

Marin Food Policy Council
Meeting Notes
November 17, 2015
[HHS campus](#)

Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting: December 15, 2015, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. [HHS campus](#)

Attendees:

Steering Committee – Janet Brown (AllStar Organics); Alexandra Danino (SF/Marin Food Bank); Bonnie Nielsen (UCCE Marin); Reba Meigs (HHS); Steve Schwartz (Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative)

Committee Members – Angela Struckmann (HHS); Becky Gershon (SF/Marin Food Bank); Cío Hernández (HHS); Elaini Negussie (HHS); June Farmer (Marin City Community Services District); Kiely Hosmon (Youth Leadership Institute); Lauren Klein (UCCE Marin); Lori Davis (Sanzuma); Peter Healey (AIM); Sarah Schoenbaum (Marin County Youth Commission); Terrie Green (Marin City Community Services District)

Guests – Ann Mathieson (Marin Promise Partnership for Educational Equity & Excellence); Brigitte Moran (AIM); Jamison Watts (MALT); Paulette Swallow (UCCE)

Welcome & Council Representative Announcements – Janet Brown

- Lori: letter for support to raise money to build a greenhouse for all Marin County schools to use. Passed around for Council member sign on.
- Reba: press release on the MFPC Equitable Access report to the BOS
- Sarah: Youth Commission just approved the Novato USD addendum beefing up the existing NUSD Wellness Policy

CA Food Policy Council Report – Steve Schwartz

- AB 1321: create infrastructure for statewide funding for market match programs, MFPC endorsed earlier this year, and it just passed. Next year the CAFPC will support the accompanying budget ask.
- MFPC support is being requested of an upcoming state sugary beverage tax. Berkeley succeeded, SF is working on it right now, Marin could be next. [Kick the Can](#) – website mapping what's going on across the country on this issue.
- Ca Food Policy Council Legislative Report just published. The document holds legislators accountable for their votes on a list of about 20 bills. Should we invite aides to a particular MFPC meeting, or to attend regular meetings?

Equitable Access Report – Becky Gershon & Janet Brown

- Policy work in the past month: meeting scheduled for December Grant Holfax (HHS), Brian Crawford (Comm Dev Agency) and MFPC members to discuss. Casey meeting with Zero Waste folks to discuss policy options relating to food waste. Make sure we are on the same page with agencies about manageable solutions for policies. Becky, Reba, and Julia to draft the larger report, fleshing out the November report and including much more detail; hope to have a draft for Council member feedback by the December meeting. Will look at the three themes of Food Access, Food ____ and Food Production, as well as the three geographical regions of the Canal, Marin City, and West Marin. Looking for folks to be on the

editing/commenting committee. Report to be finalized in January, presented to the BOS in February.

- Membership Pledge and Application Form

As discussed at the October meeting, a more formalized structure may incentivize MFPC meeting attendance. We are moving from a council that exchanges ideas and networks to a council that gets work done on a particular agenda. When there is outside homework to be done, a more formalized structure is helpful. Interim suggestion: email the Council to let us know if they do or don't want to be listed as a member.

Questions:

- **Is membership by individual or organization?** In the case of multiple individuals in one organization, are there multiple members, but one vote per organization – or is the organization itself is the member? Could naming alternate members from an organization serve in the stead of having multiple individuals need to apply for membership? By-laws that recognize a percentage vote...
- Organizations that are part of a larger (ie statewide) organization can only vote on local issues or need more time to check in with higher folks for consensus. Make note of those who abstain...
- **Voting...** Another level of the issue is how we vote/by-laws/charter document... Difference between endorsements and votes... Should individuals get to be voting members with as much sway as organizations? Would County agencies each have their own votes? Originally the MFPC goal was consensus decision making. Options for going beyond consensus decision making? Strive for consensus and have backups? Time period of membership before a member can vote?
- Should members clearly work in support of a common goal and subscribe to our MFPC mission statement? Look at how other Food Policy Councils have dealt with this, do some homework and report back at the next meeting. The Steering Committee will rework the application and get back to the Council; please send thoughts, ideas, and opinions to banielsen@ucanr.edu.

- Lauren: Letter to Marin Municipal Water District regarding Water Rates for Community-based food production

Lauren to research quantity of water used for school and community gardens as well as precedence in other communities. Something in the news about water rates about to increase? If MMWD is needing to raise rates for financial reason, will this ask even be able to do anything? The hope is that urban ag water usage is so low that it would be offset by the benefit of the food production it would enable. Does MFPC want to send a letter of support as a Council? This issue pushes forth an agenda item we have already agreed upon. Does anyone *not* want MFPC to support this? NO.

Production Panel – Paulette Swallow, Sustainable Ag Coordinator (UCCE), and Jamison Watts, Executive Director (MALT)

Paulette Swallow on Marin Ag Data

- Marin ag data: majority of revenue is livestock and livestock product (milk)
- dairy: increase of \$10 million in the past decade, most of the price increase is for organic. Probably 90% of Marin dairies have transitioned to organic.

- livestock and poultry: increase of \$25 million in the past decade. Marin climate = great pasture, which enables pasture raised egg laying and pasture raised beef, which bring in higher prices.
- field crop production: increase of \$5 million in the past decade, a lot of which is growing animal feed.
- fruits, vegetables, and wine grapes: increase of \$4 million in the past decade. Average row crop farmer is 5-8 acres, 265 total acres of row crops in Marin were reported. Although revenue increased, last year acreage dropped almost by half – due perhaps to drought and planting higher end products. 1950s Marin lost land to development, 1970s began recovering this land.
- Marin actually has a pretty streamlined permitting process that allows for diversification and adding value to your product. However, the regulatory process and its associated fees can still be prohibitive.
- Inter-generational transfer – is there a next generation wanting to take over?
- Water access is complicated – can water support multiple and diverse production systems?
- The demand is high with Marin’s proximity to a marketplace of 7 million people who have the interest and the means to support local ag. Varied marketing outlets (farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs, restaurants, etc).
- Pros and cons of being in a high-end market – harder to donate or sell at a lower cost when your higher end product incurs more production costs.
- Regulations on sell-by dates on milk means milk has to be disposed of rather than donated to food banks. Potential work-around of giving away milk in bulk, cartons cost more than the milk so dairymen can’t give cartons away.
- Who are the people doing this work? The people who own the land are out there working, helped by family, and usually with a few people on staff.
- Migrant farmworkers situation doesn’t really happen here because Marin is pasture and livestock based and there is work to do year-round. Usually farmworker families live there and have been there forever. How are farmworker living and health conditions? Specifically in West Marin...? How do we bridge gaps and continue to extend access to everyone?
- Marin farmers are still very generous, give food to ExtraFood.org, and sell some product at lower cost.

Jamison Watts with MALT on conservation

- We are fortunate to have a MALT, it was precedent setting across the country.
- Local food comes from local farms, which need local land.
- 1964 Pt Reyes National Seashore was established and leased back to ranchers = assurance of permanence. 1972 A60 zoning was adopted, backstop for ag conservation in the County.
- MALT established in 1980 by Ellen Straus and Phyllis Faber to create stability on private farmland in a landscape of farmers selling their land. MALT was the first agricultural land trust in the country.
- Nationally we lose an acre of farmland every minute; population growth occurs on fertile soils.
- Wealth in the Bay Area leads to the situation of land values that are far greater than the agricultural value of the property, which makes it hard for ag families to stay on their land, especially if there is a death in the family which causes an estate tax.
- Conservation easements mean that MALT pays landowners 50% of their property value for their development rights and promise to stay in agriculture and not develop. Easements are permanent legal agreements that the property can never be sold for other development or subdivided. The easement stays with the land, even if it is sold. Straus used the easement

money to become the first certified organic dairy West of the Mississippi and the first certified organic creamery in the country. Now this is the way that the dairy industry is surviving – thriving – in the North Bay.

- MALT has no regulatory role, does not solicit landowners; the process is initiated by the landowners. Easements are flexible regarding type of agricultural use, as long as it doesn't adversely affect natural resources on the property. Every year MALT goes out to the property and provides support; an easement is the beginning of a long-term partnership. MALT works with many other ag support organizations in the County to support farmers and ranchers.

- MALT's mission is to conserve agricultural lands for agricultural use. How do you ensure continued ag use on easement-protected properties, especially in the face of estate developers? Starting in 2011 they included mandatory ag use provisions in the easements including Agricultural Management Plans (containing provisions to protect soil and water quality), and in 2014 started a retroactive amendment practices to incentivize the inclusion of these ag use provisions in easements.

- Since 1980 MALT has protected 76 family farms and ranches, totaling 48,000 acres (50% of ag land in the county). MALT is top 10 in the country for effectiveness.

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.

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