

# OFFICE OF FOOD ACCESS

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Boston Food Access Council Meeting  
1481 Tremont Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room  
Boston, MA 02120

June 14th, 2018 | 6:00p - 8:00p

## MEETING GOALS

- Consider opportunity to develop Mayor's food agenda
- Share and discuss progress of Boston Food Access Council (BFAC) Working Groups
- Receive constituent input

## AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions

6:00p - 6:10p

**Members in attendance:** Emily Broad Leib (Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic), Sutton Kiplinger (The Food Project), Carol Tienken (Greater Boston Food Bank), Laura Benavidez (Boston Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services), Leah Triscari (ABCD), Elizabeth Miller (City of Boston Mayor's Office of Food Access), Noreen Kelly (Project Bread), Doug Rauch (Daily Table)

**Delegates in attendance:** Felipe Ruiz (Boston Public Health Commission), Gabriella Mora (Krupp Family Foundation)

**Members absent:** Barbara Knecht (Urban Farming Institute), Bing Broderick (The Haley House), Vickey Siggers (Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition), Liana Krupp (Krupp Family Foundation), Chris Bosso (Northeastern School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs), Christian Perry (Dorchester Community Food Co-Op), Allison Bovell-Ammon (Children's HealthWatch), Bill Dean (Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy), Mary Bovenzi (Boston Public Health Commission), Vidya Tikku (The Trustees), Tara Agarwal Pedulla (Children's Hospital),

**Other:** Liz Hatzenbuehler (Boston Food Access Council Intern)

### Opportunity to Develop Mayor's Citywide Food Agenda, Liz Miller

- Chief Marty Martinez new idea to think about developing a citywide food agenda in line with Mayor Walsh's agenda – Imagine Boston 2030 plan. This is a very new idea and just offered this week (6/11/19)
  - Consultant to facilitate a summit, details are still TBD
  - The summit would be for the development of a citywide food agenda, doesn't currently exist. The BFAC has a working plan, but isn't firm and could stand to be refined more with a stronger vision behind it
  - Chief Martinez would be happy to make this happen, but it would happen this fall, so short lead time



- We want to get input from the council about this opportunity so we can bring input from BFAC to the table
  - Work that the council has done so far could be embedded into the plan, so that work isn't lost unless we decide we want to completely start over.
  - BFAC either in its current form or in an updated version would shepherd that plan forward
  - There have been no concrete details yet, but what are general thoughts of council members?
    - **Sutton:** same partners?
    - **Liz M:** I don't know
    - **Noreen:** if the work of the council would get elevated if it became part of the 2030 plan, to me this is a plus. The council should be integrated into the plan, but if not our work won't have enough legs.
    - **Sutton:** yes, this resonates with from last quarterly meeting to align work with 2030 plan
    - **Emily:** yes, this is happening in other states – to have buy in. It is a short timeline, might not be enough time to get everyone here.
    - **Doug:** It's wonderful. We should have a city wide integrated food agenda moving towards nutrition and accessibility. How to integrate that into this – isn't a plug and play, it should be an iterative process.
    - **Emily:** Whoever hosts, a group from this council should be on the steering or planning of that committee that is looking to form the food agenda. It shouldn't be a different steering committee outside the BFAC
    - **Liz M:** that's feasible
    - **Noreen:** who is the audience for the summit?
    - **Liz M:** I don't have a lot of detail yet, but my thought is that it should involve stakeholders at this table and some space for resident input, but if it's a 1 day summit, is that feasible?
    - **Laura:** As each city does an agenda, could this group be convened? When national mayors council convenes, could this idea be tacked on then?
    - **Liz M:** audience – valuable for BFAC to give input on who the audience should be
    - **Doug:** Innovation and – user oriented collaborative design. Focus on the user, the citizens eating the food, but it needs to be collaborative, so therefore it is iterative. Citizens, BFAC, other stakeholders need there for there to be an understanding that this is a collaborative iterative process
    - **Liz M:** Dr. Martin did a year long process with a number of stakeholders and formats, and heavy emphasis on resident input.
    - **Carol:** Collective Impact Model – another term for it (user collaborative)
    - **Emily:** If you think about what can be done in 1 day... what is the structure to use for getting input and what are the kinds of questions to

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ask and how, or do the reverse, and push the meeting out and get input on what we what to get input on in just 1 day and then build on what we are doing and peer organizations are doing, so they day becomes more about laying out the process...

- **Liz M:** It sounds like consensus is that this is a good idea and I'll continue to engage BFAC on the development of this.
- **Doug:** To clarify terms, it would be nice to know in Chief Martinez's mind, is this food agenda with a long window or a plan with a target? Agenda is a little loose. An agenda of topics versus a plan?
- **Liz M:** My guess is that it is a plan, generally how Mayor Walsh's agenda works out is a plan- Imagine Boston 2030 plan and he's developing neighborhood plans

## **Progress Updates from BFAC Working Groups, Discussion, and next Steps, Liz Miller**

*Working Group 1 Strategy: Improve food access in underserved communities through economic development and community wealth building initiatives.*

- We've had discussions centered around the issue of there not being adequate physical access to food in many neighborhoods, the cost of healthy food is not affordable, and how do we improve access with economic development as a driver. We've considered developing a tool box for new businesses to start-up/expand, but this group is still in information gathering phase.
- We've also looked into are business having difficulty accessing resources
  - We connected with small business office, which is not centered toward food retail but could support it. They mostly provide technical assistance, and the challenge is making resources known. The small business office hosts events to promote resources and the people who show up are residents, not business owners. There is a gap there and we need to figure out how to leverage retail for them.
  - Some members participated in a call with the The LA Food Policy Council's Healthy Neighborhood Market Network (HNMN).
    - HNMN is an exciting program with great success. The goal is to bring more fruits and vegetables into areas with low access. There is a heavy emphasis on business development and support. The LA Food Policy Council provides technical assistance workshops either for groups or they provide 1 on 1 help specific to business needs such as store transformations where corner stores become community hubs. There is a strong emphasis on the development of store owners and the owner leadership within the community.
    - Communities where the HNMN focuses their work have experienced decades of institutional racism and economic disparities, so that is what is at the forefront of what's happening through the HNMN – leadership development and hands on technical assistance which can drive change and store owners become advocates for healthy food and for social change.

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- The HNMN is supported in part through COMPRA foods – which is a food purchasing program that aggregates purchase for the corner stores. The LA Food Policy Council and partners manage COMPRA and help the stores gain access at affordable produce prices.
- **Doug:** is data to support HNMN success? How do they measure success?
- **Liz M:** They are measuring the amount of produce sold from the stores
- **Doug:** What levers did they push that helped? What stimulates? What learning and metrics did they drive results with?
- **Gabi:** There are challenges to metrics/evaluation in retail space. HNMN described technical pieces – how much produce and how many stores are added in per year. They are going for a deeper dive touch with fewer stores rather than a lighter touch with many. They have a large network of city agencies offering to provide support around underwriting and business development strategy, economic impact and the changing food retail environment. There is a lot of drive from the neighborhoods themselves to recommend corner stores to the program.
- **Sutton:** Some of the specific metrics they noted on the call were an increase in total revenue in the store related to business development and availability and placement/promotion of products within the store
- **Carol:** There is also Healthy Camden, Cultivating Camden (Food Trust) – a Campbell's Healthy Communities Program collective impact. They measured obesity and worked to reduce obesity rates and getting bodegas to take more healthy foods – community bucks to redeem within the stores
- **Gabi:** There is lots of stuff happening in the schools – Campbells – a lot of intensive work in schools and community and many different partners around the table
- **Emily:** What I like about doing something like this is that can be flexible and we can do the work that we are thinking about doing and invest overtime (starting with a light touch, understand what the issues are, and what resources are out there – eg. grants that come from outside the city, benefits of point of sale system, SNAP education resources they could benefit from, and connect them to the resource before having to do fewer deep dive.
- **Liz M:** The business office of economic development is setting up these Small Business Centers across Boston. WG 1 has talked about doing this for food retail – LA provides a much more intensive version of this. Something in this realm of pulling resources together helping business know what resources are there and guiding them through the process.
- **Gabi:** BPHC lead similar model to this – can Felipe speak to this?

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- **Felipe:** Healthy on the Block that had 2 stores. It required a full time staff member and support staff and was an incredible amount of work around promotion, refrigeration, etc. The project was met with mixed feelings mostly because of the intensity of the work.
- **Liz M:** LA team really got the subject matter support and expertise – did BPHC have this?
- **Felipe:** I'm not sure. It was rigorous process to get the stores engaged.
- **Sutton:** What I remember hearing is that people were accessing technical assistance and BPHC didn't have tech support. The difference from Boston is that the LA staff have a team of external experts *and* their staff have skills to provide support to the program in addition to language support so technical assistance officers a more robust set of services in a flexible way that small retail owners need.
- **Felipe:** They probably have a larger funding stream. BPHC may not have had as much money as LA
- **Liz M:** We've done a fair amount of into gathering – is there more to do? We keep coming around to same set of concepts to be applicable in Boston. Next step is to hone in on our role and shepherd that process forward.

*Working Group 2: Improve food access in under resourced communities by making more vacant land accessible and usable for cultivation by local residents interested to pursue community gardening and commercial urban agriculture.*

- We've discussed barriers in place in order to urban ag and community garden. Article 89 – which addressed the permitting process– lays out process for going about urban agriculture within the city,, but didn't break down barriers.
- This group has identified 3 main buckets of barriers:
  - (1) permitting and approval process
  - (2) cost of development - same types of cost as someone who develops land for housing but for an individual or nonprofit looking to do urban growing, those costs are very prohibitive vs not so for developers
  - (3) capacity to navigate process and sustain a process once its in play
- The group plans to work with city and external partners to break down barriers and would like to convene partners /stakeholders to understand from them what barriers they experience and clarify the barriers they face to get a sense of where they hit roadblocks, where within the city did they hit the road black, and where can we start to break down those barriers.
  - **Felipe:** As we move forward, it's important to have a shift in language. The sliver parcel process has a lense of non-developable land, and it needs to be seen as having value for development as it will bring benefits to the community. It is not

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bad land, it just isn't suitable for house development and we need to highlight those benefits when talking to city agencies

- **Emily:** The Article 89 Guide for different growers for under 1 acre at that point started other guides (rooftop, shipping containers, over 1 acre) and 1 issue was difficult to get information from city agencies because there wasn't agreement over policies (eg. zoning), like what kind of permit do you need (to validate your point). We agreed to do 1 acre, and ran into the same barriers when you look over the 1 acre. Have done other work with Philly FPC – city and state level that can do urban agriculture, what can government do to provide resources through incentives (tax) to your property to make it easier – might be for smaller parcels – very Boston specific and learning from other cities too
  - **Sutton:** Under 1 acre, for non- commercial
  - **Emily:** yes – I can resend
  - **Sutton:** Article 89 was about clarifying zoning for commercial zoning, but set off a cascade for other things. There are also these other practical things for people that want to reclaim land for a variety of community purposes and in those cases zoning and regulatory, i.e. less of a burden, but still some substantial costs – points of overlap but also separate issue.
- LM: In addition to permitting and regulations, we need to think about costs. Very costly to get water to plots, and more cost effective if it can be aggregated – how do we bring together resources for this? Cost piece ---we could work with the city to talk about permit costs, but that is very small compared to getting water.
  - Gabi: The summit in fall could be a a hack-a-thon of Chief Martinez's and top staff to discuss these issues with the Mayor's staff --- eg. engaged resident in Mattapan to do community garden, cooking demos in farmers market. It could help expedite these challenges that we keep bumping into. This might be a good use of time
  - **Liz M:** Yes – a pretty important next step is to engage the city departments and have their perspective too. For as much as we don't like to see the roadblocks, we need to know what they exist.
  - **Gabi:** how do we make these processes **easy**. It would be exciting and fun to think about how do we do this 2030 vision.
  - **Liz M:** Great point to hit on how to make this easy, and we are still gathering info and making headway

*Working Group 3: Strengthen and expand resources that support Bostonians to access the food they need and want.*

- This is a behemoth in terms of strategy. There has been a lot of emphasis on increasing physical access to food and also advocacy, advocating for federal and state programs needing advocacy and uniting advocacy efforts with peers thinking about housing and workforce development

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- We've explored opportunities to bring food resources in communities with low food access: eg. BaltiMart in Baltimore. You can use SNAP dollars with this grocery delivery. We talked a lot about Market Basket – people see value in terms of quality/availability/etc.
- We've talked about increasing services that can help bring residents to better food resources, and explored a public private partnership like an Uber Ride (Boston MBTA RIDE program is piloting this). Could we tap into something similar with respect to food access?
- This group has been talking most about the advocacy piece and developing a strong unified advocacy voice around food access issues and how to bring players to the table, residents and peers around the table
- We are wondering where to go with this work. We don't want to reinvent the wheel. A lot of groups are doing good advocacy work – GBFB, Project Bread, so many different groups doing this work. At the last working group meeting we said we needed to develop some advocacy priorities, but we don't know what the role for the group is after the priorities are developed.
  - Should we develop our own policy agenda and make sure the council voice is heard? Do we want to convene another working group? Develop online forum? Bring in more resident voices? GBFB has the advocacy 101. So, there are lots of ideas, but no consensus on role for this group. Is there more discussion to be had?
    - **Emily:** 2 different things going on and the title of the group is the entire council's mission! Should we make this working group 2 different groups and define them better? One part of the group is advocacy and the other is thinking about healthy neighborhood network
    - **Liz M:** Yes, very similar to HNMN and perhaps this should be incorporated into working group 1.
    - **Emily:** What investment in local institutions to sell healthy food and then need to do more. Advocacy – what's the role? If cities like Boston aren't expressing that these programs are important – this is an important voice to say why this is important and what these programs mean to residents. There can't be too much advocacy
    - **Gabi:** I agree. The US Conference of Mayors to host a forum or panel focused on food specific issues, which is good timeline with the Farm Bill and federal policies that have big impact on city. The Mayors all signed on to the Farm Bill platform. Philly has greater region wide farm bill policies. Something that comes from the Mayor's office is different from what a non-profit organization does to organize a group. It's a great opportunity if there are cuts to SNAP what does that mean for families, schools, retailers, etc. so many are impacted!

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- **Liz M:** Yes, the news is very high level, but people don't tell the individual stories
- **Doug:** I really likes Emily's comment – we are trying to eat the elephant in 1 bite. The first issue is logistics should go back into WG1 and advocacy for success (successes of what other groups ARE doing – draws in resources and press) and for risks. The city needs to advocate on behalf of cities to preserve programs but advocate on innovative/successful programs too.
- **Liz M:** Should Working Group 3 would work on the agenda for the summit – connection for the advocacy?
- **Emily:** Being a link to state and federal level, reporting these things that are happening and what can the council do or what can the Mayor do – still big, but if we only look inward we miss opportunity – these programs impact all of our work
- **Sutton:** SNAP stuff feels very much part of economic development, increasing customers purchasing power must be part of the economic development story. Protection of SNAP, building on HIP, all of that is part of WG1 agenda and community wealth building. To compete for SNAP dollars and keep them local so people can purchase local products and also being able to track – not so much an advocacy agenda -- but how nimble we are and how can we participate in it – staying on top of the pulse.
- **Liz M:** So, advocacy needs to be a separate offshoot of this group; it needs to be its own group. If we are to move forward with a plan the question becomes, what areas of advocacy that we all care about need to be considered in the plan? What's the timeline? Maybe it doesn't need to be boxed into a policy agenda, but we need to know the areas that are important to us.
- **Noreen:** Advocacy for the basic programs needs to happen. We should think of advocacy as it relates to each working group rather than as separate groups. The whole council cares about advocacy in general, so it shouldn't be separated out, not for just 1 working group. National delegation is great – we don't focus enough on state stuff and it should be integrated by topic rather than spearted out.
- **Liz M:** yes – how do we structure that? My thought is that there needs to be some structure built so that it happens in each working group or Working Group 3 communicates with all groups all the time to be sure that advocacy voice is heard and being put out there.
- **Emily:** There could be a short term group that identifies priorities, agreed upon and then distributed out. Groups can claim them or choose to monitor?



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- **Liz M:** Regularly, working groups can take a pulse and see what's happening in advocacy work and where can....
- **Doug:** We don't want to allow it to get watered down. Pick 2-3 issues so that they are focused, clear and aligned and can draw resources. Be careful not to advocate 20 different messages. Focused advocacy, draw together to get people together
- **Gabi:** I agree. Focus on Farm Bill that's happening now, and people can orient around that. We can use the conference of Mayors staff and organize around it. Get press releases and get some coverage. We have a starting place and something the Mayor signed onto and can come together in the fall to re-evaluate.
- **Emily:** Harvard has a report card rating the senate bill to see how it rates up – 8 law schools across the country; 4 on the Farm Bill
- **Gabi:** Can you circulate the conference of Mayors letter?
- **Liz M:** Yes. Leaning towards what other influential groups are doing, where we fit in and take that further. We are not developing something that's said and done – it's revisited quarterly. We have to be as proactive as we can so it will be a fluid thing – we need to jump into that a bit.
- **Emily:** The Council or Mayor's office could put out something that says the 5 things Boston really cares about – non controversial: FINI, SNAP, HIP, sustainable local agriculture, TFAP, and healthy food financing
- **Gabi:** There are blueprints to follow – non controversial
- **Noreen:** We have a great federal delegation – don't lose site of local in Boston or across the state
- **Sutton:** HIP was a wildly successful program now barely funded – advocacy effort around the --
- **Gabi:** Why didn't the state reapply for FINI?? They can reapply.
- **Sutton:** There are some questions there worth probing.
- **Liz M:** I am sure within this group we can find some answers. Moving forward with determining priorities – both federal and state and what are partners in the field doing, where the council fits best, and what we want to do (eg. 5 things Boston cares about in Farm Bill). Working Group 3 can get that started ,but need to include the entire council to get input
- **Noreen:** Yes - advocacy updates as a regular item at quarterly meetings.
- **Liz M:** Yes. CHLPI – food is medicine plan and advocating for food as a social determinant of health. Development is happening now for MA FIM plan. Improve health by increasing access to

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medically tailored foods; shift to community based healthcare support; social determinants of health; health care accountable to costs associated with health care. If anyone works in this field – June 26 is the next listening session in Boston. Learning for CHILPI and BFAC. We will be keeping in touch with that work – already ties there.

## Public comments, questions

### *What do you think of a Boston city food agenda*

- Excited by the idea of a summit and a hack-a-thon; problem-based learning/activities and bringing expert voices to solve them – academic and residents together.

## Announcements

1) **BOS Food Love:** Goal to increase consumption of school food. This project has student and parent engagement to get kids willing to try school food and shift school food culture. 3 schools have confirmed. OFA is hiring a program coordinator to manage this program. There is not a job description yet, but it will open soon. We really hope to get a local applications from people who went through BPS. Take Liz Miller's card! Spread the word. Full time grant funded, 1 year.

2) **Summer Meals:** OFA in partnership with Project bread to support expansion of summer meal sites throughout the city

- 18 farmers markets will have meal sites and so will libraries – see Project Bread website for more information. website: <https://meals4kids.org/>
  - Summer Eats: branding is consistent. There is a summer eats ap, hotline and website.

3) **New Farmers Market in Uplands Corner** needs a farmers market manager

4) **Food Waste and Recovery Conference**

- Hosted by Harvard June 26-27. There will be live stream and videos following the summit

Others:

- Mass Medical endorsed 2 questions for food insecurity screening
- Double Up Food Bucks launches hopefully in later this summer. There are still some details to work out. Stay Tuned.
- HIP is back until June 30 and funding might be able to be used past end of fiscal year? Have been robo calls going out that it was ended. Noreen will follow-up on what is correct!

## Closing

Next steps:

Next working group meetings will be Aug

Next BFAC Sept 13

- No July Working Group meetings

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- Dates for future BFAC meetings
  - Thursday, September 13th, 2018: 6p - 8p, Location: 1481 Tremont Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Boston, MA 02120
  - Thursday, December 13th, 2018: 6p - 8p, Location: 1481 Tremont Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Boston, MA 02120
  - Thursday, March 14th, 2019: 6p - 8p, Location: 1481 Tremont Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Boston, MA 02120



