

# MARIN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL GOVERNANCE

## 2017 revisions

### 1. MISSION, PURPOSE, GOALS, METHODS

#### **Mission**

The Marin Food Policy Council (MFPC) develops policy and practical recommendations that promote equitable access to healthy local food and a sustainable, ecological food system, improving the health of the land and people of Marin County. Although MFPC functions as an independent entity, and is neutral politically, we recognize and value the California Food Policy Council's ten founding principles<sup>1</sup> having ratified them in 2012.

#### **Purpose**

The Marin Food Policy Council was founded to address issues connected to food production, access, distribution, and nutritional health affecting the county's 261,221<sup>2</sup> residents. The Council serves a unique purpose that is not duplicated by any other body in Marin, bringing together local food system stakeholders in a roundtable format that allows for information exchange, resource identification, and prioritization of needs. It examines the health, sustainability, and quality of life of Marin residents through the lens of community food security<sup>3</sup>, and develops targeted policies and practical solutions based on a systems approach<sup>4</sup> to solving food access issues. The Council works to provide a cooperative framework for action that addresses food policy issues and assists residents in increasing understanding of their food system. Food policy development is a systemic approach to the cultivation of a sustainable and equitable food system. It fosters policies that shorten the distance from farm to table while benefiting the land, economy, and well-being of all residents.

#### **Goals**

Our goal is to effect appropriate and culturally based change that alleviates food insecurity and promotes a vibrant local food system that serves all residents. MFPC pursues this goal through a round-table approach to mutual education and policy development, and by advocating for practical, human-scale, community-based, policy solutions to problems of food access and chronic nutritional shortfall for adoption by the County and municipalities.

Through convening divergent, interdependent stakeholders in a participatory and educational process, we develop powerful and authentic relationships that lead to development of model food system policies aimed at increasing health equity, food justice, and environmental sustainability. Within this framework, we also highlight the nutritional needs of the under-served and propose food policy recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ucanr.edu/sites/MarinFoodPolicyCouncil/files/162432.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/06041>

<sup>3</sup> Community food security is often defined as: All residents at all times receiving a nutritionally adequate, culturally appropriate, diet from sustainable, non-emergency, sources.

<sup>4</sup> Systems approach: Management thinking that emphasizes the interdependence and interactive nature of elements within and external to an organization.

targeting specific communities or conditions for relief. We understand that our ability to work across disciplines in this highly collaborative way is key to accomplishing our goals. Our success is dependent upon our ability to work together to accomplish goals larger than is possible individually.

### **Methods**

We learn together, gather and analyze data to inform decision-making, educate the community, inform our leaders, and strive to advance a shared and innovative vision. We convene meetings, focus groups, field trips, and events. We provide reports and serve in an advisory role to the Board of Supervisors, County Departments and Municipalities as appropriate. We emphasize community-based participatory research when possible and use systems thinking as our guide. While being a large body of diverse members, we strive for efficient, effective and positive change. We value and strive for unanimous consent in decision-making and discussion, but can move to action through simple majority voting as needed. This document will be reviewed annually by the MFPC Steering Committee.

## **2. COUNCIL STRUCTURE, MEETING AND MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURES**

### **Council structure:**

The MFPC is composed of one chair or two co-chairs, facilitator, timekeeper, staff or secretary, voting members, ex-officio members (non-voting), and community partners, which include representatives from non-profits, for profits, schools, government, as well as unaffiliated members. The Steering Committee (SC) is a subset of, and serves, the full Council according to the MFPC mission, purpose, goals and methods. A task force or subcommittee may be formed to explore a theme or subtopic for the Council, or other Council business. Subcommittees should include a SC representative, and may include outside community members. Marin Food Policy Council monthly meetings are generally open to the public and support a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere with meeting notes published on our website. However the Steering Committee reserves the right to call a closed and confidential session of members if deemed necessary.

### **General council meeting procedures and ground rules:**

Council meetings are monthly and generally two hours long, usually on the third Tuesday of the month. Council meetings should begin with an agenda review and end with a next steps discussion, in order to identify the key agenda items for the following meeting, and designate any key tasks to be conducted between meetings. The Council strives to actively engage the entirety of the meeting participants to share their wisdom and expertise in all aspects of Council functions. Community leadership teams and subcommittees offer the opportunity for Council members to further define and refine Council agendas through their work between full Council meetings.

#### *General meeting ground rules include:*

- Start and end on time and honor time limits.
- One individual talking at any one time.
- If there are guests at the meeting, a quick introductory go-round will be conducted.

- Individual or organizational announcements can be at the introductory time, or in the last five minutes of the meeting – Please limit announcements to relevant items.
- If a guest or member would like to photograph, record, video, or otherwise make a record of meeting discussions, permission must be granted from the whole of the Council prior to doing so.
- With the guidance of the Facilitator, it is the full Council's responsibility to create a safe space for expression from all members. As much as possible, the membership should encourage quieter members to *step up* with their perspective and encourage more vocal members to *step back* to allow for such space.
- Use the email list-serve sparingly, and only for items that are of interest to the full Council. If uncertain, contact a SC member and/or the Staff/Secretary.
- Be respectful of the fact that many council members may be volunteering their time.
- The MFPC does not endorse particular electoral candidates.
- The MFPC welcomes guests at monthly meetings.

### **The Steering Committee (SC):**

The Steering Committee is a subset of voting and ex-officio members, no less than 4, and no more than 8, including Chair(s), Staff and Facilitator. Terms of SC members are one year, with renewals allowed. Terms for chair(s) is two years, with renewals allowed. SC members may self-nominate, or be nominated by the SC or full Council, striving for a representative group. Monthly Steering Committee meetings are held by conference call or in-person and are primarily logistic and organizational, setting agendas based on input from Council, etc. The SC strives to make decisions with the whole of the Council monthly, but may take decisions on behalf of the larger membership when needed, or in an urgent situation. The Marin Food Policy Council Steering Committee received the endorsement of the full Council on December 4, 2012.

Twice a year (Dec and June), the MFPC should proactively determine food system stakeholders that are under-represented and reach out to them in an effort to broaden engagement with diverse individuals, communities, and food system sectors. The SC should also review membership applications and responsibilities annually. The SC may create a Membership subcommittee. The SC may designate a member to organize speakers, panelists, logistics, and presentation materials. SC members have a copy of Speaker Guidelines.

With the help of Staff/secretary, the SC should provide the membership with a budget of expenses and income by annually, so that future funding for the MFPC operations can be secured and managed. The budget will consider staff support, facilities' fees, food, and other expenses determined by the SC to be relevant. The Steering Committee will also need to determine where funds will be held.

The SC will be responsible for keeping a running list of themes to be discussed and explored, tasks to be completed, potential agenda items, and possible speakers to be recruited for educational purposes. The annual theme(s) will be agreed upon by the full council each year, then SC will propose topics for six months' worth of Council meetings. Most agenda items will fit topically within the annual theme(s), but some flexibility is possible to incorporate topics that arise on an ad hoc basis and/or need timely consideration.

### **Agenda formation:**

Agendas will be drafted at the monthly SC meetings based on Council meeting notes, recommendation of MFPC and SC members, and theme. Council members and non-members may propose additional agenda topics for consideration by the first Tuesday of every month. Agendas will be emailed to the full council one week prior every Council meeting. Late changes are at the discretion of the SC, based on urgency and time needed.

### **Defined positions:**

**Chair(s)/vice-chair:** Hold the tenor of the meetings, sign all letters on behalf of the full council, and generally represent MFPC publically. If neither chair can be at the monthly meeting, they will appoint an alternate.

**Facilitator:** Leads the meeting through the agenda for the day. The facilitator should appoint an alternate in case of absence.

**Staff/secretary:** Provides minutes notes and agenda distribution, membership and vote tracking, venue reservations, maintenance of the Council's website as a tool for exchanging food policy information and resources, providing public access to Council activities. Staff also keeps track of the number of meetings members attend per rules of membership – staff will send out a note of compliance if necessary, and alert the SC. With the help of other SC members, staff keeps track of MFPC accomplishments. The Staff/Secretary should appoint an alternate to record meeting notes in case of absence. If applicable, Staff will manage Voting Member annual fee collection, and in conjunction with SC, give an annual update on revenue and expenses, and a projected budget. Staff/Secretary support is a necessary position for which funds must be raised annually in order to maintain these functions.

**Timekeeper:** Reminds Council meeting participants, chair, and facilitator of agenda timing, and length of discussions. Timekeeper should appoint an alternate in case of absence.

## **CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP**

### **VOTING MEMBERS:**

Each voting member may represent an organization (non-profit, governmental, business, media, community group), department of a larger organization, or simply him/herself. A larger organization will be allowed more than one vote based on the Department that they may be representing. For example, Health and Human Services may have several relevant departments voting. This shall be determined by the SC at the membership application stage. In the spirit of transparency and in keeping with the values and mission of MFPC, each voting member shall disclose all affiliations, groups and peoples represented, and funding sources per their membership application. Prior to approval of a new member application by the Steering Committee, potential members will introduce themselves briefly at a full council meeting, identifying affiliations and representees, and field any questions from the Council (5 mins total). The SC will make membership decisions within two months after introduction. Voting members may have up to two "Alternates" designated to fill in and be ready to vote on their behalf. Individuals and organizations wishing to become members should attend a minimum of two meetings prior to applying for membership. Voting members, or their designated Alternate, are

expected to vote, endorse if eligible, and/or sign-on to policy statements, issues, reports, briefs, and letters of support either in-person or electronically. If desired by the full Council, voting members may pay an annual membership fee. Voting members should ask to be recused if they feel they have a conflict of interest, or discuss such with the broader membership.

**NON-VOTING OR EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:**

Non-voting members participate in the Council in all the same ways as voting members but do not vote, endorse, and/or sign-on. Generally, Ex-Officios serve on the Council by reason of elected office as government officials. In the event that a non-voting member or Ex-officio member cannot attend a meeting, like Voting members, they should have a designated Alternate attend on their behalf.

**Roles and responsibilities of voting and ex-officio members:**

Members of the Marin Food Policy Council pledge to:

- Serve actively on the Council by attending meetings regularly, presenting timely informational and updates, contributing expertise and local knowledge, and participating in work group and subcommittees, as needed;
- Uphold to the best of one's ability the values, mission, goals, principles and purpose of the MFPC;
- Attend at least 7 meetings a year (there are generally eleven per year);
- Email Staff/Secretary (Bonnie Nielsen at [banielsen@ucanr.edu](mailto:banielsen@ucanr.edu)) when not able to attend a meeting, assign Alternate to attend, and read notes from the meeting missed;
- If a member does not attend 4 meetings in a row, they may risk forfeiting status as member;
- Declare all agency and organizational affiliations, and funding sources, to Council (individuals, foundations, corporate, federal, governmental, academic, etc), both on application and at a five-minute Council introduction;
- Foster respectful dialog and strive toward consensus decision-making

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS:**

Community partners are not expected to attend meetings, but are welcome. They will be on the Marin Food Policy Council email list, receive agendas and meeting notes, and updates on relevant policy work, but do not participate in ongoing Council work or votes.

**3. DECISION MAKING PROCESS, DECISION RULES AND DISCUSSION PROCESS**

Since the Food Policy's most recent inception, decision-making was done on a consensus basis. At this point in the life of the MFPC, because of its growth, maturity, and success, the MFPC, in reviewing its process, shall adopt the following decision-making processes:

- a. In decision-making and discussion in our public monthly meetings, we strive for open, transparent, and unanimous consent<sup>5</sup>, but can move to action through simple majority vote as needed, within a timely manner.
- b. Quorum will be determined thusly: 33% of members must be in attendance before calling for a vote.
- c. The Steering Committee (SC) represents the entirety of the Council, and as such meets monthly to set agendas, and discuss other logistics. The SC will also make decisions striving for unanimous consent, with a simple majority vote as necessary.
- d. "Rush" decisions between monthly meetings should be avoided when possible. If impossible to avoid, first a group email will be distributed calling upon the Voting members to respond within a set timeframe. Those who do not respond will be considered abstentions. If it is determined by the Steering Committee that there is not enough time for an email to the entire body of voting members, the Steering Committee shall reserve the right to make a decision on behalf of the whole.
- e. Endorsements of legislation, etc: Some member organizations cannot be seen to advocate, per their organization's guidelines. Individuals of those organizations can endorse as individuals if they so choose.
- f. Voting members are those organizations or individuals that have been approved for voting membership by the process described above.
- g. A record will be made of all votes, including abstentions.

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<sup>5</sup> Consensus decision-making and discussion is collective opinion or agreement, harmony, cooperation, sympathy and group solidarity. Discussions should be entered into with an open mind. Consider carefully and respectfully other perspectives and ideas that arise. Listen well to other people's ideas and try to understand their reasoning. Attempt to satisfy objections and dissent. The more information and input, the better the decision