

Marin Food Policy Council
Meeting Notes

January 15, 2012

[HHS campus](#)

3240 Kerner Blvd., San Rafael, CA 94901

Attending:

Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting scheduled for:

Tuesday, February 19th, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. @ TBD

Action Items:

Introduction and Welcome:

- Chair Janet Brown shared the following from *Looking At The Whole: Toward a Social Ecology of Health*, by Dr. Richard Levins, John Rock Professor of Population Sciences at the Harvard School of Public Health to open the meeting.

“Health is much more than the absence of disease. It is connected to everything we have or lack, everything we think or believe, everything we do or do not do, everything we encounter, and everything we avoid. When formulating public policies intended to improve food security and nutritional health, we need to think broadly and systemically related to cause and effect. It’s the reason we all need to be here. All perspectives need to be heard in order to ensure a good result.”

“An examination of the changing health patterns over the last hundred years justifies both celebration and dismay.

We can celebrate the increase in life expectancy at birth, the disappearance of smallpox, and the decline of other diseases. We can marvel at technical advances such as the development of reliable heart surgery, methods for diagnosis, and sophisticated electronic imaging.

But, we also have to recognize that diseases we thought were on their way out have returned with a vengeance (tuberculosis, cholera, malaria), and that apparently new diseases have arisen (AIDS, Legionnaire's disease, Ebola, hepatitis C), while microorganisms have shown remarkable flexibility in thwarting our therapies.

Agricultural productivity has risen greatly, but without eliminating hunger. The gap between rich and poor in life expectancy has remained robust for more than a century.

When we examine the pattern of success and failure, it seems as if the successes occur in the solution of narrow, highly specific problems (smallpox), while the dramatic failures appear at the level of whole systems (wide disparities in health).

When assessing health, then, our task is to integrate these insights and to confront health, society, and habitat as a whole, in its full complexity. Health is produced and eroded in a natural and social environment that varies in time, space, and according to the social locations of people in various hierarchical, cooperative and competitive relationships.

External influences — chemical, physical and microbial — impinge on each of us in a pattern that depends on how we produce and consume goods and use our time. What happens next depends on the coping mechanisms that we develop in the course of a lifetime. The external becomes part of the internal; previous experience alters our body and mind and our behavior in ways that influence how we respond to the next encounter.

Our own physiological and psychological processes erase these impacts, some of them rapidly, some slowly, and some so slowly they have permanent effects on us. But the internal also becomes external, as our own activity selects, transforms, and even defines our environment.

For the most part, this pattern was not constructed with health in mind. The health consequences are essentially random side effects of economic and social processes. But their consequences have become so powerful and pervasive that we now have to intervene in social development with health and well-being in mind.”

That is essentially what we are doing by working together as The Marin Food Policy Council—confronting health, society and habitat as a whole, and intervening in social development with health and well-being in mind. That is our purpose.

Levins also points out a need to avoid false dichotomies that often plague public health initiatives and inevitably lead to failure. He asks us to consider two propositions:

- We are each responsible for our own health, and
- Health is socially determined.”

- This was then followed by Council member self-introductions and sharing New Year’s wishes for the Council:
 - Be active
 - Increase CalFresh participation with Spanish speaking residents and elderly
 - Continue providing fresh products for the West Marin Pantry
 - Learn about MFPC and how to support
 - Create a permanent home for farmers market
 - Farm Bill changes that support access to healthy food
 - Good work that radiates outward
 - MFPC is fruitful in this iteration
 - Learn from each other
 - Access to local organic food in schools
 - Increase CalFresh enrollment
 - Demystifying myths that are barriers to participation in CalFresh
 - No one is hungry
 - McDonald’s goes bankrupt
 - Learn about nutrition education and coordinate
 - Represent infant nutrition

- Expand opportunities for community gardens
- MFPC produces effective policy agenda

Council representation and governance:

- Revisit and finalize both at the February meeting

Supporting implementation of existing policies and developing new opportunities

- David Lewis lead a brief review of the Council’s timeline with milestones for accomplishing development of policy recommendations:
 - January - Begin identifying themes and discussion areas
 - February - Continue to identify themes and discussion areas
 - Begin focused theme and area discussions
 - March through August - Continue focused theme and area discussions
 - June through September - Drafting and compiling policy recommendations
 - October - Submitting draft policy recommendations
- Janet Brown continued the discussion about existing policies in the Countywide Plan.

What jumps out to you?

- Leah Smith and Janet Brown lead a brainstorming session use the WORDLE of Council Member input and asking the questions “what is jumping out to you?” to generate a list of policy issues and themes for the Council to work on. The initial list is:
 - Food security
 - Food stamps/ CalFresh
 - Community Gardens
 - Encouraging production of foods in small ways on small plots
 - Schools
 - Wellness
 - Lunch and breakfast (one meal and snack)
 - Youth
 - Affordable
 - Access
 - Grocery stores in communities (Marin City closed)
 - Gaps and barriers
 - Improve communication on eligibility
 - Gaps and barriers

- Improve communication around eligibility
- Fix the system
- Aging population growing with increasing nutrition needs
- Aging
- Taxing structures and incentives supporting regional and local sourcing
- Soda tax
- Local agriculture and local production

Getting to one or two

- Council Members then were asked to identify up to three issues or policies for the Council to begin its work in the February and March meetings. This resulted the following two, including leads that will work with the Steering Committee on the agendas for upcoming meetings (others are welcome to join as leads):
 - **Healthy Access** (Leads: Marty Graff, Sheila Kopf, Joseph Pierutoski, Alexandra Danino)
 - CalFresh
 - Food Banks
 - Congregate Meals/Home Delivery
 - Support/Education
 - Empowering people to take care of themselves
 - Expanding programs
 - Taxing schemes and supporting regional screening
 - Health
 - **Production** (Leads: Stacy Smith, Janet Brown, and David Lewis)
 - Community garden
 - School garden
 - Open space
 - Edible landscaping
 - Local Farms
 - Measure A

HEAL Marin Grant Opportunity Introduction:

- Final framework ready with launch in March
 - Four Teams
 - Early Childhood Team
 - Active Living Team
 - School and After-school Team
 - MFPC Implementation Team
- Mini grants of \$12,000 available to support teamwork and implementation of HEAL
 - Capacity building

- Conference and education

California Food Policy Council:

- Presented the role and connection with State process
- February decision to ratify it

Next Meeting:

- Set for Tuesday, February 19th, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm
- Places
 - San Geronimo Community Center
 - Commission on Aging
 - Draft agenda:
 - Welcome
 - MFPC representation and governance
 - CFPC Principles and ratification
 - HEAL Mini-Grant opportunity
 - Work on Access policy themes and issues