

6/16/20 – MFPC Meeting Notes ZOOM conference call

Attendees: Liana Orlandi (Agricultural Institute of Marin), Alexandra Danino (SF-Marin Food Bank), Bonnie Nielsen (UC Cooperative Extension), Cathryn Couch (CERES Community Project), Felicia Chavez (Systems Thinking Marin), Julia Van Soelen Kim (UC Cooperative Extension), Heather Gilardi (Innovative Health Solutions), Lauren Klein (UC Cooperative Extension), Linda Jackson (Aging Action Initiative), Maggie Gori (Catholic Charities), Melanie Raquel (Marin Housing Authority), Reba Meigs (Innovative Health Solutions), Reilly Briggs (CERES Community Project), Ryan Thayer (Marin County HHS), Sandy Turner Parry (North Bay Children's Center), Steve Schwartz (Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative), Wendy Tobiasson

Introductions & Announcements – Liana Orlandi

- Linda: AAI started weekly info sessions about topics concerning people who work for older adults. If interested in receiving the AAI newsletter, email: support@agingactioninitiative.org.
- Lauren: several school gardens are growing food specifically for donation over the summer (San Pedro, Edna Maguire, Tam Valley, Redwood High School), as well as a couple community gardens (2 Mill Valley gardens)
- Wendy: data project - food bank has been setting up new sites across the county and delivering increasing amounts of food (150,000 up to 250,000 lbs of food/week)
- Cathryn: 2 efforts going on; 1) Rockefeller Foundation focus area around climate and food systems, gotten interested in opportunities revealed by COVID to create transformational change as we build back after COVID (coming out with report at end of June/July with high level priorities, systems level policy change); 2) Aspen Inst Food and Society Initiative around food as medicine to integrate food as a health care intervention. Contact Cathryn at ccouch@ceresproject.org any with thoughts, research questions etc.
- Felicia: systemsthinkingmarin.org recent blog on systems thinking “One Book to Save the World” - <https://www.systemsthinkingmarin.org/2020/06/09/one-book-to-save-the-world-thinking-in-systems-by-donella-meadows/>

Food Justice as Social Justice - Statement on Black Lives Matter and Discussion on anti-racism policy work locally (Liana Orlandi & Julia Van Soelen Kim)

- Statement from Liana and the MFPC Steering Committee:
The Marin Food Policy Council stands with the Black Lives Matter movement. We acknowledge the deep pain and inequity caused by generations of systemic racism - including within our food system. Racist policies have dictated where people live, their ability to access land to grow food and the ability to purchase and sell culturally appropriate food in their own communities, as well as, have limited access to capital to start and sustain food businesses. Marin Food Policy Council's 2016 report, "Equitable Access to Healthy and Local Food in Marin County" highlighted Marin City's status as a food desert – one more way that racism survives in our local food system. Given the inequities that persist, we commit to envisioning and elevating anti-racist policies, magnifying the voices of Black communities in Marin County, and partnering with other organizations to create meaningful change.
- Should MFPC issue a formal statement and work together to move this draft forward with greater input and perspective from MFPC members, or is holding space here preferable?

- **Yes**, important to stand up and say what we believe
- Suggestion to add brown lives matter as well. BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) or center attention on Black Americans specifically? Specific movement around Black Americans now is very real, but perhaps a both/and situation now where BIPOC could be included as well?
- Lots of statements like this are coming out right now, might want to consider something about setting a goal or timeline in addition to an intention? Increase specificity? Something like “We want to see Marin County meet ____” etc? MFPC can work towards this specificity. Perhaps to work on a Policy Platform that will include an equity lens?
- **MFPC will take this feedback and revise to send out to our listserv and get on our website/public record, and use it as a living document that informs decisions going forward. Marin Voice piece (600 words max)?**
- Is there current local anti-racism work that we could and should be engaging in?
 - Budget discussions at the county level - not only is the sheriff department not taking 10% cut, but asking for more funding - this funding could be reallocated. There is no reason funding should be increased at a time like this. The board will meet next Monday June 22nd. Marin Organizing committee is working on a statement supporting no increase in funding this year. **MFPC vote on drafting a letter asking the board to not support an increase in funds and reallocate any funds to equitable food access in Marin.**
 - <https://8cantwait.org/> looks at police reform and current policy, county-specific
 - Work to support black farmers? As well as other people of color? Find specific groups we can support or invite to MFPC? Black and Indigenous-led farming collective in Oakland that we may be able to work with around amplifying the farming work of Black Americans in Marin - <https://www.blackearthfarms.com/>, and Gayle Meyers, Farms To Grow, Inc. (supports black farmers).
 - Work around the County in areas of education (Marin Promise), housing, economics and jobs, law enforcement... Work with food and COVID links to housing and place... people coming from other counties to serve Marin (such as farm workers and other essential workers), need assistance as well.
 - The Marin Equity Initiative (Leadership for Equity and Opportunity alumni group) to figure out next steps for Marin to move the needle.
 - Renaming statues and places tied to colonial practices (such as Sir Francis Drake) - hearings happening this next week so should act quickly.
 - How organizational efforts led by white leadership can connect with orgs on the ground led by POC and step back to let them take the lead.
 - Would like to hear directly from farm workers about their situation, as well as from people who are working in Marin but can't afford to live here.
 - IJ and editorials would be helpful to bring awareness to our efforts and the needs of the communities.
 - MFPC Policy Platform work has been on hold, but these threads should feed into the MFPC Policy Platform that we do develop.
 - CFFN is using interesting approaches around racial equity and bringing that lens to all policy choices that the org makes.
 - Reba and Ryan can pull numbers to show decreased funding for food equity work to show the need for increased funding (deflected from police).
 - MFPC can work to make discrepancies in Marin more visible/known/talked about - need to elevate the message that there are hungry people in this county.

Community Garden Municipal Policy discussion (Lauren Klein)

- Deeply rooted in equity root: not everyone has equal access to healthy fresh food - or the land to grow their own - in Marin.
- Support demand, grow resiliency, flourish!
- Collaborative grant focused on supporting senior residents in Marin; Lauren's piece has included senior residence gardens. With flexibility from MCF, Lauren is shifting her focus back to policy work she began in 2014, and she needs MFPC ideas and support.
- MFPC decided that a focus would be local food production and community gardens (trying to make them easier to make) in response to UCCE Needs assessment in 2010 revealing huge demand for garden plots county-wide. Marin BOS adopted a Resolution on Equitable Access to Healthy and Local Food including research that came out of this initiative.
- Lauren looks at policies in municipalities that prevent the easy and ready creation of gardens. Asks for community gardens to be deemed a "permitted use."
- Currently there are 11 comm gardens, 4 cities in Marin with no comm gardens (2 of which have the demand). Have tried on 2 occasions to establish gardens in Corte Madera, heading into a third try. Mill Valley, San Rafael, and Larkspur are success stories - they have involved Parks and Rec depts in partial staffing to support their comm gardens. These still have long wait lists.
- Novato and San Rafael have comm gardens listed as "permitted use", but have still not broken ground (location sighted in Novato).
- County is supportive of comm gardens in its General Plan; we are not alone (but we are somewhat behind). There even is language in the General Plan to encourage creation of comm gardens and edible landscapes, including town land! This doesn't necessarily mean that they won't run into lots of challenges - need to streamline.
- There were 800 victory gardens in Golden Gate Park!
- Interest in estimates of what the potential amount of food production is possible with community gardens in Marin - how many people would be impacted and how that would contribute to addressing Food Insecurity in Marin. This data could make conversations more impactful. How do we make the case that comm gardens work deserves to be looked at in a significant way - show that we could actually move the needle on Food Insecurity. Even just using rough numbers of food production possible and how much Food Insecurity that would alleviate. Value to our community of addressing the issue. Policymakers want specifics, numbers. Could look at the estimate of what is currently in our communities (from Comm Gardens map), and project what it could be based on land that is available? Would this data blow people away? Or highlight the healthy eating active living perspective instead? Both? Hyper local issue and decision. Have waiting lists changed during COVID?
- Can we get mention and inclusion in climate action plans as well - as a local solution? Marin County is updating CAPs now. All Marin municipalities except one and county encourage community gardens as climate mitigation in their Climate Action Plans, but it doesn't make it happen in a timely way.
- Due to the 10% budget cuts looming right now - now is not the time to ask municipalities to spend money on this. Anything jurisdictions can do that is free is a more realistic ask right now, such as public land being made available without permits, rather than asking for funding for staff. Highest ask is getting comm gardens into the language of GPs and eliminate restricted language during updates (free). Letters need to be tailored for each jurisdiction.
- Lauren is asking to institutionalize comm gardens and have them supported by municipalities. **First step is a letter of support that Lauren is working on - will circulate to MFPC along with meeting minutes looking for feedback. Preliminary thumbs-up vote of approval today for MFPC to co-author this letter of support**

along with UCCE. Also ask for individual organizations to sign-on where it makes sense.

- Does MFPC want to do a roundtable with elected officials? Work on shared use agreements with schools?
- This is work MFPC has led with UCCE in the past, but it wasn't the right time - people seem more amenable to change right now due to current urgency around food insecurity as well as climate change.
- Importance and power of localizing food systems is huge, name "community gardens" makes it sound a little quaint... perhaps use "community food production" or "urban farming" or other name. Workforce development and job creation. Words matter. Locally empowered gardens also drive agency and empowerment and food sovereignty.
- Future to feed the world is looking at small local farming.
- 10-15% of Oakland food could be sourced from within the city if available land was used for food production. Urban Tilth.
- Sonoma County third of comm gardens are on faith-based sites, rented for \$1/year.
- SB 1000 mandating all municipalities to update GPs and include racial equity lens and environmental impact lens on food access, could tie back to the equity conversation and be a leverage point to discuss with local decision-makers.

Policy Updates (Steve Schwartz)

- Updates & Action Items on Pandemic EBT & Online CalFresh
 - Julia will provide a concise report-out of items in this area.
 - Lots of activity in the County trying to get people to enroll - over 9000 people (including undocumented people) in Marin are eligible for this. About 3,600 need to enroll (by June 30!).
 - USDA technically could extend P-EBT once next school year begins, but under federal law they can only extend the program through Fiscal Year 2020 which ends on September 30th, and only if there is still a public health emergency designation in place. CDSS and CDE will likely request an extension of P-EBT for the next school year if it looks like it will be needed and at that point we will put pressure on USDA to accept the waiver request. Between now and the start of August, USDA is unlikely to act on any requests for waivers of a P-EBT extension. They have been extending waivers on a month by month basis.
 - Food Bank working with 6 organizations on P-EBT Application assistance in San Rafael, Novato, Marin City, and West Marin. Food Bank looking at funding to support P-EBT Applications. Spotlighted the opportunity on Spanish radio. Will have updated applicant numbers at the end of the month. State is swamped, difficult to get through to help lines for clients to set up programs. Drafting a letter of challenges asking for more guidance from the state.
 - Schools worked on messaging going out county-wide in two rounds to ensure that families were aware.
- Update & Letter to CDFA on Senior Farmers Market Promotion Program (Steve Schwartz)
 - Model changing due to COVID, plan was to delay and change the way it worked with farmers markets. Area Agencies on Aging, AIM, and other orgs wrote a letter asking for the integrity of the program to be preserved, and this will likely happen.
 - Interfaith and others putting funding towards a lobbyist (Rebecca Marcus) to work on this, looking at options for the June as well as August budget.

- If we don't have a victory in the short term, we build understanding and allies. Also, Rockefeller is working at a federal level to extend P-EBT and have identified a form of B-EBT that should be available on an ongoing basis anytime kids are out of school for 3+ days.
- This is the first time that MFPC is stepping up into a place of co-sponsoring direct policy education advocacy work at the state level as opposed to signing onto the work of others. **Looking for other orgs who would like to be part of this process with Steve and Reba, as well as non-profit organizations with small pots of money they would like to contribute to this advocacy process.**
- Latino Coalition for a Healthy California sign-on letter to support the Latinx community during COVID-19 (Liana Orlandi) - time sensitive so it was sent out in-between MFPC meetings. A Letter on increases in SNAP was sent out the same day, Liana will send both out to MFPC to look over.
- Letter to BOS to request no increase in sheriff budget - Reba to draft. MFPC vote: Julia doesn't know if UCCE, HHS, and other county departments can support that, sensitive to wording of the ask. Take a breath and pause, and out of respect for our work in food justice, perhaps can word it delicately enough to support. Start with MFPC comment on racial justice shared earlier by Liana, add onto that. Reba to draft, will distribute to MFPC for feedback - watch your inbox. **VOTE: MFPC members voted to see the draft letter first before approval.**

HEAL Update (Julia Van Soelen Kim)

- CalFresh, Food Now, Built Environment groups are meeting every other work during COVID to talk about emergency food response, invite MFPC members to join if working in this area.

Linking our Work to Draw Down Marin (Wendy Tobiasson)

- Presentation to DrawDown Marin: lot of food resiliency opportunities around climate change and equity access and food insecurity. AIM got fully approved, others some approval. *Full presentation is tabled until July meeting.*

Closing (Julia Van Soelen Kim and Liana Orlandi)

- Question of returning to holding MFPC meetings from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. (rather than ending at 4:30)? Discussion: some yes (relevant important work), but majority *no* (too much zoom these days - be more succinct in shaping agenda and holding people to agenda times).

Virtual meeting closed at 5:05 p.m.

Next virtual meeting scheduled for Tuesday, July 21 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.