

**Marin Food Policy Council**  
Meeting Notes

April 16, 2013  
[HHS campus](#)

**Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting scheduled for:**

Tuesday, May 21th, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. @ [HHS campus](#)

**Handouts:**

CWP Ag & Food Element Related Policy and Program Table, Community Picnic handout, Novato Healthy Hub Farmers Market Food Pantry handout, Bob Brown's presentation "Working with Local Government to create Community Gardens"

**Action Items:**

**Introduction and Welcome:**

Chair Janet Brown welcomed all attendees to the meeting and introduced the focus of Production by sharing the following:

"This is the first meeting of the Council devoted specifically to Healthy Production and focused on community, school, and household, garden development.

There is a particular excitement to this work, because it promotes self-sufficiency. In the words of Wendell Berry, leading American essayist and Kentucky farmer, "Self-sufficiency is the foundation for peace."

I'll quote our friend Jeanette Armstrong, Okanagan wisdom-keeper from British Columbia, who describes true community food security as, "When the people are feeding themselves, within a pattern that can be repeated, from generation to generation."

I love the thinking of Ron Finely, self-described guerrilla gardener from South Central LA, who's done that math that proves, in his words, that "Growing your own food is like printing your own money."

As we contemplate feeding ourselves, it behooves us to improve our thinking about what agriculture really is, and to form a more complete and sophisticated understanding of how comprehensive our needs really are. Agriculture is a land-based enterprise. A full definition of agriculture might be; the production of food, fiber, flowers, fodder, forage, and fuel, the growing of row crops, the raising and keeping of livestock, dairying, aquaculture, timber production, apiaries, nurseries, orcharding, floraculture, seed production, mycology, and medicinal plants.

The food system is defined as the entire set of decisions, connections, relationships, and processes that control the production and distribution of food from field to table. Food

and agricultural systems depend upon the natural world, with broad and diverse implications at every level of scale.

Planning for sustainability recognizes even distant effects of human decisions upon human well-being, upon the viability of natural systems, as well as their necessity to coexist. A problem-solving effort that seeks to consider other species, and the land itself, is fundamental.

In planning for the well-being of present and future residents of Marin County, commonsense dictates that ensuring the sustainability of the food system, and universal access to sufficient nutritious food for all residents, is of primary importance. Equity, that quality of distributed ownership that results in broadening access to land and resources, as well as decision-making authority related to production, are keys to securing those elements for all Marin communities.

Implied in all of this is a choice about who we are and how we want to live. Our choices will dictate how we use planning and policy. Once the lens of sustainability is invoked, time horizons are moved outward considerably, and our thinking must also exceed former limits of human centered concerns as the exclusive yardstick of relevance or competing need.

True community food security is the outcome of a planning process that considers human patterns of living and competing needs for resources while maintaining a focus on health as the overall assessment tool. Designing food into communities, and shortening the distance from field to table are dramatic and right-headed steps in that direction.”

## **CalFresh Update by Council Representatives Rebecca Smith and Marty Graff:**

Council Representative Marty Graff reported that since the last MFPC meeting in March, there have been multiple meetings to develop and coordinate CalFresh Awareness efforts. Council Representative Rebecca Smith described the multi-layered media outreach including: email blasts to providers, social media options, and newspaper inserts in English and Spanish, that will be targeting seniors and Spanish speakers. They also introduced upcoming in-person outreach efforts, including: the Community Picnic on May 18<sup>th</sup> from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at HHS, two Application Assistor Trainings to train Assistors in helping applicants fill out applications in such a way to expedite processing, and the CalFresh-in-a-Day event on May 28<sup>th</sup>, where people can come with prepared applications and leave the day knowing whether they've been accepted to the program. Council Representative Leah Smith suggested a Press Release announcing both the MFPC recommendation to the Board on May 7<sup>th</sup> as well as the relaunch of AIM's Market Match program.

## **CalFresh Resolution Recommendation to the Board on May 7th:**

Council Representative David Lewis confirmed that the CalFresh Resolution Recommendation is on the Board's Agenda for May 7<sup>th</sup>, with the exact time to be announced. He shared on behalf of Liza Crosse the reminder that the recommendation be kept simple and short, no more than 10 minutes total split between 2-3 representatives – perhaps a CalFresh participant such as Claudia Canjura as well as a program representative such as Marty Graff. Other MFPC representatives are encouraged to attend the meeting in a show of support and solidarity; while they won't have time to speak, there will be time for other representatives to stand and be introduced. The Steering Committee agreed to coordinate participation and representation; please email Bonnie Nielsen at [banielsen@ucanr.edu](mailto:banielsen@ucanr.edu) if you plan to attend the meeting.

## **CWP Food & Ag Element Table of Related Policies and Programs discussion:**

Chair Janet Brown introduced the CWP Table of related policies and programs identified by the Steering Committee and Susan Martinelli as being potential “low-hanging fruit” of policies to focus our work on. Janet reminded the Council that the Countywide Plan is a guidance document for unincorporated areas that is often a reference for the general plans of cities and incorporated areas. The ensuing discussion touched upon the following points:

- The potential of the Council to serve in a capacity building role, to collect collaboration for groups without resources (such as schools) and bring funding to the County.
- The challenges that Marin faces in qualifying for federal money; the largest barrier being the 19 school districts, each with their own agendas. A consistent policy, perhaps around wellness, may help – there is currently zero language around food in district policy. The Council could potentially endorse language around school wellness policies as a way in. Pilot policies are in place with some success, the question lies in bringing those to scale.

Council representatives are encouraged to look at the Marin Countywide Plan Update Agriculture and Food element policies (found at: [www.co.marin.ca.us/EFiles/docs/CD/CoastalProgram/09\\_0727\\_IT\\_090701105359.pdf](http://www.co.marin.ca.us/EFiles/docs/CD/CoastalProgram/09_0727_IT_090701105359.pdf)) along with the table, keeping in mind how these policies and programs may relate to their organizations and clientele. The council will revisit the Table and related suggestions at future meetings.

## **Community Gardens Learning:**

**Tom Wilson, ED of Canal Alliance and Daniel Werner from Canal Alliance:**

Presentation – [History and Background of the Canal Community Garden](#)

Additional key points:

- Needs: good site location, land/space, support of local government, interested individual, funding, invested partners, and engaged & committed participants.
- Hurdles: while funding is always an obvious hurdle, equally challenging was finding an appropriate location with the necessary attributes (accessible, sunny, good sized, non-toxic, etc.).
- Success is really dependent on the strength of individual gardeners.

- It was a huge collaboration, and the goal is to work towards passing management along to individual gardeners themselves.
- Ultimate cost \$600,000.

**Bob Brown, Director of Novato Community Development:**

Presentation - "[Working with Local Government to create Community Gardens](#)"

Additional key points:

- Meet early and often with neighbors to smooth the way.
- Hurdles: lack of organization and lack of resources, lack of infrastructure to manage the project.
- Having local government approval upfront is key in simplifying the process. Being able to show existing policies in the CWP with help; then government is merely being asked to help support put into place what they have already deemed a priority.
- It all depends on relationships, people interacting with people.

**Discussion and summary:**

- CWP existing policies are a good place to begin; CWP can set a precedent for general plans of incorporated cities.
- Potential work for the Council to pursue: inventory of land for potential sites, develop zoning template(s) for permitting for community gardens, look into permitted allowances, use San Francisco and Berkeley as examples.
- Funding potential from Measure A?
- Pay attention to areas where there is the greatest need and fewest existing gardens to direct Council's focus -
  - Trust for Public Land working with Marin City
  - Including edibles as part of demonstration gardens?
- Reminder that the Council's role is to facilitate policy statements.

**Council Representatives' Updates:**

Council Representative Richard Waxman shared about the success of last Thursday's Novato Healthy Hub Farmers Market Food Pantry sponsored by Lift-Levante, San Francisco and Marin Food Banks, and Marin Community Clinics. 571 people representing 117 households were fed in an impressive showing of community support and engagement. The afternoon events feature nutrition counseling, fitness programs, talks on subjects such as healthy shopping on a budget, and CalFresh outreach and will continue on Thursdays from 3 – 7 p.m. at the Marin Community Clinic on 6100 Redwood Blvd. in Novato.

Council Representatives Richard Waxman and Rebecca Smith shared about the launch of the 4-year CX3 project – Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention (CX3), highlighting major points:

- An assessment of accessibility to healthy foods and wellness information will take place in this first year, and the following 3 years will be devoted to action responses based on the assessment.

- Communities will select priorities of development based on the results of the assessment, and make neighborhood changes based on the data collected.
- There will be a [Program Launch](#) before the [Community Picnic](#) on Saturday, May 18, from 10 – 11 a.m. at the [HHS campus](#)

The meeting wrapped up just after 5 pm with the following remarks from Chair Janet Brown:

"It is not easy to cross boundaries to adopt a whole-systems approach to health. It means leaving the areas we know well and venturing into fields where we have to depend on the expertise of others. It means learning unfamiliar concepts and mastering new tools to engage complexity. It means asking people to take health into account in making decisions that usually depend on other considerations. It may provoke controversy. It may make people we approach uneasy and even angry. It requires patience, imagination, courage, integrity, and a sense of humor."

- Dr. Richard Levins, John Rock Professor of Population Science, Harvard School of Medicine

### **Next Meeting:**

- Set for Tuesday, May 21st, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the [HHS campus](#)
- Will continue with the Community Gardens focus, perhaps incorporating school gardens as well.
  - Potential speakers include: Bob Brown and Tom Lai of Community Development Agency to draft development and/or zoning template(s); Miguel Villareal; Trathen Heckman, ED of Daily Acts in Petaluma
- Steering Committee will meet to plan for next meeting