Jae will make a 2025 WFPC tracking form.
- **Pollinators PAT – Mitch**
 - Starting to engage with the stewards of sites on mapping community garden pollinator resources. Will be more intensive in July and August. Planning a presentation of the results with Project Grow in the fall. This will be a baseline data gathering activity to be used for advocacy and education in the future.
- **Farmers PAT - *PAT not currently active; looking for new Chair***
 - Let us know if you are interested in being this PAT's Chair.
- **Food Waste & Packaging PAT- Noelle**
 - Nothing today. Noelle not in attendance.
- **Inclusive Food Justice – Ava**
 - Nothing today. Ava not in attendance.
- **Planning & Zoning PAT - *PAT not currently active; looking for new Chair***
 - Let us know if you are interested in being this PAT's Chair.

b) Things on the horizon, important updates from councilmembers

- **Crystal Lecoq** – Involved with an organization that distributes free native wildflower gardens. She will share the link in the chat. <https://adaptecoology.org/>
- **Justin Hodge** – Opportunity for public comment on the “Resolution in Support of USDA Staff and Commitment to Small and Minority-Owned Farms” at next week's BOC meeting. In-person comments are more effective than the write-in option. Public are allowed 3 minutes for their comments at the full meeting.
- **Andrew Paniagua** – Attended the National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference. FG was able to team up with the Food Bank Council of Michigan and other food banks to talk to some federal representatives in Washington D.C. about federal nutrition policy. Even though it seems challenging, important conversations are being had and

members of Congress are listening to organizations across the state.

- **Peter Lindeman** – Opioid Settlement Funding. The state supports county needs assessments across the state, specifically in opioid use disorder populations. Things that come up a lot for long term recovery include housing, transportation, and other basic needs like food. Is there a role for food access programs to partner with harm reduction programs? Justin Hodge said most of the Opioid Settlement Funding will be going out through an RFP process.
- **Lewis Hughes** – Shared an event hosted by Damian's Craft Meats about the progress on a new USDA meat processing facility in Washtenaw County. Thursday May 29th 6-8pm at Webster Township Hall. They are going to talk about the site plans and will take input on the project for their sales and product plans.
- **Dayna Popkey** –
<https://www.votervoice.net/MFF/Campaigns/126560/Respond?vvs=BJRkFBgWBCg5eAoBptf7FAA>
Got an email from the Michigan Fitness Foundation yesterday that the On May 13, 2025, the House Committee on Agriculture released proposed budget reconciliation language that includes the complete elimination of the SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed) program.
- **Chrissy Taylor** - We are looking for a contractual RD at JFS. Please feel free to send my contact info to anyone who might be interested: christinet@jfsannarbor.org.
- **Mitch Seymour** – Link to educational FB page for Michigan Ag, Food Systems, and sustainability. Just FYI.
<https://www.facebook.com/share/1Kq1JyHEBG/>

7. Open Comment (Council Members and Public)

10:42-10:43 am

- None

8. Adjourn

10:43 am

ACTION ITEMS

- Russ will share public comment options for BOC meetings with WFPC through email.
- Jae will make a 2025 WFPC tracking form.
- The executive committee will work on drafting a resolution at their meeting and circulate to council members.

RECORDED VOTES

1. **Motion 1:** To approve January, February, March, April, 2025 meeting minutes
a. Approved: Yes-13, No-0
2. **Motion 2:** To approve May 14, 2025 meeting agenda
a. Approved: Yes-13, No-0

CHAT TRANSCRIPT

09:25:12 From Nick Pomante to Everyone:

All good here

09:27:19 From Julius Buzzard, he/him, Growing Hope to Everyone:

Resolution in Support of Prioritizing Food Services for Seniors in Washtenaw County

https://docs.google.com/document/d/17b5j9dquZpmAE0JYPNnd28Mqx3GrCS_B/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103720407262722264297&rtf=true&sd=true

0407262722264297&rtf=true&sd=true

Resolution in Support of USDA Staff and Commitment to Small and Minority-Owned Farms

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zRVeFeQSWAJ8KCngIU3vr83_LwMJEM6D/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103720407262722264297&rtf=true&sd=true

720407262722264297&rtf=true&sd=true

09:28:55 From Jae Gerhart to Everyone:

What services are you currently providing to seniors?

How has your funding changed (if at all) in the new Trump administration and what would the new millage funding mean for your organization's continued service?

Which of the proposals for managing the senior funds do you support and why?

09:40:29 From Chris Brown YMOW to Everyone:

Well said, Chrissy!

10:02:42 From Jeffrey Tritten to Everyone:

Just so everyone has it, the Washtenaw County Healthy Aging Collaborative offered recommendations for strategic direction of senior millage funds to the BOC titled 'Recommendations for Investments to Improve the Lives of Seniors' - google drive doc here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ko7GF4o2gilEK4MECT0j2c2Lsn1f-_CQ/view?usp=sharing

10:15:37 From Lunia Evodie Oriol to Everyone:

Thanks Andrew. I'm unable to turn on my audio right now, but this is the tracking sheet researching food sovereignty-focused ordinances (on a township/municipal level) that is in progress:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1u9iYTiEKWttSYdNu2tOBSyDz3FoItw3UTs51CpUtGOA/edit?usp=sharing>

10:23:21 From Crystal Lecoq to Everyone:

<https://adaptecology.org/>

10:23:27 From Crystal Lecoq to Everyone:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdLroyv1AJY7KU3p38MrLgKzfQUGyqplrWgiGPnVYEfaaQYw/viewform>

10:24:01 From Autumn to Everyone:

Replying to "https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdLroyv1A...":

I'd love to connect this with the ICC— we just started our summer garden and landscaping! Filling out the form now

10:27:34 From Julius Buzzard, he/him, Growing Hope to Everyone:

I'm going to try and get online for that.

10:30:09 From Kelly Wilson (she/her) - Trinity Health to Everyone:

Michigan Food as Medicine Summit

10:34:16 From Dayna Popkey (she/her) Growing Hope to Everyone:

<https://www.votervoice.net/MFF/Campaigns/126560/Respond?vvs=BJRkFBgWBCg5eAoBptf7FAA> Got an email from the Michigan Fitness Foundation yesterday that the On May 13, 2025, the House Committee on Agriculture released proposed budget reconciliation language that includes the complete elimination of the SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed) program.

10:38:46 From Chrissy Taylor, JFS of Washtenaw County to Everyone:

We are looking for a contractual RD at JFS. Please feel free to send my contact info to anyone who might be interested: christinet@jfsannarbor.org.

10:40:03 From Mitchell Seymour to Everyone:

Link to educational FB page for Michigan Ag, Food Systems, and sustainability. Just FYI

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1Kq1JyHEBG/>

10:42:17 From Nick Pomante to Everyone:
Thanks!

10:43:15 From Julius Buzzard, he/him, Growing Hope to Everyone:
I appreciate you following up, Justin!