



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

**(301) 952-3700**  
**County Council**

**Prince George's County Council  
Food Security Task Force Minutes  
January 8, 2021**

Attendees:

Council Member Todd M. Turner, Chair  
Dr. Deborah Archer, University of MD Extension  
Elana Belon-Butler, Department of Family Services  
Renee Carroll, Director, Housing Counseling & Supportive Housing  
Dr. William Campbell, Senior Pastor, Union Bethel AME Church  
Nicole Hall, Economic Development  
Leslie Jefferson, Giant Food  
Dennis Lewis, Department of Social Services  
Stacey Little, UM Capital Region Health  
Gail Livingstone, Deep Roots Farm  
Kimberly Rush Lynch, Soil Conservation District  
Maria Martin, Parks & Recreation  
Roberto Melara, Capital Area Food Bank  
Aimee Olivo, County Council Representative  
Dr. Darlene Saunders, Department of Health  
Joan Shorter, Prince George's County Public Schools  
Lindsay Smith, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
Erica Berry-Wilson, County Executive's Office

Consultants

Julia Groenfeldt, Prince George's County Food Equity Council  
Evelyn Kelly, Institute for Public Health Innovation

Council Staff

Sandra Eubanks, Education & Work Force Development Committee Director  
Leroy Maddox, Legislative Officer  
Leonard Moses, Clerk's Office  
Shirley Anglin, Administrative Aide  
Sharon Williams, Administrative Aide

1. Welcome & Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed the members and thanked everyone for their participation in the efforts of the task force.

2. Review & Approval of Minutes – December 4, 2020

The members were requested to provide any corrections to staff. The minutes were approved as drafted.

3. Updates:

a. Food Assistance Provider Call (Julia Groenfeldt)

- i. The January call featured Alison Mendoza-Walters from the Health Department to share the Healthy Food Priorities Areas map and legislation that was previously presented to this group.
- ii. There were quite a few updates, including an update from County Executive about launching the Stand Up & Deliver program in mid-January and going for another few months.
- iii. There were quite a few questions about delivery options for food assistance -- that seems to be a real need among providers and an interest in exploring that topic further on future calls.
- iv. There was also some discussion around opportunities to co-locate distribution at schools.
- v. We also announced our upcoming partnership with Food Rescue US to launch the Food Recovery Platform in the County -- More information will be provided at the February meeting.

b. Overview of recent MWCOG meetings (Lindsay Smith)

- i. The FARMs call was on January 8th (same day).
- ii. There's been discussion and interest to expand SNAP, Food-as-Medicine and Treatment programs.
- iii. Will be hosting meeting on cold and inclement weather (1/28).
- iv. Upcoming bi-weekly call will focus on farmers markets and food access in the region.
- v. Question about best practices and results with food as medicine:
  1. Evelyn shared that Montgomery County has a food-as-medicine program operated through the Primary Care Coalition.

4. State of the Food Ecosystem of Prince George's County

- a. Planning Department Food Study Update -- Maria Martin, M-NCPPC
  - i. Reports on urban agriculture, healthy food access, and food waste were all written by Gül Guleryuz -- she also helped put together the presentation.
  - ii. Healthy Food for Prince Georgians -- focus areas: Affordability of healthy food, increase sustainable food, and improve transportation and access.
  - iii. Recommended strategy to collaboration between libraries and community members to use computers to order groceries. Libraries could also be a hub for food distribution as mobile food banks.
  - iv. Recommended strategy to launch a healthy grocery store program to make food accessible in underserved neighborhoods -- the health department is working on healthy corner store initiatives. But, in new zoning code there is no incentives to create a grocery store through the green grocery store program.
  - v. Recommended strategy to create food orchards in public parks. They've established lots that are available for lease. The Department of Recreation is developing a program with youth to utilize these lots. There is a possibility of expanding the program.
  - vi. Recommendation to eliminate hunger and food insecurity by ensuring access to affordable and healthy food for all via various policy support outlined in the reports.
  - vii. Questions:
    - 1. University of Maryland was working on a food access program -- interested in working with schools that had previously established relationships -- will circle back with Maria.
    - 2. Ask Parks and Recreation Department to work develop a report on what they're doing and provide an update -- ask them to speak to the top priorities.
    - 3. What would be the top priorities to move forward? A lot of people are having a hard time understanding what the COVID priorities are and what long term priorities are -- For example the Department of Recreation is providing meals that stem from long term needs. There should be more collaboration with other agencies to receive input on strategies -- the Planning Department doesn't have the agency to work on anything independently.
- b. Review past food systems legislation -- Leroy Maddox, Legislative Officer
  - i. Mr. Maddox compiled a document that summarizes food policy work that has occurred since 2009.
  - ii. In 2009, the RAND report was commissioned to evaluate the health of the county. In 2012, the County created a Health Improvement Plan (HIP) (2011-2014).

- iii. This put forward priorities and strategies to prevent and control chronic disease and the need to improve access by healthy food.
- iv. That was further supported by M-NCPPC that laid out policy guidelines for the development of the County. That included developing research, nutrition, food safety and improving access to fresh food county-wide.
- v. As a result of that, the Council voted affirmatively on a series of legislation to accomplish those goals including allowing food trucks, enhancing utilization of farmers markets, encourage SNAP at farmers markets, as well as several bills and resolutions mentioned in the presentation.
- vi. There was an effort on many parts by FEC and Park and Planning -- urban agriculture was a big part of past legislation (that encompasses zoning).
- vii. Questions:
  - 1. Kim Rush-Lynch -- Information on Soil Conservation District (SCD) and Agriculture Legislation:  
The SCD is working on an urban farm incubator project. For more information Chris Fanning and Kyle Low would be good contacts. The urban Agriculture group would also be a good group to loop in.
  - 2. Parks lease about 1200 tillable acres - mainly to commodity farmers but I know there is more being leased for table crops and even cut flowers. Also, the urban farm incubator is about 11 acres total. The details haven't been worked out quite yet. ECO City Farms has been a part of the collaborations and would be a great partner with their beginning farmer training program with Prince George's Community College.
  - 3. Impressed with what has happened on the policy level. Interested in knowing about what is being implemented and what is being addressed -- what is most effective and what needs to be revisited. The implementation needs to be worked on.
  - 4. Food Trucks weren't regulated -- the County cracked down on that. Then saw that the industry had changed so they implemented a policy to allow for Food Trucks. There's a Food Truck Advisory Group that assist Food Truck vendors. This is a good example of addressing policy and ensuring follow up and accountability.
  - 5. This group needs to do an in depth look at what we've done and where we currently are.
  - 6. The County struggles with density, so it's tough to compare to other areas in the region in terms of retail markets. It's difficult to incentivize in this type of landscape.
  - 7. We need to increase land access for new farmers -- We have an urban agriculture group that should advise new farmers.

8. Food Prints is a program that help kids prepare food and understand the food system. Is it possible to implement something like that in Prince George's County?
  - a. We do have Brighter Bites operating at several PGCPs which does similar product taste-testing, education, recipes, etc., and families go home with large bags of produce.
  - b. UMD Deborah Archer works with PGCPs and provide nutrition education and train educators to integrate that into curriculum.
5. Institute for Public Health Innovation & Food Equity Council
  - a. Review of key food systems definitions
  - b. What is a food system?
    - i. You often may see different terms for the components of the food system, but they drill down to 5 different areas.
    - ii. These include Production or Growing, Distribution, Access or Getting Consumption, Recovery or Surplus/Waste.
      1. Grow: Growing and harvesting fruits, vegetables, and other forms of produce by use of soil, hydroponic/aquaculture/aquaponic, or pasture mediums; and raising or keeping animals and insects for food production or pollination, whether for personal or commercial purposes, in urban, suburban, or rural areas (i.e., backyards to large farms). Includes protecting and providing access to resources needed to carry out this process, such as access to land.
      2. Process: Turning fresh produce, honey, meat, fish, and other plant and animal related foods into forms ready for sale, including in restaurants and other commercial settings, and including value-added processing that changes the physical form of the product (e.g., making berries into jam), and packaging.
      3. Distribute: Transporting and delivering food to wholesale, retail, institutional, and other food access points (such as food shelves, food pantries, or food banks and aggregation points such as food hubs). Includes the use of marketing strategies, such as labeling, pricing, placement, promotions, "sell-by" and similar dates, and other marketing techniques, as well as decisions about what types of food will be made available to the consumer, such as procurement decisions.
      4. Get: Activities, practices, systems, and facilities that affect people's ability to obtain and consume healthy food.
      5. Make: Baking, boiling, bottling, canning, cooking, and other processes of making food for consumption, family gatherings, and other non-commercial purposes.

6. Surplus/Waste: The process of food recovery, including gleaning, as well as minimizing, composting, and recycling of food surplus or waste.
- iii. What is food equity?
  1. Providing healthy food with consideration for what is culturally appropriate, combats diet related disease, and provides optimal nutrition for food-insecure communities. (Charlottesville Food Justice Network, 2019).
  2. Food Security is defined as providing healthy food that is culturally appropriate and provides optimal nutrition for food-insecure communities.
  3. Food equity not only considers the immediate need to diminish hunger, but also recognizes the systems and structures that create barriers for access to healthy foods and actively pursues dismantling those barriers.
- iv. What is food security?
  1. According to the UN Committee on World Food Security, food security is defined as the means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for a healthy life."
- v. What is food resilience?
  1. Resilience is the ability to prepare for, withstand, and recover from a crisis or disruption. A resilient food system can with stand and recover from disruptions in a way that ensures that enough supply of acceptable and accessible food for all.
- vi. What is preparedness?
  1. Preparedness is the process of becoming aware of the vulnerabilities of a system and develop strategies that improve its capability to respond to and recover from disruptions.
- vii. Survey Results: [See slides.](#)
  1. Survey Question 1: How should County agencies and the County Council prioritize actions in the next year to advance the food security of County residents?
    - a. Ranking (short to long term)
      - i. Expand food assistance provider network and strengthen provider capacity
      - ii. Increase utilization of federal nutrition assistance benefits and programs
      - iii. Increase coordination, communication, and data sharing among county agencies
      - iv. Modify the food retail environment
      - v. Promote locally grown food production and access

2. Survey Question 2: How should County agencies and County Council prioritize actions in the next year to advance resilience within the local food system?
  - a. Ranking (short to long term)
    - i. Expand food assistance provider network and strengthen provider capacity
    - ii. Increase utilization of federal nutrition assistance benefits and programs
    - iii. Increase coordination, communication, and data sharing among county agencies
    - iv. Promote locally grown food production and access
    - v. Modify the food retail environment
3. Survey Question 3: Survey Question: How should County agencies and the County Council prioritize action in the next year to advance preparedness to respond to food security challenges during disruptions?
  - a. Ranking (short to long term)
    - i. Expand food assistance provider network and strengthen provider capacity
    - ii. Increase coordination, communication, and data sharing among county agencies
    - iii. Increase utilization of federal nutrition assistance benefits and programs
    - iv. Promote locally grown food production and access
    - v. Modify the food retail environment
4. Discussion:
  - a. Slim on data to assess food provider work -- it's a work in progress. We know that there are 85 food distributors. It's a good basis to understand this. We need to collect more data!
  - b. The CAFB has information about the network that they have -- They're trying to figure out how to obtain that information of food that is provided in the County.
  - c. Is there an incentive to get folks to complete data? We could help them get the word out if they provide that information.
  - d. Do we need to increase capacity or number of providers? We have partners that are providing these services: increase the capacity through existing providers. Once that is maximized then it may organically increase the number of providers!
  - e. Can we expand grant programs to increase capacity?

- f. Providing best practices/professional development support for our food providers would also be incredibly helpful. This is happening somewhat through the providers call.
- g. There are also different resources we can provide like heaters and tents, etc. There are many caterers that can support food and meal preparation.

viii. Challenges and Lessons Learned:

1. Challenge themes:

- a. There were many comments about communication and coordination -- including inefficient or ineffective communication among food systems partners and to the community, such as where and how to access food, when donations are happening, etc.
- b. What makes communication among food system players difficult? Is it a lack of partnership or connection?
- c. What makes communication from the system to the community difficult? Is it a lack of understanding of what methods communities' use -- social media, email, print...?
- d. Transportation has consistently been an issue we've heard about -- whether that is opportunities to expand delivery services, improve bus and public transit to grocery stores, understanding how to use and apply benefits and where those locations are.
- e. The food system is a complex structure with lots of challenges and opportunities to intervene -- these impacts play out in each sector in different ways.

2. Lessons learned:

- a. We saw innovative collaborations and partnerships -- we've heard about those on past calls, including partnerships with restaurants to provide meals, partnerships with funders to support new programs like SUD; providers partnering with local farms to increase local food supply.
- b. Political action played a role in ensuring access to food. We saw wider availability of federal and county resources to support residents.
- c. And, perhaps a silver lining of the pandemic is that we've seen topics of food security emerge as a priority for the county.

3. Future Learning:

- a. We asked what you wanted to learn more about -- this is a summary of what we heard from you:
- b. Understand the issues -- what is happening in the County.



- c. Learn from our neighbors --we're inviting Montgomery County and Baltimore City.
  - d. Explore solutions
  - e. We will take these recommendations into consideration for future meetings.
  - f.
- 6. Announcements from Task Force Members
  - a. Phase 38 has been announced -- that will be going out soon.
  - b. CAFB is collecting data on provider partners also developed a legislation report for MD [https://www.capitalareafoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Prince-Georges\\_Exec\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.capitalareafoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Prince-Georges_Exec_Summary.pdf).
  - c. CAFB is developing an advocacy committee to move these forwards.
  - d. Next Tuesday, County food distribution response at County meeting at 10 AM (maybe 10:45).
- 7. Next Meeting – February 12, 2021 at 1:00 pm.
- 8. Adjourn

The Food Security Task Force meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.