



**Washtenaw County Food Policy Council (WFPC)
Meeting Minutes**

May 13, 2026; 9:00 – 10:30 AM

Learning Resource Center (LRC) Michigan Room & Zoom

ATTENDEES

Council Members:

Present

1. Noelle Blasch
2. Justin Hodge
3. Crystal Lecoq
4. Peter Lindeman
5. Alexander McKay
6. Brian Meko
7. Lunia Oriol
8. Andrew Paniagua
9. Nicholas Pomante
10. Chrissy Taylor
11. Anna Taylor-McCants
12. Amanda Villescas
13. Kelly Wilson

Absent

1. Preety Gadhoke
2. Ava HeberkornHalm
3. Sierra Lambert

WFPC Support Staff:

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

Other Attendees:

1. Azella Markgraf
2. Francesca (FW) Williamson
3. Mitch Seymour
4. Shavonne Shaw

MEETING NOTES

1. Opening/Introductions

9:01-9:13am

a) Council members please share the following:

i. Shallow Intros: Name, Affiliation, Seat, and Area of Interest

ii. Location: Municipality, County, State (If virtual)

- Noelle Blasch – In-Person.
- Justin Hodge – Attending remotely.
- Crystal Lecoq – In-Person.
- Peter Lindeman – In-person.
- Alex McKay – Attending remotely from Traverse City, Grand Traverse County, MI.
- Brian Meko – In-Person.
- Lunia Oriol – Attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, MI.
- Andrew Paniagua – In-Person.
- Nicholas Pomante – Attending remotely from Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, MI.
- Chrissy Taylor – In-Person.
- Anna Taylor-McCants – In-Person.
- Amanda Villescas – In-Person.
- Kelly Wilson – In-Person.

b) Icebreaker

- Council members discussed something good that happened in the last week. Answers included child's graduation, out of the country trip, new employment, good luck from being pooped on by a bird, attending the Tulip Festival, releasing a trapped bird from inside the house, and moving into a new house.

2. Agenda, Minutes Addition/Deletions/Approval – Anna

9:13-9:15am

a) Previous Meeting Minutes (April) – VOTE

- Motion: To approve the April 8, 2026 meeting minutes.
 - 1) *Motion: Kelly Wilson, Seconded: Brian Meko*
 - 2) *Approved: Yes-12, No-0 (12 council members present at time of vote)*

b) Meeting Agenda (May) – VOTE

- Motion: To approve the May 13, 2026 meeting agenda.
 - 1) *Motion: Kelly Wilson, Seconded: Nicholas Pomante*
 - 2) *Approved: Yes-12, No-0 (12 council members present at time of vote)*

3. Public Comment – Anna

9:15-9:19am

- Azella Markgraf, City of Ann Arbor, mentioned 2 upcoming events.
 - 1) Ann Arbor Area Food Donation Workshop: Doubling Impact by 2030. Wednesday June 17th 1:00pm. Link in the chat.

- 2) Local Food Festival: Celebrating local food in our community.
Thursday August 27th 5-8pm. Link in the chat.
- Francesca (FW) Williamson mentioned an upcoming event.
 - 1) Collaboration Kick-Off: Advancing Food and Nutrition Policy at the University of Michigan. Tuesday June 2nd 9-10:30 am. Link in the chat.

4. Council Member Share Out – *Andrew*

9:19-9:36am

- Andrew Paniagua discussed Food Gatherers, the food bank and food rescue program that serves Washtenaw County. They are guided by Feeding America, the National Association of Food Banks and at the state level by the Food Bank Council of Michigan. He showed a map of how different areas of Michigan are served by food banks. Food Gatherers is unique because they only serve Washtenaw County and can build strong relationships with all the major food retailers. Andrew shared the foodgatherers.org website that shows a map of every food pantry and meal program in the county. He also went over how the process works, including where the food comes from, what happens with it at Food Gatherers, and where the food goes. About 50% of the food they receive is through food rescue from major retailers. Two other major sources are government funded programs and purchased food. Food Gatherers has a large number of amazing volunteers that collect, inspect, and sort through the food before it goes out to community partners. Andrew was asked what is one thing he would like to tell about Food Gatherers that a normal citizen might not be aware of. He highlighted the amazing network that exists across the county to make food as accessible as possible and that food is available to everyone.
- At the last executive committee meeting, the topic of “how prevalent are kangaroos in Australia” came up. Andrew showed a picture of the very large carrots outside of the Food Gatherers building as a segue into sharing some photos of Australia, including The Big Potato in the town of Robertson. It recently lost its title of Australia’s Worst Big Thing to the Giant Koala. The answer about kangaroos is that they are all over the place.

5. PAT Updates – *Anna*

9:36-10:00am

a) Food Waste & Packaging – *Noelle*

- Noelle said the PAT continues to meet monthly, but there is no meeting in May. They have been pushing the Resolution in Support of Coordinating the Donation of Surplus Food from County Events to Pathways for Human Consumption. They added additional resources on how to help with implementation. Members want to have the pathway defined before events occur and not last minute at the end of an event. Justin Hodge said the resolution is planned for the agenda at next week’s Board of Commissioners (BOC) meeting. He will ask staff to reach out to the WFPC for support in implementation of the resolution. As it is written now, Washtenaw County events would be encouraged to donate surplus food and not required to. Anna suggested having a one-page information sheet to give to people hosting events with phone numbers and the rules for being able to donate surplus food. Peter suggested adding a tracking element with a short

form to fill out if anyone is using the guidance on donating surplus food. Justin added that the pollinator week resolution is scheduled for the BOC in June.

b) Food Access & Nutrition (FAN)– *Dayna & Kelly*

- Kelly said the PAT received approval to update the county webpage with local food access resources. A small group will get together to work on updates and submit to the county. They discussed the Right to Food Resolution at the last meeting. The meeting in May has been moved to May 18th at 3:30pm.

c) Pollinators – *Mitch*

- Mitch said he is stepping away as chair of the PAT. He still plans to finish the pollinator policy mapping across municipalities. He will pass it along and have it stored by the WFPC. It might be added to the database Planning & Zoning PAT is working on or just be a stand-alone document that can be updated every 2 years. Once complete, it should be shared widely. Anna thanked Mitch for all of his work!

d) Planning & Zoning – *Lunia & Peter*

- Lunia said the PAT continues to meet bi-monthly and the next meeting is May 26th. They recently cleaned out the listserv and are working on recruiting more members.

6. Working Session

10:00-10:32am

- Andrew talked about the draft Right to Food Resolution that Growing Hope and the FAN-PAT have been working on. He sent an email to the group in advance of the meeting. He also shared a recording of Julius Buzzard (Executive Director of Growing Hope) and Growing Hope's academic partner, Francesca Williamson (FW), talking about the purpose and potential impacts. FW said they hope to collaborate with Washtenaw County and have this lead to a statewide coalition. Justin said there are certain elements that are totally fine and there are certain pieces that are asking for more action than a resolution would typically do. He is working on scheduling a meeting with Julius Buzzard to discuss the resolution and figure out what parts make sense as a resolution and what parts make sense as something else. The WFPC can pass what they want and it would come to the BOC as a communication. If the WFPC passes it, the BOC would take out the parts that wouldn't be relevant at this point. Anna suggested waiting for the meeting with Julius to make revisions and then have the WFPC support it or not. Andrew asked if there are any examples around the country on how this has translated into actionable steps for policy change. FW said the one that is furthest along is the one in Maine. There were some regulations that were removed so people could engage in traditional food practices. She said that it is great feedback to look into the implementation plans.
- Andrew shared an email with council members about MSU Center for Regional Food Systems (MSUCRFS) looking for representatives of local food councils for a new project. Sounds like it is a yearlong project.

- Anna talked about the Resilient Washtenaw Plan. It is available on the shared drive. She discussed the areas that Beth Gibbons highlighted that WFPC work could overlap. Some of these include Create Resilience Hubs Countywide, Expand and Maintain County Tree Canopy, Farmland Preservation, **Create Opportunities for Local Food Production on County Properties**, and **Develop a County Wide Organics/Compost Program**. Anna suggested adding additional working meetings to discuss further.

7. Open Comment (Council Members and Public)

10:32-10:32am

- None.

8. Adjourn – VOTE

10:32-10:32am

- Motion: To adjourn meeting.
 - 1) *Motion: Crystal Lecoq, Seconded: Andrew Paniagua*
 - 2) *Approved: Yes-13, No-0 (13 council members present at time of vote)*

ACTION ITEMS

- Russ will send out links mentioned in public comments for upcoming events.
- Russ will send out link to last month's meeting recording.
- Develop a one-pager resource for donating surplus foods from county events.
- Pre-meeting to discuss Resilient Washtenaw Plan items further. Peter will schedule/lead a strategic planning session.

RECORDED VOTES

1. **Motion 1**: To approve the April 2026 meeting minutes.
 - a. Approved: Yes-12, No-0
2. **Motion 2**: To approve the May 2026 meeting agenda.
 - a. Approved: Yes-12, No-0
3. **Motion 3**: To adjourn the May 2026 meeting.
 - a. Approved: Yes-13, No-0

CHAT TRANSCRIPT

2026-05-13 09:01:40 From Peter Lindeman to Everyone:

Hey all - calling in from the car but will be to the LRC shortly

2026-05-13 09:03:36 From Alexander McKay to Everyone:

I have a lot of background noise on my end, but I am Alex McKay attending remotely from the Agritourism Summit in Traverse City, representing rural agriculture.

2026-05-13 09:17:43 From Francesca [FW] Williamson she.her to Everyone:

We are excited to see many of you on Tuesday, June 2nd, at our first IFNHP in-person gathering, "Collaboration Kick-Off: Advancing Food and Nutrition Policy at the University of Michigan." The event will be held from 9 to 10:30 am on North Campus in NCRC Building 10, Rooms G063 and G064. Parking is very easy near the building. Please enter through Building 18. Breakfast will be provided!

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfR0g2ARd_MouPO06BEKeplg5fs1W1xtWcZYgWDYOv

ZL8kYzQ/viewform

2026-05-13 09:19:16 From Azella Markgraf | City of Ann Arbor to Everyone:

https://misbf.org/blog/misbf_events/ann-arbor-food-donation-workshop-doubling-impact-by-2030/

2026-05-13 09:20:00 From Azella Markgraf | City of Ann Arbor to Everyone:

Ann Arbor Local Food Festival: a2gov.org/localfoodfest

2026-05-13 09:37:27 From Mitch Seymour to Everyone:

Book recommendation: "Feeding the Other: Whiteness, Privilege, and Neoliberal Stigma in Food Pantries"

Azella Markgraf | City of Ann Arbor: ❤️

2026-05-13 09:42:56 From Justin Hodge to Everyone:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Commissioners encourages all Washtenaw County-funded events that provide prepared food or packaged food, made in a licensed kitchen under local regulatory authority jurisdiction, to make arrangements prior to the event to donate food that has not been served or displayed. Donation sites may include charitable organizations, community meal provision sites, and donated food distribution sites.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Commissioners encourages entities holding events to use the Michigan State University Extension guidance on donating potential food not served or displayed and/or the Food Gatherers Food Safety Resources.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners supports the communication of and education around diverting surplus food at county events from landfills.

2026-05-13 10:03:30 From Francesca [FW] Williamson she.her to Everyone:

Growing Hope Right to Food page: Includes a Right to Food Declaration for Washtenaw County, a place for residents to endorse the declaration, and a link to the MI Right to Food: Community Story Survey
<https://www.growinghope.net/righttofood>