



# Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Minutes for Dec 20, 2021

## 1. Welcome & Roll Call FSRC Updates

- Secretary Russ Strickland called the meeting to order at 14:30.
- Motion to adopt agenda was made by Heather Bruskin, seconded by Sydney Daigle.
- Motion to accept minutes was made by Wade Haerle, seconded by Heather Bruskin.

### ● Letter to DBM

- Del. Lorig Charkoudian provided an update on a letter, sent to DBM Secretary Brinkley, co-authored by the Delegate and Sen. Katie Fry Hester. The letter highlighted specific, high-priority funding requests made in the FSRC's report such as cold storage and Council staff funding. Because there is no set process in place for any extra or "leftover" ARPA money, Del. Charkoudian and Sen. Hester hope that this correspondence will elevate these items to DBM's attention.
- Chloe Waterman asked if there are possible funding sources or streams available from the USDA, based on recent grant award announcements; this will be discussed later in the meeting.
- Michael J. Wilson requested clarification about Council-approved recommendations and talking points versus what was included in the letter. In particular he noted that the letter made reference to a request for emergency feeding program funding, an item that was not approved by the FSRC to include in the interim report. Del. Charkoudian replied that this letter was written on behalf of herself and Sen. Hester and was not intended to represent requests on behalf of the FSRC.

### ● State decision making guide

- MDEM will create a guide to the funding and legislative processes should Council members decide to engage in advocacy in the upcoming session.
- Sydney Daigle, noting its potential usefulness for encouraging civic engagement, asked if this document will be made available to the general public, or if members could share it. Anna Sierra replied that this is a document intended specifically for food-related legislative and funding issues that may come up, but that she will check to see if there is something publicly available that might be more appropriate for the general public (and

that is approved and authorized by the Governor's office) that we can share.

- **Food Needs Assessment**

- DHS, MSDE, and MDEM have distributed a food needs assessment form to their networks in order to collect information about existing gaps in funding and services at the local (government) level.
- Meg Kimmel asked for more details about the assessment; specifically, what partners were included and what kind of data is being sought. Anna replied that Bethany Brown (DHS) discussed the project with DHS's monthly feeding call meeting and sent it to that group; Mischelle Williams (MSDE) said that they also sent it to county-level DSS offices. Meg replied that Maryland Food Bank would be pleased to offer their responses to the assessment.
- Holly Frieshtat said that we need to have a more standardized pathway and strategic process for data collection in order to engage the full spectrum of answers to this and future needs assessment.

- **New Meeting Schedule - Doodle**

- Aiming for a regularly-occurring meeting in the first two weeks of each month, Anna will send around a Doodle poll to Council members to schedule meetings for 2022.

## 2. 2022 Planning Session

- **Legislative Session**

- For the upcoming legislative session, Sec. Strickland proposed that the Council be represented by Heather Bruskin in any legislative matters that have to do with the FSRC's recommendations outlined in the interim report. To assist in processing incoming information and updates during session, the Communications and Coordination Subcommittee, led by Michael J. Wilson and Sydney Daigle, will meet weekly during session to examine food-related matters. Any legislative testimony will be made by Heather and/or someone Heather chooses; however, this should not stop Council members from advocating on behalf of themselves or their own organizations, but they should not represent the Council in those efforts unless specifically authorized.
- After discussion, Council recommended a strong decision making process for examining legislation that is clear and transparent. MDEM staff will coordinate with Communications and Coordination subcommittee chairs and leadership to develop a procedure for legislative considerations.
- Michael J. Wilson opened the Communications and Coordination subcommittee meeting to any FSRC members interested in the legislative discussion.

- **Subcommittee Structure**

- Sec. Strickland proposed that the Funding subcommittee be merged into the remaining 3 other groups so that each subcommittee will have funding experts to discuss funding needs for any future proposals. This will break down some of the silos we discovered in the fall. He also noted that leadership would like someone from the Maryland philanthropic community to be involved.

- **Parking Lot “Sprint” and Report Update**

- Anna explained the project management term ‘sprint’ to mean a process where one piece of a task or item is put in hyperfocus for a short period of time. The legislators on the FSRC recommended releasing a follow-up report to recap the 2022 legislative session and to provide any update on the ‘parking lot’ issues in the 2021 report. Anna and Vanessa will work with subcommittees to identify what items should be prioritized for the parking lot sprint process.

- **Webinar series**

- Anna explained the proposed biweekly webinar series (which may be branded as a lunch & learn or sip & learn, depending on the time of day they are offered) as a way to address the interest in learning more about specific food issues. The webinars would be offered to FSRC members to participate and the public to listen. These would be separate from the field trips and listening tours that have been proposed by several members. If there are ideas, suggestions, or offers from Council members, please email Anna and Vanessa.
- Michael J. commented that the Council has had several presentations during meetings where members felt like they were merely given information and not provided with the opportunity to participate or offer feedback. He suggested that these may be better served as shorter presentations with more time for discussion, or perhaps have the material given in advance to save more time for questions.
- Anne Palmer recommended monthly rather than bi-weekly events in order to encourage better attendance and to reduce the workload on staff. She also mentioned that the University of Hawaii has received funding to work on state resilience efforts and to create a community of practice. There may be opportunities to collaborate in the future, and Anne will forward more information as she receives it.
- Leslie Sessom-Parks asked to clarify who will organize these events. Anna replied that MDEM will organize the series under direction of Council, working with UMD and the College of Ag to help facilitate the sessions and manage back-end IT.
- Lisa Lachenmeyer noted that UMD runs a lecture series that the Council may be able to partner with. Their series invites speakers from all over the country to talk about food and agriculture issues.
- Leadership will determine a monthly schedule of events.

### **3. Open Discussion**

- **USDA project:** Mark Powell explained the “Local Food Purchase Assistance Program,” which allocated \$6.1m to Maryland to help support local farmers. MDA will develop a procurement system, while DHS will ensure that food will go to appropriate consumers. The proposal is due to USDA by April 5, and it is a 2-year cooperative agreement (which gives more latitude and has fewer specific deliverables than a grant).
  - Del. Charkoudian noted that there may be some opportunities to use those

funds for infrastructure to store food, and she asked if cold storage could be addressed using that funding stream so that other ARPA money could be allocated elsewhere. Mischelle replied that state agencies have to be careful about funding that is coming from the same sources (USDA and other federal funds).

- **Event announcements:**

- Maryland's Best expo: January 19, 10am-2pm
- Future Harvest Annual Conference: January 13-14 (virtual)

- **Membership roundtable:**

- USDA recently announced additional funding for schools to deal with supply chain issues
- MSDE direct certification through Medicaid will be tested in spring 2022, and they hope to have a complete rollout by the next school year.
- Leslie Sessom-Parks announced that MSDE has received a farm-to-school grant and will be partnering with UMD College of Ag and MDA to convene stakeholders and think strategically about sustainability. Their ultimate goal is to publish a 5-10 year sustainability plan.
  - *NOTE: Leslie provided the following clarification to statements made during the 12/20 meeting:* The funding is part of USDA's Build Back Better Food System Transformation initiative, not "Build Back Better" funding. Included in the \$22M allocated to Maryland, is the \$14M in Supply Chain Assistance funding for school meal programs. The remaining dollars are for USDA Food purchases and agriculture's cooperative agreement funding for partnerships with local producers.

- **Staffing note:** MDEM is hiring a food resiliency specialist to support the Council full-time. The application deadline is January 4.

#### **4. Wrap Up and Adjourn**

Sec. Strickland called for a motion to end the meeting at 16:01; Heather Bruskin made the motion, and it was seconded without objection.