

Meeting Minutes
Weekly Update – Guest Speaker Winton Pitcoff,
Director, Massachusetts Food System Collaborative
June 25 @ 9am

Participants: 44

Chat Box notes in Italics

**See attendee introductions at bottom of document*

Liz Wiley (Marion Institute):

- Winton Pitcoff from the MA Food System Collaborative will lead the meeting today

00:12:02 *Liz Wiley: This is separate from the work we have been doing together on the updating of our Food System Assessment Report for Southeastern MA. This will be complimentary to the work we are conducting.*

00:09:44 *Liz Wiley: <https://www.mafoodsystem.org>*

Winton Pitcoff (MA Food Collaborative):

- We try to promote policies that support a sustainable, resilient and equitable food system across the state.
- We feed off of the MA Food System Plan which is now about 4 years old.
 - o We are assessing when/how this will need to be updated, along with the response to issues related to COVID
- This meeting is part of finding the information to ‘overlay’ the Food Plan to update as needed.
 - o There will probably be about 60 meetings
- We will aggregate everything we get out of these conversations and send that info back out to you all

00:51:23 *Winton Pitcoff: So you all have my contact info: winton@mafoodsystem.org. Happy to continue any of these discussions one-on one or in smaller groups.*

- Let’s start out by asking: **what do you think a transaction/interaction that would represent a sustainable, healthy and equitable food system?**
 - o **What are you seeing that is working – or what are you proud of in your community that’s happened.**

Kristi Marshall (Farmers Market – Marshfield):

- One of the hurdles for local foods is single points for customer purchases
 - o One of the hurdles is that there are so many places to go to get eggs, veggies, meat etc.
 - o I am involved with several different organizations that do aggregate purchasing

Ben Jones (UMass Dartmouth):

- How institutions can partner with the local food system to create predictable demand, and build buying power with institutional partnerships

Peter Muise (First Citizens):

- Where supply outstrips demand
- Along with the ease to the supply (transportation)

Megan Rogers (United Way of G. Fall River):

- I echo what Peter said, transportation is a huge issue to access
- We realized this, but it wasn't obvious until now

Winton Pitcoff:

- Is there particular food that you notice this as an issue?

Meg Rogers:

- It seems like the hardest things for people to get is meat and dairy currently

00:19:41 *Holly Fowler: Which is wild, because meat and dairy are both struggling in these times.*

00:20:10 *Meg- UWGFR: Right? I was surprised. We're putting flyers in people's deliveries today with the survey link, hoping to get broader data.*

Desa VanLarrhoven (Round the Bend Farm):

- It's around the idea of growing food for all seasons
 - o And echo the supply outstripping demand
 - o But I do see that there is an issue with supply reaching customers currently
- The hope is to open up / grow a market for more sustainable farmers

Dave Perry (Food Bank):

- I feel that a facility is needed to centralize the distribution
- A diversity of vegetables is important
 - o There can be an issue with seasonal overloads of veggies
 - o i.e. the issue with too much lettuce or kale this spring season

00:25:33 *Kristi Marshall: Good point for educational information on using greens like kale in many ways. Using what is in season!*

00:25:50 *Liz Wiley: Absolutely Kristi*

00:25:54 *Meg- UWGFR: We've had our WIC partner share recipe cards for the produce boxes!*

Marica Picard (Greater Fall River Partners for a Healthy Community):

- Transportation is an issue
 - o We are opening a market at a densely populated high rise

00:27:20 *Holly Fowler: Regular convening and capacity to coordinate collaboration is critical.*

Peter Muise:

- Prior to the pandemic I don't think we could have gotten 44 people on a phone call
- Sharing best practices and coordination from Southcoast Food Policy Council meetings have been important

00:27:51 *Pam Kuechler: I agree Peter!! Thank you for saying it!*

00:28:10 *Kelley Mass in Motion: Ditto!!*

00:29:26 *Julie Ramos Gagliardi BayCoast Bank: Yes! Kudos to Liz and the group for keeping the Regional group going and coordinating food access across both gateway cities and the surrounding communities.*

Maura Ramsey (Groundwork Southcoast):

- Our focus is on the intermediate and long-term aspects related to food justice
 - o The young people we employ advocated about the importance of food from the beginning
 - o There is a lot of disconnect in resident's ability to grow food
 - One of these is cultivating future farmers from our cities, where there is interest in both community gardens and farming
 - o There is a lack of policies in our local municipalities – which ends up in negative answers from the municipalities because they don't know how to address

Stephanie Perks (Coastal Foodshed):

- During the pandemic we pivoted the farmers markets to be online and delivery (SNAP available in pickup only)
- We are having a hard time because of the policy aspect. There has been a disconnect with the health department and the agricultural side of things. Disconnect between city departments and farms.
 - o Would love to see more people of color at our farmers markets and especially as vendors.

00:35:19 *Kristi Marshall: Stephanie raises a good point about processing SNAP payments in person during the pandemic (unable to process online) AND good point in disconnect with local Boards of Health. Even at a county level rather than a town level would alleviate burden to producers.*

Buddy Andrade (Minority Action Committee – and Old Bedford Village):

- We need more communication with the people of color on these issues
 - o In order to reach these communities, we need more communication at the grassroots level
 - o I.e. the community meeting at Serenity garden in the South end of NB
- We could use an Environmental Justice Ordinance at the City Level
- We are also interested in getting more land available for farming

Winton:

- In these discussions we don't a good makeup of diversity
- How do we do this? – practical steps to increase diversity?

Buddy:

- Places to start:
 - o Reach out to who you know in the black community to bring others to the table
 - o Find the community organizers
 - o Getting into the schools and working with residents

Winton:

- The collaborative is making a concerted effort in how to use more of a racial equity lens in what we do

Adam Davenport (Marion Institute):

- From the philanthropic perspective it is important to have the time and resources needed to do grassroots outreach considered in funding RFP's and grant outcomes

00:51:16 *Holly Fowler: I think it is becoming increasingly difficult to work on food without working on the root causes of the challenges to access - physical, economic, culturally relevant, etc. Why is it hard to get food? Why is it hard for entities to buy local? I also think localized boards of health and an incomplete food code open for interpretation make it hard for food entrepreneurs and farmers to know how to operate easily. It is an especially hard system to navigate if English is not your first language and you don't have a connected network to help you navigate it.*

Bill Napeltiano (SERPPD):

- Looking at the Brockton Urban Agriculture commission and plan
- When you have a community that is hungry for land - this is where an urban agriculture plan would work
- For transactions: as a planner you want to see the benefits from the customers' transaction, reinvesting into the source and so on.

Winton:

- The system used to work better for farmers when there were more farmers at the decision-making table

Liz Wiley:

- The YWCA has stepped up and is in the process of putting together working groups – and we are putting together a working group of Food Justice

00:52:05 *Kelley Mass in Motion: Let me know Liz about the Food Justice group - I do have to log off soon I have another Zoom meeting at 10*

Dave Perry:

- I'm on the planning board in Taunton – we just lost 3 large farms to solar farms

Winton:

- The Collaborative's focus is typically on state level policy
 - o Have you all had issues at the state level that you all think are important

Dave Perry:

- We put together a policy on solar development
 - o Partially based on soils

Desa:

- I don't feel like there is enough policy to support small local scale farming
- There is more powerful to have incentives, especially all along with any new restrictions
- Also, fund the experts that have been on the ground for generations

Liz:

- A frustration has been that much of the funding has become part of the problem with reactive policy and funding measures
- Much of the funding is not future/systemic thinking
 - o It does not fit into local farmers timelines and schedules

00:58:54 *Meg- UWGFR: We're feeling the same, Liz.*

00:59:32 *Meg- UWGFR: We want to support and advocate for improving the system to support local folks and local ag, not run food programming!*

01:01:06 *Holly Fowler: I'm a little wary of elevating the success stories of a crisis versus having the conversation of "how could this have been avoided" to your point, Liz.*

Winton:

- As much as we are talking about the local food system, it is interwoven with the national and global food system
 - o Food in the US right now is less expensive than it ever has been, but people are still going hungry
 - o Making food cheaper is not the answer – what are the levers to try to use the local food system

Adam:

- It would be helpful to have a state funded planning process to decentralize local food systems, from a grassroots planning perspective. Important to be unique to each region.
- Something to follow up from Food System Assessments in a more formal way
- Funding included to implement planning would be great.

Holly:

- What is the plan to share these conversations?

Winton:

- Collaborative staff will be in an iterative process to take this information, aggregate it and put it back to you all.

01:00:03 *Rhonda Fazio: So please follow Interwoven when I launch because this is narrative of "Re-birthing a Nation" through "interwoven" dialogue that brings EVERYONE to the table that were not present at the inception of the U.S.*

01:01:21 *Rhonda Fazio: This project is ongoing, and encompasses food and fabric and the exploitation of... so please watch out for it. It is getting launched through New Bedford Creative.*

01:03:27 *Rhonda Fazio: I will send the info to Liz to share with the group. Thank you.*

Liz (CFC Food Pantry):

- A struggle within any food pantry is the lack of communication
- There is a lot of overhead work in running a food pantry, outside of days that are open
- We are competing for products, because there is not enough access to the products that are available.
- The grants are out there are restrictive
- There is a need for infrastructure funding as well

Dave Perry:

- The overhead of running a physical space is an issue with the restrictive grants
 - o Grant money is mostly used for food

Karen Schwalbe (SEMAP):

- The Southcoast has expensive land and with long term tenure
 - o This make infrastructure investment an issue
 - o Our large farms are hay or silage – to transition this needs infrastructure investment

Gavin Fay (SMAST Professor, Seafood supply systems):

- We have seen quite a bit of pivots for direct to consumer sales
- MA has waved fees for being a 'dealer'
 - o There is a lot to be done in this area, about who has the right to sell
 - o i.e. Coastal Food shed has partnered with one of the markets to not be a direct sale, but still sell through their market
- New Bedford does not yet have a community supported fishery

Winton:

- We have heard that fisheries have not benefited from the buy local movement the same way that
- One topic that has come up is education for youth, farmers, consumers – do you see the need.

01:22:07 *Meg- UWGFR: There are some local lobstermen and scallopers who are selling directly from their boats during COVID...they are bypassing the whole system to sell direct to consumer*

01:22:36 Karen Schwalbe: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/298310594487687/>

01:22:55 Karen Schwalbe: *SouthCoast Direct Source Seafood*

Stephanie Perks:

- We do get requests from different organizations and community members for cooking demos, etc.
 - o How to use food seasonally is an issue as well
- It is a great opportunity to share cultures through cooking demos

01:26:12 *Kristi Marshall: Stephanie - how about a weekly meal planning tool or recommended seasonal meal somehow through printed material or Coastal Foodshed web tools to the community?*

Desa:

- Find grant money to bring these collaborations together that can share cultures

Marcia Picard:

- We work with the UMass Nutrition Extension for education services in schools, but there have been budget and time cuts to that program.

Ben Jones UMass:

- We've been educating students about seafood and trying to create supply chains through the institution

Buddy:

- I would like to see more interaction with not just the kids, but their families.

Adam:

- For programs such as HIP and Farmers Markets it would be great to have resources that connect to curriculum at varied K-12 levels. Often this information gets passed out as dense fliers.
- Education from schools to families often happens when kids are excited and bring information home – flyers are typically not enough.

Bill Nap:

- One of the pillars of the MVP planning program – retain land, local skills, feed itself, and have resilient systems, should have Food security tie in's

Maura Ramsey:

- The inequities are tied into the top-down planning processes
- How do we have bottom up knowledge into these planning processes

01:28:44 *Kristi Marshall: People are now engaged more....a great time to reach them for full impact on educational efforts.*



Attendees:

- 00:17:59 Michael Jackman: mike Jackman from Congressman Keating's office here
- 00:18:52 geoffrey swires: hello. Major Geoffrey Swires. The Salvation Army Fall River
- 00:19:18 Jacob Miller: Hi everyone! Jacob Miller from Senator Mark Montigny's office. Thanks for all that you're doing.
- 00:20:32 Liz: Hi Liz Berube, Chrystal and Garth from CFC. we have been running our food pantry over 25 yrs
- 00:21:11 Maura Ramsey: Good morning! I am Maura From Groundwork Southcoast and here with our Forest Foundation Intern- Jean Espinal. We do youth employment 30% of our work before COVID was food access in environmental justice communities. Now it has significantly and strategically increased as our COVID response efforts
- 00:21:30 Kimberly Hoy: Good morning. I am Kim from the Mansfield Food Pantry. We are a choice pantry. Mansfield is still in Bristol County!
- 00:22:30 Kristi Marshall: Hello everyone. Kristi Marshall. I co-manage a farmers' market in Marshfield where we are operating online ordering, curb-side pickup and re-opening our physical market this week. I also am a small producer and aggregator myself selling on multiple online delivery systems, working to improve accessibility.
- 00:24:47 Deirdre Healy: Good Morning, I'm Deirdre Healy from UMass Dartmouth where we have a food pantry for students and have been working on projects related to food justice for the past several years.
- 00:26:47 Holly Fowler: Hi Everyone, I'm Holly Fowler. I am a sustainable communities and food system consultant. I am supporting the Marion Institute and Coastal Foodshed with updating the Southeastern MA Food System Assessment and conducting a Food Hub Feasibility Study.
- 00:27:14 Kelley Mass in Motion: Hi - I am Kelley Cabral-Mosher - Coordinator of Mass in Motion - that's great Marcia!
- 00:27:29 Julie Ramos Gagliardi BayCoast Bank: Good morning, I am Julie Ramos Gagliardi VP for Corporate Giving at BayCoast Bank. We have been providing grants for some of the emergency food programs that have taken place in Fall River and New Bedford. Very interested in how we can be strategic in providing funding to create an innovative food delivery system for the Southcoast.



- 00:30:33 Gavin Fay, he/him, @gavin_fay: Morning all! I am Gavin Fay, Associate Professor of Fisheries at UMass Dartmouth SMAST. I'm interested in how strengthening local food supply networks can help create more resilient seafood systems. Agree with others - thank you to Liz and all for sustaining and coordinating this community!
- 00:31:05 Pam Kuechler: Hi I am Pam Kuechler, the Executive Director of PACE. We run a food pantry in New Bedford and provide mobile pop up pantries in other parts of the city. We are helping supply some pop ups as well.
- 00:32:12 Ben Jones - UMass D: Ben Jones, UMass Dartmouth. I work on the fundraising side with a variety of campus stakeholders interested in food and food systems, on both the programmatic and research side, including Gavin Fay, Deidre Healy and Nancy Wiseman. Also beekeeper and web guy for my local CSA (The Silverbrook Farm in Acushnet), a former Master Gardener student of Dan King, with an ever growing heirloom tomato problem.
- 00:34:09 Peter Muise: Peter Muise, President & CEO of First Citizens' FCU. Executive Committee Member of NB's Homeless Service Provider Network. Chairman of the Housing Assistance Corp, Barnstable Cty.
- 00:35:44 Michael McCarthy: Good morning everyone. I'm Mike McCarthy, research associate at the Public Policy Center at UMass Dartmouth. We're not a part of the food system formally but we interact with a lot of the organizations involve through our work on program evaluations and strategic planning. Currently, we're working with Southcoast Health on their community health improvement plan over the next three years. This is the next step after the community health needs assessments that we collaborated on in 2019 and 2016. Food insecurity has always been an issue that stakeholders have identified during these assessments, but it was usually perceived as sort of a "back burner" compared to other social determinants of health like poverty and housing. Obviously all these issues are linked. One positive of the last few months has been seeing the region come together to address this issue collaboratively. In general the Southcoast needs more regional solutions because these issues don't stop at the borders of Fall River and New Bedford.
- 00:57:57 Rhonda Fazio: Hi, I am a teaching Artist that collaborated with The Coastal Foodshed. Pertaining to Buddy Andrade's points of conversation, we received a grant to bring people together at the dinner table to discuss this very thing. We had one dinner and then the grant was rerouted during the Covid crisis. I am resuming this dialogue from the Interwoven gallery I am launching next month.