

Marin Food Policy Council
Meeting Notes
April 19, 2016
[HHS campus](#)

Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting: May 17, 2016, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. [HHS campus](#)

Attendees:

Steering Committee – Alexandra Danino (SF/Marin Food Bank); Becky Gershon (SF-Marine Food Bank); Bonnie Nielsen (UCCE Marin); Julia Van Soelen Kim (UCCE Marin); Lauren Klein (UCCE Marin); Lori Davis (Sanzuma); Reba Meigs (HHS); Steve Schwartz (Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative)

Committee Members – Cio Hernandez (HHS); Gail Crane (Community Action Marin); Sierra Smith (HHS, Marin Head Start); Veda Flores (Latino Marin); Victor Westman, (AIM)

Guests – AnaPaula Kitos Vasconcelos (Marin School of Environmental Leadership – MSEL); Christine Kim (farmer looking to work in non profit sector); Dani Cohen (MSEL); Merone Eckert (MSEL); Rita Kesler (food service director for San Rafael City Schools); Dave Corey (community housing activist)

Welcome & Council Representative Announcements – Lori Davis:

- Goals: launch and wrap up work on equitable access work, MFPC present to Equity pilot project, sugary beverage tax, id way youth can get involved, learn about policy process, filling in the blanks of what is needed in the county, gains in CalFresh enrollment in the county, increased access to fruits and vegetables, continue work towards equitable access to food in the county.
- Announcements:
 - **April 20:** Aging Action Initiative
 - **April 23:** 10am – 2pm at Indian Valley Organic Farm and Garden Spring Plant Sale (you can buy veggie starts with SNAP)
 - **April 25:** 10 am – noon at MCOE: Healthy Event Launch
 - **April 28:** Sacramento event through Aging Action Initiative, advocating increase in SSI benefits in CA
 - **May 7:** Healthy Parks Healthy People at McNears beach
 - **May 9:** 9am – noon Marin Breastfeeding Coalition Summit
 - **May 14:** Fruit and Veggie Fest at HHS campus
 - **May 24:** brown bag on Lessons Learned from Berkeley sugar sweetened beverages process
 - Co-sponsoring candidate forum for Cavala Harrison
 - today Marin City held a funders meeting to talk about bringing a grocery store to Marin City.

Production Theme: Ag worker health and housing – Jeffrey Stiles, Marin Department of Agriculture Ag Inspector and MOCA Program Coordinator

- **Background:** Marin County Dept of Ag = each county has a dept of ag in CA but most have just one per state. Also the Department of Weights and Measures (consumer protection that isn't ag related). Mission: promote agriculture, while also being regulators. Public service oriented staff. State level programs

overseen by CA Dept of Ag. Pest prevention, Environmental protection via regulating herbicide, pesticide, fungicide, etc. In-house organic certification agency (1 of 3 counties in the state), inspect farmers markets and nurseries, livestock protection program, safe harbor program. Annual crop and livestock report = data back to 1935 (great historical record).

- **2014 Crop Report:** gross production was \$101 million (39th out of 56 counties – smaller county, not as ag intense), almost all livestock-related (dairy, beef, eggs, and feed for animals). Over 50% ag production has been milk over the majority of history. Row crops get a lot of attention, although they are a tiny slice of the puzzle. Marin is unique: animal ag due to topography such as coastal and hilly. 1950 there were 200 dairies (today there are 28). Dollar value is increasing because dairies are more efficient. There used to be more acreage devoted to just artichokes than all fruits and veggies now. Out monetary output increases, but are we growing more food? Around 1950 there was a drop in fruit and nut production (flat sunny ground with water), turning into housing. We are making more food and money but less people are doing it. Decreasing number of ag operations, decreasing acreage, yet was still the same fraction of production that is happening now.
- **Can't we just produce more?** Real estate, topography, water and other resources. Everyone is going for economy of scale. As you scale up, you're really making more and getting paid less. The wholesalers are the ones with the power: I want the product to look like this, be of this quality, and I will pay you this much. The products are usually perishable so farmers can't wait for another buyer. There is always the drive to expand and increase business, but that can lead to relationships that aren't the most beneficial for the farmer. Smaller retail accounts are better for farmers but are unrealistic to juggle when you scale up. Different business models with different goals. Food follows demand and price, because farmers have a huge debt they need to pay off.
- **Where does the product go?** Most food is leaving the county. Milk mainly goes to Petaluma, Sonoma, SF... Organic beef mainly goes to Madera as live cows and then Whole Foods. Veggie crops are going to the ferry building, SF restaurants, distributors to East Bay and peninsula. Cheaper to process and operate in Sonoma, more people in SF... There is no meat processing in Marin. Any effort to keep food in Marin, such as a buying consortium? Marin Organic was focused on keeping food in the county through gleaning and school lunch programs, but now MO has closed... UCCE programs...
- **Preserve agriculture?** Incentivize local producers to keep produce local? San Rafael and Novato USDs are getting contracts to get local produce this summer. Look into the company Marin Produce. Are ranchers worried that their days are numbered after the oyster situation? Yes. Over 20% of the numbers of Marin's organic dairies are on the Point, which means they could go away. The threat to agriculture in Marin is real, there is a momentum towards ag becoming a novelty. The lawsuit has been filed to change the dairy situation on the point and there is political support on both sides... Any local level policies that are helpful or problematic for local producers? Useful: organic certification program (voluntary, supported by taxpayers and BOS)... Get people to tell BOS that this is what they want and they are ok if BOS spends their money on it.
- **New CCOF bill:** CA is the only state in the US where you have to registered with CDFA with the state as well as be certified organic; CCOF is working to change this structure, and the Ag Dept is against that bill.

Council Business – Lauren Klein

- **Governance:** Lauren is working on fleshing out how we make decisions: voting as individuals or institutions, etc. Lauren would welcome any input. Until further notice, this will process continue as consensus-based.
- **Snacks:** Janet brought snacks out of the kindness of her heart, but going forward it would be helpful for the job to be shared. It's unfunded and we don't have reimbursement option, so only sign up to help if you can.
 - **May 17:** Reba Meigs
 - **June 21:** Alexandra Danino
 - **July 19:** Becky Gershon
 - **August 16:** Cio Hernandez
 - **September 20:** Lori Davis
 - **October 18:** Veda Florez
 - **November 15:** Steve Schwartz
 - **December 20:** Viktor Westman
- **Application:** most folks have completed the Application – THANK YOU. If you haven't yet done so, please complete the Member Applications at ucanr.edu/MFPCapplication.

Production theme: farmworker housing, ag production

Dave Corey: focus on affordable housing. Key: diversity of housing type to meet full range of the community (income, disabilities, interests, etc). Touches every community in the county. County is supposed to do an analysis of impediments to fair housing every 4 years – this hadn't been done in 14 years. This report is on the County website under the CDBG program. Now at the end of the Voluntary Compliance Agreement, but it's being renewed. Critical task ahead of us is over the next 2-3 years, as the county prepares the new **Assessment of Fair Housing** – everybody in the county should be involved, looking for everyone's opinion about housing. Multi-step process: outreach, education, input (Liz Darvey with the county is coordinating this), and policy development. Diversity in Marin is declining, people are driving here to work here (can't afford to live here too). Learning more about the West Marin Coast Guard housing facility would be a good learning opportunity for MFPC. West Marin farmworkers need to be freed from their bosses/landlords.

- How could MFPC help? Wait 6 months or so and have Dave back then, once the county has come up with specific topics and questions and we can discuss how these relate to food and our work. Coast Guard comments issue is more current.
- We should send a coalition to the new BOS (Kinsey's seat) and their aide.

Farmworker housing is a really big issue, and we are not the Housing Security Taskforce. Is this an area we want to focus our time and energy on?

Questions for West Marin Supervisorial Forum – Lori Davis and Becky Gershon

Sup. Steve Kinsey is retiring and his term ends this December. Fairly competitive election is going on right now. His district has the majority of agricultural lands, so this Supervisor will have a lot of weight on ag and food and

farming in the county. Upcoming forum at the Dance Palace on May 4 during which the candidates will respond to public-submitted questions; MFPC would like to submit a couple to this as well as other debate forums and TV opportunities. MFPC will not endorse a candidate, but rather introduce meaty issues as topics of discussion. What are we trying to do with these questions? Raise awareness of issues, or of MFPC, or of the Equitable Access report, or entice a relationship with them in the future? Two to be submitted by this Friday 4/22; **SEND FURTHER QUESTION IDEAS FOR SUPERVISOR SEATS TO BONNIE AT: banielsen@ucanr.edu.**

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Hunger and access (Becky), community food production (Lauren), farmworker housing (Alex and Lori), and drinking water (Veda)

FINAL QUESTIONS after email correspondence (as of 4/25):

- **BACKGROUND:** In Marin County, 1 in 5 people face the risk of hunger every day. While the non-profit sector provides a multitude of food assistance programs to people in need, we know that the most effective public program that exists to meet this need is CalFresh (formerly “food stamps”). But unfortunately, current estimates tell us that only about half of eligible people – or about 10,000 people – are enrolled in the program, while another 10,000 people still remain unenrolled. In addition to the benefit that CalFresh would bring to low-income families and individuals, full participation is estimated to generate an additional \$30 million in economic activity for Marin County. **QUESTION:** What do you think you can do, in collaboration with the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services, the Marin Food Policy Council, and anti-hunger advocates, to support efforts to increase enrollment in this and other vital anti-hunger programs?
- **BACKGROUND:** Currently in West Marin there are very limited grocery stores, small food markets, or farmers’ markets. For example, residents of Point Reyes often travel over half an hour by car to get to the closest Safeway– assuming they have a car and money for gas. Alternatively, residents are limited to shopping at relatively small, expensive, and tourist-oriented markets closer to where they live. **QUESTION:** What do you think you can do, in collaboration with residents of West Marin, the Marin Food Policy Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the business community to ensure that all West Marin residents have access to healthy and affordable food close to home?
- **BACKGROUND:** Within the Marin Food Policy Council, we frequently discuss the issue of food access and how the food system is connected to the overall economy. While our Food Policy Council encourages the growing of food in community gardens, schools and backyards, we recognize that not everyone has the space, skill, or time to do that. Instead, the obstacle for many people to obtain food is having enough income, and the means for getting to a grocery store that sells affordable healthy food. **QUESTION:** Can you discuss what connections you see between food issues, improving job opportunities, and economic development for underserved communities? And, specifically, in what tangible ways you would tackle these issues together in the 4th District and Marin County?
- **BACKGROUND:** Currently Marin County produces \$100 million a year in agricultural products, employing over 500 agricultural workers in West Marin alone. While farm workers are the foundation of our flourishing local food system and our agricultural economy, the quality and standard of farm worker housing remains to be a serious concern. A 2011 survey administered by California Human

Development found that virtually all farm workers surveyed were living in a home with at least one serious defect and most housing was considered inadequate, according to County standards.

QUESTION: What are your ideas about how our County can work towards increasing the availability, quality, and security of housing for farm workers in Marin County, and West Marin in particular? For example, would you be willing to form a County task force or committee to address these issues or waive fees on permits for improvements or new construction of farm worker housing?

CA Food Policy Council Update – Steve Schwartz

- Last month CA Association of Food Policy Councils of 20 counties met in Sacramento.
- Took a stand on three issues: AB1321 budget request for Market Match state money; Healthy CA Fund (sugary beverage tax) didn't even make it to committee; and Healthy Soils Initiative to incentivize climate-friendly ag processes was endorsed again.
- More upcoming bills: seed swaps, CCOF bill to change organic certification, school breakfast occurring after school starts **school meal discussion: very little fresh food in schools, kids won't eat it if it's unappetizing, microwaved, cheap, etc. Learning theme for future: school breakfast and school lunch.

Equitable Access Report – Becky Gershon

- *Tabled until next meeting due to time*

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 17, 2016, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the HHS campus