

Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2021 @ 9am

Attendance: 26

Audio Link: <https://soundcloud.com/user-8563948/southcoast-food-policy-council-resource-meeting-922021>

Note: This document is primarily paraphrased. Please see the audio for direct quotes. Chat Box comments are included as needed.

Present: Kathleen Facchini (Director of Housing Services, Neighbor Works Housing Solutions), Maureen Fitzgerald (Director Public Policy, Neighbor Works Housing Solutions), Kim Smith (United Way of Greater Fall River), Laura Bradley (New Life Southcoast Church), Meg Rogers (United Way Greater Fall River), David Perry (Greater Fall River Community Food Pantry), Marcia Picard (Fall River Public Schools/Groundworks Southcoast), Laura Smith, Allison Hague (Fall River Family Resource Center), Wendy Garf-Lipp (United Neighbors of Fall River), Jennifer, Stephanie Taylor (Martha's Vineyard Vegan Society), Fran Hutchison (MA Senior Action Council, Bristol Co. Regional Chapter), Peter Muise, Victoria Grasela (United Way Greater New Bedford), Whitney Tully (Lasagna Love), Olivia Hart (SEMAP), Jacob Miller (Senior Policy Advisor and Community Development Director Office of Senator Mark Montigny), Dana Siles (Rescuing Leftovers), Sarah Labossiere (Mass in Motion Fall River), Colleen Hart (Fall River Housing Authority), Chloe Melvie (Plymouth WIC), Patrece Peterson (Martha's Vineyard Vegan Society), Martha, Karen Schwable (SEMAP), Christine Smith (SFPC, Marion Institute), Liz Wiley (Marion Institute).

Guest speakers from Neighbor Works Housing Solutions <https://nhsmass.org>

- Kathleen Facchini (Director of Housing Services, Neighbor Works Housing Solutions) kfacchini@nhsmass.org
- Maureen Fitzgerald (Director Public Policy, Neighbor Works Housing Solutions)
- The services offered include rental assistance, emergency financial help, shelter and homeless prevention, first-time homebuyer education and counseling, financial coaching, foreclosure prevention, and affordable residential and small business loans.
- Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and Emergency Rent and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) application can be found here: <https://nhsmass.org/covid-19-response/>. RAFT assists any household in MA, regardless of documentation. If your client has back rent or back mortgage due, this can help. If utilities are shut off, they can help with the payments as long as there is a shut-off notice.
- RAFT and ERMA: There are millions of dollars in COVID federal funds to help with this that have not been used. There is an all-in-one application on the website. A person applying only needs one head of household ID and SS number, but if there is no SS number, type in 888-88-888. A landlord or social service agency can help the person fill out the application online. The application will then go to a central office, after which it will be sent to the office closest to the client.
- Applications are in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and many other languages



- The turn-around time is 2-3 weeks, but if someone is moving, then it is quicker.
- If your client is working with the court eviction, then the turn-around is almost immediate. Even though the federal moratorium on eviction is over, if the paperwork for eviction is in the court, the court must allow the court process to occur, and a person cannot be evicted before then. Neighbor Works Housing can provide the needed money.
- It is often the case where a client receives RAFT funds but cannot find affordable housing. Neighborhood Works are seeing the rent increase, particularly in the Southcoast area, as buildings are sold, and new owners are increasing the rent.
- Many landlords will not accept new people if they have received an eviction notice. However, there is a current bill at the MA state level to seal eviction records so there will be fewer obstacles to getting affordable housing.
- Tell clients to bring in all the eviction paperwork. Often the landlord is using an abundance of paperwork to intimidate the person.
- As a social service agency, you can go to housing court to advocate for your client
- Other Resources for COVID eviction help:
 1. <https://evictionlegalthelp.org>
 2. <https://haconcapecod.org/>
 3. <https://www.mvmediation.org/>
 4. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-housing-resources-and-guidance>
- Neighbor Works Housing Solutions is partnering with PACE in New Bedford and Ser Jobs in Fall River to process paperwork and BAMS in the Brockton area.
- *For Fall River, we should connect with Maria to discuss the applications at Ser Jobs and a way for us to collaborate.- Allison Hague*
- There is an Eviction Diversion Initiative meeting for Bristol County on 9/15 @ 1:30 pm. If you would like to join, let Allison Hague AHague@frfsa.org know, and she will connect you to Father Bills and get the zoom link.

Food Related News:

- Fall River Farmers Market Sept 15, 2-5 pm with legislators Rep. Schmid, Rep. Silvia, Rep. Fiola confirmed, and Sen. Rodrigues might send someone. Winton Pitcoff from Food System Collaborative is confirmed, the Mayor of Fall River is invited along with city counselors and School committees. The aim is to highlight the importance of farmers' markets, the importance of codifying HIP into law, and collecting testimony and food stories at the market.
- Rescuing Leftovers- the next steps in the phase is to get volunteers and donor organizations. www.rlcma.info/spread-the-word-south-coast-ma dana@rescuingleftovercuisine.org
- SEMAP is losing Olivia Hart- thank you for all your hard work. Good luck. There is an opening for Communications and Outreach Coordinator at <https://semaponline.org/semap-is-hiring-communications-and-outreach-coordinator/>
- Virtual Food Summit, October 6, 6:30 pm-8 pm to release the Food System Assessment information, Food Finder push, along with guest legislative speakers. This is a partnership with the MI, UMass Dartmouth, and Sen. Montigny's office.
- Please use southcoastfoodalert@marioninstitute.org to keep connecting.