



MEETING MINUTES

Boston Food Access Council

Inaugural Meeting

6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 29, 2017 at Boston City Hall

Attendees

BFAC Members: **Laura Benavidez** (Director of Food and Nutrition Services, Boston Public Schools); **Allison Bovell-Ammon** (Deputy Director of Policy Strategies, Children's HealthWatch); **Bing Broderick** (Executive Director, Haley House); **Alison Brown** (Board Member, Dorchester Community Food Co-Op); **William Dean** (Director of Advocacy and Public Impact, Tufts University); **Noreen Kelly** (Director of Programs, Project Bread); **Sutton Kiplinger** (Greater Boston Regional Director, The Food Project); **Liana Krupp** (President of the Board of Directors, Krupp Family Foundation); **Emily Broad Leib** (Director and Assistant Clinical Professor of Law, Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic); **Anne McHugh** (Director for the Division of Chronic Disease and Prevention, Boston Public Health Commission); **Elizabeth Miller** (Food Security Fellow, Mayor's Office of Food Access); **Eric Mitchell** (Deputy Director of Field Operations, Action for Boston Community Development); **Linda Palmer** (Special Projects Administrator, Urban Farming Institute); **Tara Agarwal Pedulla** (Program Manager, Boston Children's Hospital); **Doug Rauch** (Founder and President, The Daily Table); **Vickey Siggers** (Farmer's Market Manager and Program Coordinator, Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition); **Carol Tienken** (Chief Operating Officer, The Greater Boston Food Bank); **Vidya Tikku** (General Manager of Boston Community Gardens, The Trustees)

Other attendees: **Felix Arroyo** (Chief of Health and Human Services, City of Boston); **Catalina Lopez-Ospina** (Director, Mayor's Office of Food Access); **Jillian McKoy** (Intern, Mayor's Office of Food Access); **Aparna Ramesh** (Intern, Mayor's Office of Food Access); **Kristina Stefanini** (Former Intern, Mayor's Office of Food Access)

Absent BFAC Members: **Chris Bosso** (Professor of Public Policy, Northeastern University); **Juan Leyton** (Executive Director, Dudley Square Neighborhood Initiative)

Welcome

- OFA Director Catalina Lopez-Ospina welcomed the group to the inaugural BFAC meeting and introduced Chief of Health and Human Services Felix Arroyo.
- Chief Arroyo welcomed Council members and highlighted how members' diverse and extensive resources and expertise will help advance our collective goal to create access to affordable, nutritious food for all of Boston's residents.

Member Introductions

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Members introduced themselves and their organization, and stated their reasons for joining the Council.

Member Survey Results

Jillian provided an overview of the most common priorities and current initiatives of each member's organization to help determine the Council's strengths and how its work should be shaped.

- **Top priorities:** Food Access; Hunger Awareness; Improving public school food; Nutrition Education; Food Justice; and Urban Agriculture.
- **Additional priorities:** Food Systems; SNAP; Community Gardens; Food Sovereignty; Healthy Meals; Food Waste
- **Top initiatives:** Increasing access to healthy foods; Meal sites; Nutrition education and Nutrition policy; Community health center engagement; Food system job training; Community Gardens.
- **Overall Strengths of Council** - Awareness and understanding of:
 - Physical, financial, cultural barriers to food access; Importance of food sovereignty
 - Educational tools for youth and adults
 - Progressive ideas utilizing modern tools and technology to create sustainable changes
 - Community relationships

Getting Started

OFA Food Security Fellow Liz Miller provided the Council with an overview of the plan and structure for the Council.

- **OFA Data Report**
 - OFA is producing a Food Security Data Report and will share it with the Council by the end of Summer 2017.
 - This report is a comprehensive analysis of data sets that OFA has compiled over the past year, in partnership with the Greater Boston Food Bank, Boston Development and Planning Agency, Department of Public Health, Boston Public Health Commission, and other partners, to identify food insecurity trends in Boston, and examine how those trends intersect among factors such as demographics, social need, and resources.
 - The analysis will identify current approaches that are successful in reducing food insecurity in Boston, as well as the areas that have been overlooked or are in need of improvement.
 - The report will also include a literature review of food insecurity trends and effective interventions in other major U.S. metropolitan cities.
- **Setting Priorities for the BFAC**
 - Council will begin to set priorities in today's meeting.
 - The priorities will be confirmed at the September BFAC meeting and will determine the group's work over the next two years.
- **BFAC Action Plan**

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- The Council will determine short-term action items on an ongoing basis (can expand upon the existing programs/initiatives of members' organizations), and will aim to produce a broader action plan to reduce food insecurity in Boston, tentatively by the December 2017 meeting.
- **Structure of BFAC**
 - Working Groups
 - In addition to quarterly meetings, the BFAC will also establish working groups that will focus on more tailored projects or action items.
 - Council members should participate in the working group that best reflects their area of expertise, or, if they prefer, they can appoint a delegate from their organization to participate in their place.
 - The working groups will meet outside of quarterly meetings as determined (likely once per month).
 - The working groups will provide an opportunity to incorporate input on addressing food insecurity from other subject-specific experts and community members.
 - Liz Miller will serve as the Chair of the BFAC.
 - Liz will coordinate the work of the Council and will help the group set its goals. She will serve as the OFA liaison to the working groups .
 - Delegates
 - Each Council member can assign a delegate from their organization to attend a BFAC meeting in their absence, and to serve on a working group, if applicable. [POST-MEETING AMENDMENT – While it is suitable for delegates to represent a Council member in the working groups, OFA asks that Council members attend all BFAC quarterly meetings, with no more than two absences in a one-year cycle. Delegates are also permitted to attend the quarterly meetings, especially if they have progress updates from their respective working groups to share with the Council.]
 - BFAC Expectations and Protocols
 - OFA provided each member with a document that details the expectations and protocols of the Council, and it was briefly reviewed during the meeting.
 - Members will have a chance to review the document and provide feedback and comments, and then Jillian will send the document to each member and their designated delegate to sign and return it.
 - The expectations and protocols will be reviewed in two years and updated, if necessary.

Overview of OFA Activities

- OFA Director Catalina Lopez-Ospina provided an overview of the office's initiatives and programming.

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- The Mayor's Office of Food Initiatives recently changed its name to the Mayor's Office of Food Access to better reflect Mayor Walsh's focus on equity and resiliency.
- OFA is working to increase food access for all Boston residents by focusing on the physical, financial, and social barriers that residents experience in accessing food on a regular basis.
- Catalina discussed details of several OFA initiatives, including:
 - The annual Boston CANshare fundraising campaign which supports the Healthy Incentives Program (formerly Bounty Bucks)
 - Support of the Boston Public School meals programs
 - Partnering with the Boston Public Health Commission to create a Food Resource Information Map, which will feature a detailed, multilingual list of food outlets citywide and will debut in Summer 2017
 - Creating the Boston Urban Farming Coalition with the Department of Neighborhood Development
 - Advocacy on a state level to advance food security in Boston
 - Increasing Summer Meals Programs and piloting programs at the Mattapan Boston Public Library (with Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition and Project Bread) and City Hall Plaza this summer
 - Convening the BFAC
 - Creating a Food Insecurity Data Report by the end of Summer 2017
- Liz briefly reviewed some of the food insecurity data that OFA compiled over the past year by conducting listening sessions and issuing surveys to Boston residents who experience food insecurity.
 - 31 layers of data were collected through the surveys.
 - The data revealed that existing community programs do not meet the dietary or cultural preferences of many residents.
 - Cost and mobility were the biggest barriers to food access.
 - There were concerns about price gouging and spoiled food in Mattapan.
 - The data also revealed that many residents are unaware of the Bounty Bucks program (now HIP).
- Liz also provided details and reviewed data examples of the Food Insecurity Data Map that the Boston Planning and Development Agency created in partnership with OFA to produce a visual and quantitative assessment of food insecurity in Boston. The map is categorized by demographic, food resources, and food access/insecurity data, and it will help inform the research and direction of the Food Insecurity Data Report that OFA will produce by the end of Summer 2017.
 - Members provided suggestions for additional layers to add to the map, including schools, corner stores, convenience stores, public transportation, and data from Children's HealthWatch Hunger Vital Sign.

Breakout Sessions

- Council members divided into four groups to identify priorities that the Council should address over the next two years, along with appropriate strategies to implement and resources to utilize.

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- **Group 1:**
 - Maximize existing federal and state resources (ex: SNAP, schools meals)
 - Procurement processes and economies of scale (ex: working together to make school food healthier)
 - Including the food access agenda on all policy levels
 - Increasing food access through urban agriculture, transportation, and educating residents about their options (growing food, cooking food, food as medicine, etc.)
 - Recognizing income inequality – structuring the message around inequality as a root cause of food insecurity
 - Pooling resources on a local, state, and national level
- **Group 2:**
 - Community Gardens and Urban Farms
 - Increasing physical access and funding for sustaining the services
 - Food recovery
 - Better alignment
 - Better policies that support Boston's creativity
 - Better mobile vending
 - Increased screening for food insecurity (ex: at food banks and community health centers)
 - Making sure food is affordable but also nutritious
 - Early intervention (ex: implementing programs with childcare programs)
 - Making innovative choices – utilizing technology to advance our messages and goals in a useful way
- **Group 3:**
 - Ending hunger through food access and equality
 - Making quality food more affordable
 - Behavioral shift to healthy food - accessing healthy foods easily
 - Community-building and education of both children and adults
 - Decreasing the stigma of food insecurity and SNAP
 - Being mindful and raising awareness about the SNAP gap
 - Celebrating the culture of food (ex: exposing people to diverse types of food)
 - Gathering many groups to work together on the mission to reduce food insecurity
- **Group 4:**
 - School Food
 - Improving quality of food and equity of access
 - Engaging with food through a “Public Plate” – public institutions in which food is a large component, i.e. schools
 - Raising community voices
 - Empowering communities
 - Making sure residents and communities understand and believe that their voices are being heard and that they matter.
 - Educating people about the quality of food

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- Making sure residents understand that they are stakeholders in creating equity to food access.
- Creating regulatory policies that the Mayor can support, such as sugar-sweetened beverages, reducing price gouging in corner stores, and increasing transportation frequency and access.
- Living wage
 - There are many families on the cusp who are struggling.
 - Need for workforce development
 - Access to fresh, affordable food on a neighborhood level (such as small alternative vendors)
- Promoting education of nutritious food resources
 - Word of mouth conversations to spread information
 - Large employers and labor unions
- Closing the Equity Gap
 - Promoting/utilizing convenient healthy food options such as Amazon Fresh/Whole Foods deliveries
 - Need to create access to healthy, affordable food that is convenient to access for all residents. Need to expand and replicate successful programs so that they reach everyone.

Closing Comments and Next Steps

Members noted that the BFAC member survey was somewhat vague and that it would have been helpful to be able to elaborate or explain their responses when necessary.

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 14, 2017, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m., Boston City Hall

Future Meeting Dates

Thursday, December 14, 2017, 6 p.m. – 8 pm., Boston City Hall

Thursday, March 8, 2018, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m., Boston City Hall

Goals for September 14 Meeting

1. Solidify priorities
2. Establish objectives
3. Begin identifying short and long-term strategies

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