

Marin Food Policy Council  
Meeting Notes  
July 15, 2014  
[HHS campus](#)

**Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting:** August 19, 2014, 3-5p.m. @ [HHS campus](#)

**Attendees:**

*Steering Committee* - Janet Brown (AllStar Organics); David Lewis (UCCE Marin); Bonnie Nielsen (UCCE Marin); Leah Smith (AIM); Julia Van Soelen Kim (UCCE Marin);

*Committee Members* – Al Baylacq (Good Earth Natural Foods); Alexandra Danino (SF/Marin Food Bank); Deborah Schoenbaum (YLI); Denise Trevino (YLI); Elani Negussie (HHS); Gail Crain (CAM); Kate Donnelly (HHS, Social Services); Miguel Villareal (Novato USD); Susan Martinelli (Breastfeeding Coalition); Terrie Green (Marin City Community Services District)

*Guests* – Zachary Whittles (YLI)

**Handouts:**

- MFPC 1 page handout
- Novato Wellness handout

**Welcome and opening remarks** (Janet Brown)

**Update on Marin Health Council** (David Lewis)

David reported to the council about a presentation to the Marin Health Council about the MFPC, noting where we crossover with their issues and interests. David and Rebecca attended the meeting, presented and responded to Q&A for 30 minutes. David handed out a one page document and shared the Powerpoint presentation, which are resources any MFPC member can use to communicate to our organizations and/or boards.. The Marin Health Council website display's its mission statement; their goal is to give input to BOS on how to increase Marin County residents' health. They are interested in our Council's model of meeting to work on policy as our central focus. They are added to our meeting outreach, and their members are welcome to our meetings. They had a lot of interest in CalFresh. Suggestion: we might start thinking about restaurants and other food businesses to add to our group. Our connection was motivated by a few BOS's suggestions.

**Update on the ongoing formation of the Youth Commission** (Deborah Schoenbaum and Zachary Whittles)

- Zachary – Youth Commission is group of ~20 board-appointed youth from all around Marin, ~ 16-22 years old. They receive funding from BOS, and look at their communities to identify problems and work on solutions. In their first year, he worked on prescription drug abuse, passed resolution with board promoting drug take-back day, removing opportunity for abuse in the home. In their second

year, he was the chair of the environmental justice committee, and worked on photo voice project on problems in low income communities. They visited low-income communities and talked to community members. The outcome of their efforts was a photo narrative display which gave voice and communicated the issues they discovered. Zachary was shocked by the similarities of issues that came up in remote locations isolated by geography - Same issues, regardless of who. The Youth Commission lets youth bring their opinions to the table, since normally they don't have much power in politics. The Commission gives youth the opportunity to make change where they see change is needed.

**Action Item:** (Deborah) YLI is in the process of recruitment for new Commissioners until August 1<sup>st</sup>. They want youth who think outside the box, and who might be struggling to find a voice. Applications accessed online at [http://www.yli.org/media/docs/5284\\_BoardJobDescriptionrevJune2013.pdf](http://www.yli.org/media/docs/5284_BoardJobDescriptionrevJune2013.pdf) or contact Deborah. Application process includes a written component and personal interview. 2 commissioners per district, plus 10 for underserved youth. 6 returning commissioners this year so can appoint 14 new. YLI helps youth ID issues they want to tackle, do the research, come up with strategies or campaigns to alleviate issues, help lead them through the process. YLI is adult allies, don't tell them what to do. Council began in 1987, one of first in the US and one of the largest still. Large interest in tackling the food justice issues this year, hope commissioners can attend meetings. Likely will target West Marin issues this upcoming year, anticipate lots of activity with West Marin youth, also will meet with Rebecca at the end of the month on collaborating with youth she works with. Want to focus on storefront makeovers. Also want to work on underage alcohol consumption, can be addressed through storefront makeovers.

- Elani – Q. focus on West Marin = exclude other areas? A. No, want to train anyone and partner to work with other folks. Friday Night Live = any social engagement work motivates youth in refraining from drinking alcohol, have FNL chapters all over the County. Would like Marin City to partner with the Commission on storefront makeovers.

- Miguel – Q. is every high school represented? A. Almost every high school, but it's not part of the mandate. Can also include Middle School. In Novato there are two high schools with separate identities. There is an FNL chapter at Marin Oaks in Novato. Work closely with the Novato Youth Council made up of youth from both high schools.

Alexandra – Q. time commitment per week? A. Because I'm (Zachary) interested in it I'm always thinking about it. Average = 2-3 hours per week for meetings and larger excursions?

- Al – Q. storefront makeovers mostly about messaging? A. Whole process: assessment of store and surrounding community and its needs, proposing scope of changes in the store that the youth help implement. Replace signage, building produce bins, celebration, promotion. Friendlier conversation because of the youth's involvement. 4-year grant from Kaiser.

- Julia – Q. Commission might have youth reps attend out meetings – is there anything in terms of our meeting structure that might facilitate that? A. Some of the commissioners have more difficulty getting out of school than others. If they can't make the beginning, maybe they could join at the end.

## **Finalize process for Letters of Support from the Marin Food Policy Council (Janet Brown)**

Consensus on process for approving Letters of Support. Can we agree on guidelines? Ideas for your consideration for our ideal situation:

- Time to consider and discuss letter requests as a Council
- Groups wishing for letters need to plan ahead and contact Steering Committee with letter of support beforehand
- Members/groups may also address the Council with potential requests for pre-approval
- Steering Committee will email synopsis and template letter in advance of next meeting
- Review in person at the next meeting, and ask for consensus
- What we as a group want to do is support one another in having our dreams come true
  - o Council agrees on this process

When groups don't have enough time for this process...? How should Steering Committee respond?

- Gail – Suggestion from another group's process: if you are in favor, can we add you and your organization's name to this letter? This way we can support as individuals via email. Who can sign ON? This wouldn't allow MFPC to send a letter without 100% agreement.

- Susan – Could the MFPC have a list of topics considered generally supported, if it falls in that category we would consider it ok? Might be hard to come up with such a list.

- Leah – If things don't line up exactly, could there be something we could do differently for in-house projects that have already come up somewhat?

- Elani – We are all committed to food access for all, but to strengthen alliances, it's important that we know each other and each other's projects well so we can synergize and collaborate well for a collective impact. You have stronger alliances and understanding of people's work when you know what folks are involved in, which helps with communication and understanding, so that when questions come up we are all on the same page.

- Alexandra – I value having the voice of the community, need to be aware of where our community interests are. Gaps if we don't have community input. If we really want to serve, best voice and ideas are from the community.

- Terrie – The same issue came up at a food access meeting I was just at, happens constantly. It would be so much better if folks listened to the community members from the beginning.

- Julia – Do we need specific bullet points on how to proceed next time? Steering Committee is asking for clarity.

**New Policy for Letters of Support:** End consensus from discussion is that letters of support must be brought before the Council for in-person discussion at a meeting before the Council can sign on. If there is not time to do this, then individual Council members can invite support or sign-ons from individual organization via email, but cannot obtain full support or endorsement from the Council. IF there is something that comes along and is critically important—once

in a blue moon—the Steering Committee may ask for email support from the full Council and would not send a letter if there were any objections.

**School Meals** (Janet Brown and Julia Van Soelen Kim)

There didn't used to be a school lunch program. Problem of chronic malnutrition realized when young men were unfit to serve in military draft because of malnutrition in childhood. School lunch program began as a matter of national security.

**- Novato Unified School District Food and Nutrition Services – Miguel Villarreal**

We have found our weapons of mass destruction – in the processed foods we consume and serve our kids! Today people aren't qualifying for service because they are overfed and undernourished. This is my 50<sup>th</sup> year of consuming school meals! Critical to success: principal, parents, food service provider, but also the superintendent of district sets the stage for the entire district, has to have the vision. What can I do differently that what we did before (working with Industry; it's all driven by Industry). Redefining the role of the school food service director as hub of wellness in schools. Everything we do involves "wellness" (newsletter, website, social media presence...), monthly wellness ambassador meetings. Everything we do every day involves Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community. Wellness events and café days engage everyone. Also involved in: gleaning days, exercise together before school day starts, fruit and smoothie mornings from share tables, sugar-savvy training, staff wellness, and more. Last week we had a full week of cooking camp designed and put on by a 17 year old girl. Huge success, want to expand to more cooking camps for more kids taught by youth. In Novato we haven't served our kids any highly processed red meat for the past 3 years, haven't served chocolate milk or juice, removed lots of highly processed foods – though not written into policy. Working on writing into our policy what we've been practicing to strengthen our wellness policy. Also want to work on developing wellness videos to tell our story. I've been talking to families in the Rio Grande Valley about improving their health for 5 minutes each show for the past few weeks.

- Denise – Q. Are these wellness events at all school campuses? A. These are examples of events that have happened at specific sites. Q. How about going into the classroom to have a discussion about food and what has been happening, such as meatless Mondays? A. Miguel did this last year, reached about 250 youth, using the Youth Speaks videos "The Bigger Picture," created by youth around music having to do with diabetes and wellness and the ways of the world. Kids ask how they can help and say they want to be a part of it. The two Novato high schools have had redone cafeterias, serving same food but re-worked and re-designed, such as with huge salad bar with organic fruits and veggies first thing upon entering. Denise would love to collaborate with Miguel or intern at Marin Oaks.

**- Organic School Lunch Program, Good Earth – Al Baylacq**

10<sup>th</sup> year of Good Earth school lunch program. The vision wasn't to make money. Started working with private schools that could afford \$4-5 per lunch, helped it get off the ground and running. Always hot, always organic. 90% of

ingredients are certified organic, \$5.60/lunch. Larkspur is our biggest market. Kid-friendly food being as healthy as possible = our goal. We're gradually getting there – push-back not only from an expense standpoint, but not all of them are used to whole grains and flours and such. Struggle to provide the nutrition and keep the likeability. Rounding out of program includes education and outreach and culture of food and people eating together; our ability to influence how kids perceive food. Difficulties: keeping it exciting, execute new dishes at volume we need to (~1500 kids at 15 campuses per day, about 50/50 private/public), keeping things fresh (variety of delivery options). Over the years we've been involved with 30 different schools, we have 14 schools under contract to begin in August. ~7500-8000 meals per week. 4 of our 5 vans run on biodiesel.

- Gail – Q. Have you heard the term “re-distribution” of school food? Food that can't be re-served in the classroom but can be re-distributed throughout the community. A. Novato isn't doing it at this time. Miguel could send information on it.

- Liana – [Extrafood.org](http://Extrafood.org) will pick up food if you have at least 10 prepared extra meals. Liana would like to discuss our Farm Field Studies with you about doing better on connecting our farm visits with what you are doing.

- Leah – Q. What are the obstacles to making the programs you're engaged in county-wide – and is there any policy the County could adopt to make that easier? A. Novato USD is working with MCOE on expanding programs beyond Novato, they are interested and supportive, and when we get to a point, MFPC could help with support. Mary Jane Burke knows we're meeting and is supportive. Good Earth's main issues are around being able to transport and hold hot food – how to provide a lot of food centrally and getting it out safely UNPACKAGED. Solution: cafeterias back in schools, need a chef/food service director at every school. Superintendent and budgeting for school lunch programs is the highest need. Replace heat and serve kitchens with cooking food kitchens. School cafeteria from 12-1 and then more afterwards?? Connect with community disaster preparedness... Working kitchens in each district is a policy issue, related to shared use agreements work. Active teachers for better nutrition in schools also important. Having resources for engaged parents, a roadmap of how to advocate for school wellness policies and what needs to be done would also be really helpful. In the last 5 years Novato has built 4 new kitchens and dining rooms with upgraded equipment, hoping this extends to other districts.

- Deborah – Idea: new Novato facilities being incorporated with curriculum, could there be options for students to learn culinary skills and engage the community, involving gardens and kids teaching other kids as well as parents about cooking?

### **Council representative updates (All)**

- Denise – Email application language and procedure, please pass it on.

- Leah – AIM submitted a proposal for the Mobile Market to MCF, appreciate the letters of support from individual organizations in the room.

- Elani – please fill out the Doodle poll for the Marin City Tour. Also, Healthy Retail begins tomorrow in Canal, will report back and look for your support.

- Terrie – Childrens Edible Gardens Project: have gotten lot of pots donated from Sonoma Compost but need more pots, soil, and seedlings. Appreciate outreach.

- Julia – for those orgs that work directly with farmers, there is a toolkit for helping farms accept EBT/CalFresh. Program give farmers a free EBT machine to accept EBT at farm stands, farmers market stalls, and through CSAs. For more information: [http://www.petalumabouty.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CalFresh\\_EBT-Toolkit-for-Farmers.pdf](http://www.petalumabouty.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CalFresh_EBT-Toolkit-for-Farmers.pdf)

- Julia - UCCE has proposed 4 new positions for advisors who would work with Marin food and agriculture. If interested, please provide your online comments on the need and relevance for small farms, diary, nutrition , 4H youth development advisors. Deadline is 7/21/14. See follow up email for details.

**Closing remarks (Janet Brown)**

*"It's 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

**Meeting adjured** at 5:05 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, August 19, 2014, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at [HHS campus](#)