

4/21/20 – MFPC Meeting Notes
ZOOM conference call

Attendees: Liana Orlandi (Agricultural Institute of Marin), Ariana Gunderson (Conscious Kitchen), Bonnie Nielsen (UC Cooperative Extension), Cathryn Couch, (CERES Community Project), Juliette Martinez, Julia Van Soelen Kim (UC Cooperative Extension), Heather Gilardi, Linda Jackson (Aging Action Initiative), Lauren Klein (UC Cooperative Extension), Marchon Tatmon (SF-Marin Food Bank), Reba Meigs (Innovative Health Solutions), Roxana Yekta (Marin County HHS, Nutrition Wellness Program), Ryan Thayer (Marin County HHS), Sandy Turner Parry (North Bay Children's Center), Steve Schwartz (Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative), Susan Lopes (Mill Valley Chamber), Wendy Tobiasson

Introductions & Announcements – Liana Orlandi

- Wendy: the week of April 11 the food bank delivered 159,000 lbs of food!
- Linda: AAI working with clients and providing info to public (Zoom meetings 2-3pm daily, contact Linda if you want to know more.
- Susan: restaurants helping to feed people, launched GoFundMe for Mill Valley businesses
- Lauren: safety protocol draft for working in school and community gardens, surveying gardens in county to see if they are being used currently.
- Ryan: working to help connect food resources in Novato, please reach out to Ryan if you have ideas.
- Ariana: expanding school kitchens to try to feed people in Marin City, eager to expand to other locations – contact Ariana with ideas.

AIM Video on Social Distancing options at farmers markets from ABC channel 7 - Liana Orlandi

Update from Marin County HEAL Collaborative/VOAD - Ryan Thayer & Roxana Yekta

HEAL collaborative has been meeting as a space for stakeholders to troubleshoot, offer support, provide for folks to connect offline in order to align efforts better in a variety of sectors: farmers markets, health clinics, nutrition assistance, food policy work, etc.

Organizational Policies for Coronavirus - Julia Van Soelen Kim

If your organization has created new organizational food safety or public health policy in response to Coronavirus, please join the meeting prepared to share

Food and Beverage Policies (Reba Meigs) – organizational food and beverage policy work

- Healthy Food & Beverage Guidelines developed by the FoodNow Taskforce: recommend water, unsweetened dairy, 100% fruit or veg juices, coffee & tea with no added sugar, and no sweetened beverages. Orgs look to adopt 70% - 100%, highlighting foods with no trans fat or added sugar and low in sodium, also looking at portion size. Important now as orgs are preparing meals.
- Environmental aspects and zero waste considerations also suggested.

AIM's Farmers' Market Policy (Liana Orlandi)

- AIM started a process with a wellness committee on a larger project. AIM adopted HEAL FoodNow Marin guidelines and it has changed their snack buying choices. Link for AIM's policy: <https://www.agriculturalinstitute.org/covid>.

Question: Where are we seeing the greatest need for food in Marin County? Is this info available?

Depends on demographics as well as location: pockets of food insecurity correlate to pockets of poverty (West

Marin, Marin City, the Canal, children and older adult populations). School districts could be a resource on info where students are on free and reduced meal programs. Affordable housing info could be a source for older adults. Area Agency on Aging and food banks are also good resources. Data and equity teams at the County working on putting this info together and will share at a future meeting.

Ceres Community Project (Cathryn Couch)

- All essential businesses must require certain protocols, including symptom and temperature checks for workers; social distancing, hand washing and face masks in buildings and on deliveries (such as all disposable containers); and other protocols for kitchen (switched to all-paid staff rather than rotating volunteers in kitchen for consistency, continuity, safety and risk management). Cathryn emailed MFPC listserv the full list of Ceres COVID protocols.

Agricultural Institute of Marin (Liana Orlandi)

- Safe markets during COVID-19: hand sanitizer stations and social distancing in the beginning. As the weeks went on, conversation continued and protocols progressed: aisles are wider, booths are farther apart, produce is selected and bagged for customers, cancel all community gathering elements (artists, musicians, etc), all food is to-go, asking shoppers to be one person per family and spend only 30 minutes at the market, relying on market staff to remind folks as well as market participants, marking ground with X's to suggest 6 feet. Rollin Root: 2 staff (1 handles money and 1 handles food, 1 customer at a time), all shoppers asked to wear masks beginning next week. A work in progress, AIM staff is emailing market participants each week with reminders.

Question: Suggestions on how to help the public shift social norms in gracious and kind ways, to reduce confrontation?

AIM market managers are always managing behavior in a public space and practice using non-confrontational language already, this is an extension.

Observation: People are sharing data and referring resources more easily in this climate.

More of an informal process, verbal agreements are increasingly sufficient regarding policy and data. Cross-county conversations are increasingly useful and helpful (Lauren's example with community gardens in other counties). VOADs and COADs are meeting weekly, and last week was the first multi-county COAD call (breaking down traditional organizational and locational barriers).

Policy Updates – Julia Van Soelen Kim and Steve Schwartz

Coronavirus policy updates at the local, state, or federal level (Roxy Yekta and Marchon Tatmon)

- CalFresh update: Pandemic EBT (separate and additional allotment for kids on free and reduced meal program, separate to household increase in EBT). Working on messaging efforts and how to spread the word. EBT purchases will be possible online starting next week through Amazon Fresh and Walmart, free delivery on orders over \$35 (already had a contract with Amazon so moving forward first). Decision made at the federal level, not state. But a state could push for a pilot program to other (smaller) stores to start with them. Andy with AIM looking with online EBT concerns, looking to gather and submit comments and concerns (to allow other vendors to accept EBT online purchases as well) – ***ACTION ITEM:** Steering Committee can work with Andy to see how MFPC can be supportive of this effort, follow-up with a letter on behalf of MFPC to Levine and McGuire saying we want this in Marin.

- Eliminating certain certification paperwork: March, April, or May renewal paperwork; interview waiver for initial approval process; implementing telephonic signature to submit applications. Some of this is due to SB 882 (Weiner).
- Is there any policy action that is needed from MFPC?
 - Food Bank is having a CalFresh Policy Action Day on April 22 (virtual) – template to send to elected officials pushing for an 15% increase in next COVID package to the federal government, to help boost the importance of SNAP – Marchon to share with MFPC
- USDA is offering an opportunity for purchasing products from wholesalers (including food hubs), hopefully this is something local farmers can participate in.
- Stimulus to support older adults in restaurants – info coming this week on how this will roll out in Marin.
- Senator Harris will introduce Closing the Meal Gap (calculate SNAP benefits using low cost meal plan which will increase benefits and transition Puerto Rico and other territories to regular help)
- Pandemic SNAP (for children on free and reduced price meals, an additional separate EBT card) and clients would not have to do anything to enroll in this program. State is looking for this to apply to kids on Medical or foster care as well. Timeline is not available yet. If they are undocumented and opted out of school meal program, will still get the card in the mail if they attend a school that uses the meal program.
- Unemployment in Marin February: 614 up to March: 8,000+
- Year ago local restaurants needing to get authorized to accept EBT for hot meals for certain eligible EBT holders (older adults); Marin was exploring this, also looking for this work at a state level so it wouldn't have to happen county by county, and Roxy can get an update. Food quality concern: restaurant meals program people have to meet specific criteria proving they can't prepare food, and almost all approved vendors are fast food purveyors. Critical time to make sure than fresh healthy food and meals don't get left out of the process.
- Policy advocacy opportunities for expanding list of eligible list of food purveyors of prepared meals added to May MFPC Meeting Agenda.

Non-COVID Policy Updates (Steve Schwartz)

- Sustainable Ag Coalition says USDA is not planning on implementing aid for farmers as hoped, stay tuned.
- Promoting local food for schools. Give any feedback to MFPC Steering Committee this week on this timely ask from CFFN members: <https://forms.gle/KkXcsiNbMq8foXFYA>.
- Update on Farm to Elders proposal with Senator McGuire – something like Farm to School Program for Seniors: legislators will only be able to carry a couple things, as times are stretched thin with COVID now. Impressed with our work, but asking how can we share our stories given the current climate? Takeaway: look at mapping our impact; shape future work. Narrow agenda for legislators, yet our work on food security is very relevant to the times (getting emergency food to populations most at risk and supporting local farmers during crisis). Left the door open, but not much was promised – honest reality check. Running parallel with Master Plan for Aging is still an idea. Checklist of elements a legislative ask should include – Steve to share. The state is not going to release senior farmers market funding in the next two weeks like they normally would. If we are intentional about telling the right story and selecting the right pilot, it could fit in the high priority bill category – especially touching on isolation.

Council Business – Julia Van Soelen Kim

- MFPC is funded by a MCF collaborative grant through Innovative Health Solutions. Because of coronavirus MCF has released any restrictions and can be used to help the community in any way.
- Check-in on virtual format and the focus on coronavirus in recent agendas:
 - COVID focus is relevant and important and fundamental to the work we are trying to do
 - COVID has underscored the County's needs that we were already working on; like the focus on policy
 - SC to re-visit year plan involving the policy focus; zoom has been a good platform to allow us to continue collaborating
 - networking and connecting across orgs and telling positive stories is all important as well – encourage 3-5 people to share success stories/stats each meeting

Closing – Liana Orlandi

- Richard Levins reading
- Coronavirus underscores how important a resilient local food system is

Virtual meeting closed at 5:05 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 19 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Stay tuned for information regarding whether the meeting will be held in-person or on Zoom again.