



Todd M. Turner
Chair
District 4

**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL
FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 6, 2020**

Attendees:

Council Member Todd M. Turner, Chair
Dr. Deborah Archer, University of MD Extension
Annabelle Beavan, LindaBen Foundation, Inc.
Elana Belon-Butler, Department of Family Services
Daphne Benbow, Office of Community Relations
Renee Carroll, Director, Housing Counseling & Supportive Housing
Dr. William Campbell, Senior Pastor, Union Bethel AME Church
John Erzen, County Executive's Office
Nicole Hall, Economic Development
Alexandra Harris, Office of Emergency Management
E. Fatimah Hasan, Planner, M-NCPPC
Dennis Lewis, Department of Social Services
Stacey Little, UM Capital Region Health
Gail Livingstone, Deep Roots Farm
Kimberly Rush Lynch, Soil Conservation District
Maria Martin, Parks & Recreation
Roberto Melara, Capital Area Food Bank
Aimee Olivo, County Council Representative
Kerriann M. Peart, County Executive's Office
Dr. Darlene Saunders, Department of Health
Joan Shorter, Prince George's County Public Schools
Lindsay Smith, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Sonja Welbourne, County Executive's Office

Consultants

Julia Groenfeldt, Prince George's County Food Equity Council
Evelyn Kelly, Institute for Public Health Innovation

Staff

Sandra Eubanks, Education & Work Force Development Committee Director
Leroy Maddox, Legislative Officer
Leonard Moses, Clerk's Office
Sharon Williams, Administrative Aide

1. Welcome & Opening Remarks

Chair Turner welcomed the members and thanked them for their support. He reminded members that this is an open; live streamed meeting.

2. Review & Approval of Minutes – October 2, 2020

Chair Turner asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. He asked the members to provide revisions to staff.

3. Update

- Recap of last meeting's priorities (Sydney Daigle)

At the last meeting, the group discussed areas of opportunity and challenges that this group can address regarding food insecurity. Issues included:

- Food assistance provider capacity (staffing, funding, cold storage)
- Food retail environment (affordability, accessibility, and availability of healthy foods)
- Federal nutrition assistance benefit and program utilization (FARMs, P-EBT, school meals, SNAP participation)
- Locally grown food production and access (land and market access for growers and marketing support)
- Decentralized food assistance network (provider concentration and service accessibility)

- Food Assistance Provider Call: Food Recovery (Julia Groenfeldt)

The FEC hosts [bi-weekly food assistance provider calls](#) to share resources and best practices among organizations, food pantries, and other agencies working on food assistance and distortion. The upcoming calls are on 11/17 and 12/03 at 1 PM. These calls have identified needs and gaps in services, including:

- Lack of food recovery efforts (DC, Montgomery County and other jurisdictions have used these platforms to coordinate food assistance during the pandemic). The FEC is currently working on a partnership with Food Rescue US to launch this in the County.
- Lack of cold storage infrastructure. The FEC is working with nonprofit partners to host cold storage trailers at sites throughout the county.

- Overview of recent MWCOG meetings (Lindsay Smith)

- The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is creating a new, [Food and Agriculture Ad-Hoc Committee](#) and is pleased to have Councilmember Sydney Harrison serving as the representative for Prince George's County.
 - COG's Regional Food Systems Program has been holding Metro DC Biweekly Food Access and Food Security calls since the start of the pandemic.
 - The calls bring together area food policy council directors and staff, food assistance providers, local and state government staff, interested elected officials, food policy experts, and others.
 - The purpose is to share experiences across Metro DC on key food security and food access issues, provide potential solutions, important connections, and more. These calls are at 4 pm on the same day as the Prince George's County Food Assistance Provider calls. For more information, please contact Lindsay Smith at lsmith@mwcoq.org.
- Overview of Centralized Food Assistance Response Meeting on 10/14 (Leroy Maddox)
 - The Food Equity Council along with other stakeholders met on 10/14 to discuss developing a centralized response to the food insecurity problem in Prince George's County which has since been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Discussed creating a repository of information on food assistance activities.
 - Discussed opportunities to enhance distribution services and establish cooperative agreements to purchase food.
 - Discussed interconnectivity amongst different food distribution sites to prevent fraud/waste.

Discussion:

What opportunities exist to leverage existing farms and create a local farming movement to enhance food security?

The Soil Conservation District works with farmers in the County to develop soil conservation and water quality plans to improve soil health and water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. They also work with farmers to provide additional resources including connecting them to marketing resources and helping to navigate permitting issues (especially with urban farming). The Upper Marlboro office houses the Natural Resources Conservation Service which provides financial incentive programs for conservation practices like high tunnels or hoop houses to extend the growing season. Up to 80% of the cost may be taken care of by the federal government. There is also an Agriculture Resources Advisory Committee. There are potential opportunities to

cross-pollinate with these groups and resources. There is also an urban agricultural property tax credit available to farmers.

4. Current County Food Services and Issues

- Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB), Roberto Melara, Director, MD Region
 - CAFB had originally intended to release a hunger report in April. Due to the pandemic, this was delayed creating a more comprehensive report that factored in hunger during the pandemic.
[The 2020 Hunger Report](#) was released to include this data.
 - The report includes key data on food insecurity in the region and contributing factors (root causes/social determinants) that impact different groups.
 - The DMV is high-income, and highly educated; however, there are still high rates of food insecurity that are often masked.
 - The report includes census tracts with high rates of food insecurity correlated with income, life expectancy, etc.
 - Estimates show a 40-60% increase in food insecurity due to the pandemic.
 - Prince George's County has higher rates of food insecurity than other areas in the CAFB service areas.
 - The report looks at the impact of food insecurity in different areas of the region and the impact on different groups (women, seniors, children, immigrants, college educated residents).
 - The report also includes some solutions and ways that CAFB is addressing these issues.

- No Kid Hungry, Ayesha Holmes, MD Director & Kara Panowitz, Senior Manager
 - Childhood hunger has been an issue before the pandemic, but COVID-19 has made things worse. In August, No Kid Hungry [released a report on school level hunger factors](#). This showed that 1 in 4 high school kids lacked access to healthy food. Even more, these issues are exacerbated in areas that are black and Latino. With the pandemic, the national report shows that these disparities are growing, and the pandemic has made it worse.
 - In communities of color, there is an over 50% lack of food access. This is growing. This is a huge area of work to focus on!
 - Prior to the pandemic, we were making progress towards ending childhood hunger. The pandemic has made these positive effects disappear overnight.

There are a few things we can do in MD to not slip back too far:

- MD Meals for Achievement – A program to provide universal free meals and free breakfast in the classroom. This is a proven program and should be implemented in schools throughout the country. It increases school attendance, decreases absenteeism, and improves school behavior and academic success.
 - Community Eligibility Program (CEP) -- This program ensures that every child in a designated CEP school would receive free meals, no matter an individual's eligibility. If schools are eligible, they should apply.
 - Increase SNAP benefits by 15% -- This helps families receiving SNAP. MD participated in Summer SNAP last year, which gives an additional \$30 for families per month over the summer months. Similarly, P-EBT provides additional benefits on cards. These programs work and help families keep food on the table.
 - This year, No Kid Hungry MD provided over \$1 Million in grants to schools and organizations in need. They're hoping to continue doing that.
 - They're also in partnership with the Partnership to End Hunger -- contact Ayesha Holmes to participate. This group will be working on MDMA and Summer SNAP.
 - They're working hard to expand SNAP benefits across the country. This would be an economic win for everyone.
 - They are interested in continuing to expand local partnerships to serve children and families in need.
 - For more information or to participate in the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, email Ayesha Holmes at AHolmes@Strength.org.
- Prince George's County Health Department, Alison Mendoza-Walters, MPH, MBA, Health Planner

Ms. Mendoza-Walters works with the Prince George's County Healthcare Action Coalition to elevate health in the county. One of the coalition's workgroups is the Healthy Eating Active Living Workgroup (HEAL). One of HEAL's initiatives was to create a [map and identify healthy food priority areas \(HFPAs\)](#) to provide tax credits to grocery stores that locate in these areas or provide fee waivers to food trucks that vend in these areas. The group has just launched this map of the HFPAs.

- The map used census data and takes into account feedback from existing stores, municipal feedback, partners, experts, and other organizations. Through these partnerships, the group came up with data and metrics.

What is a healthy food priority area?

Website: pgccouncil.us/District4	County Administration Building
Telephone: (301) 952-3094	14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, 2nd Floor
Fax: (301) 952-4910	Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

- A place with a low number of healthy food retailers (ration of 4 unhealthy food retail locations to 1 healthy)
- Medium household income must be under the self-sufficiency number for a family of 4 in the County
- Transportation access - low vehicle access (if over 5.2% didn't have access to a vehicle in the area)
- The map uses these criteria to identify what constitutes a HFPA.
- This map serves to help alleviate structural inequities i.e. grocery stores are less likely to locate in communities of color. This is one small step to helping to advocate for solutions to help improve healthy food access.
- If you would like to learn more about the Healthy Food Priority Areas map project or the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Workgroup of the Prince George's Healthcare Action Coalition, please reach out to amendozawalters@co.pg.md.us.

- Q&A:

Are organizations teaching residents about growing food as a form of food security? This helps people understand the importance of access to fresh produce because they are actively participating in growing and creating it, that would make a huge difference.

- No Kid Hungry is funding two different programs -- they're looking to create partnerships to make more of those programs happen.
- Capital Area Food Bank worked on a "train the trainer" program to teach people how to teach those skills to clients. They also do that through recipes and training. They are trying to find partners who do that in their own neighborhood.
- HEAL Workgroup does not have initiatives to support growers. However, we do have partners in the farming sector who run community gardens as the work they do in their individual organizations.
- Is there any ability to capture which of the retailers may offer delivery? (I know that data collection/maintenance can be very resource intensive.)
- Delivery options is something that could be explored in future iterations of the map. This would require a multi-pronged research approach, as some of the retailers do not have a web presence, so it would require phone calls and/or door-to-door visits.
- Sydney Daigle commented that Food Justice vs. ugly produce -- we see that the quality of produce is lower in lower-income areas of the county. There is a lot of room in rescuing food but that doesn't solve the issue of quality produce in some areas of the county.

5. Open Discussion & Assignments for Next Meeting

- Are there restaurants that can provide food insecurity help?
 - Through the CARES Funding, the County has partnered with the department of family services to provide meals -- There are some catering companies and restaurants that are being utilized.
 - District 3 has a Go Fund Me that has raised money to purchase subsidized meals from restaurants -- win-win for restaurants and community! There are a lot of people who want to give back -- they're more than happy to talk with us about that model.
 - Our county received very generous donations from the Nationals to buy meals/partner with World Central Kitchen. Unfortunately, that funding wrapped up in August. I think it's a great idea to explore a grant fund to provide support to restaurants interested in providing discounted meals.
 - Department of Family Services, Elana Butler -- Expanded programs by working with restaurants and partnering with local restaurants.

6. COVID-19 Food Security Interventions & Lessons Learned Survey

The Food Security Task Force consultants are working on a survey to assess current food security interventions in the county during the pandemic. The survey will be used to understand gaps in service, target additional resources, and ensure increased access and inform short term recommendations. The survey will be distributed to the group in the coming weeks.

7. Next Meeting – Friday December 4, 2020

This virtual meeting will feature presenters that will be sharing regional models to inform food security strategies in Prince George's County. The virtual meeting will also include a legislative recap on food systems policies in the County.

8. Adjourn

The Chair adjourned the Food Security Task Force meeting at 2:50 pm.