



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

Prince George's County Council
Food Security Task Force Minutes
December 4, 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

Council 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

Task Force Chair Turner called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 pm. He informed the members that the Council changed leadership and that Council Member Calvin Hawkins is Chair and Deni Taveras is Vice Chair. He further stated that Sydney is on leave and gave birth to a boy.

2. Review & Approval of Minutes – November 6, 2020

The Chair presented the minutes and asked for a motion to approve indicating to members to forward any changes to staff.

3. Updates

- Recap of last meeting's priorities (Evelyn Kelly)
 - Task Force survey will be discussed later during the meeting.
- Food Assistance Provider Call: Food Recovery (Julia Groenfeldt)
 - The Food Assistance Provider calls are hosted in partnership with the Food Equity Council and the Department of Social Services
 - Before Thanksgiving, the call featured organizations serving the disability community -- this has been a topic that many of our providers have brought up as an issue of access and the need for more delivery options
 - The next call will be in the new year on January 7th at 1 pm
 - If you would like to join the calls, please email Jgroenfeldt@gmail.com
- Overview of recent MWCOG meetings (Lindsay Smith)
 - FARM Committee is meeting from 10-12 PM next Friday. There will be meeting notes shared next week
 - They host the Metro DC Bi-Weekly Food Access Calls. The last call featured food and nutrition service providers from Prince George's County, Fairfax County, Montgomery County, and DC

4. Prince George's County Food Security Programs

- **County Executive's Office (Stand Up & Deliver) -- John E. Erzen, Deputy Chief of Staff, Sonja Welborne, Director of Stakeholder Engagement, and Daphne Benbow, Office of Community Relations**
 - Goals: To provide groceries and meals in food insecure areas with the most vulnerable residents in the county during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Seen need continuing to grow

- Working with nonprofit and faith-based partners to distribute: United Way has been a key partner to support these efforts
 - Program overview: Administration (program leads and support staff that are running the program and distributing 4-5,000 meals a week; purchase agents -- receive vendor registration information; prepared meals and groceries; and supplies
 - Two parts of the program: groceries and meals + supplies
 - Now in phase II of the program: First phase was with CAFB and worked together to determine site locations. Phase II is working with other partners and providing groceries, prepared meals, and supplies
 - Impact: The first partnership and launch with CAFB was a collaboration with the County Council for donations and supplies. Worked with nonprofit partners and food service establishments to donate food. The program has also worked with restaurants to purchase meals and groceries. The primary strategic partners are Sardis, Market Fresh Gourmet and Sodexo Magic.
 - Each partnership is unique whether they donate meals or groceries
 - United Way is the strategic partner for the second phase of the program
 - Summer Youth Employment program (SYP) -- students were employed through the program this past summer and worked at different sites. In exchange, the students wrote a one-page summary of food insecurity and what they learned
 - There are ongoing partnerships for the program with different partners to provide different services. They recently launched a partnership with the Human Rescue Alliance to provide pet food for residents and pets in need
 - How the program is funded: Influencers; businesses; individuals; groups/organizations; employee giving program
 - Working on building out a communications plan for phase III of the program and how to bring in new partnerships for the program. All organizations and businesses are vetted by United Way.
 - Stand Up and Deliver is giving a virtual appreciation to county executive for the program
- **Department of Family Services -- Elana Belon-Butler, Director**
 - The program has been expanded as a result of the nutrition sites and Park and Planning closing during the pandemic in mid-March
 - They transitioned the congregate meal program to a homebound meal program as well as providing additional meals and more residents (the need ran beyond the seniors who were already enrolled)
 - Received \$1.6 million in CARES funding through the MD Department of Aging
 - Received \$4 million through CRF funds from the county
 - To date, provided over 1 million meals to county seniors as well as individuals with disabilities and their families

- Distributed 4,425 bags of fresh groceries
 - In the previous year, the program served 225,000 meals over a 12-month period (more than quadrupled meals over 8-month period of the pandemic)
 - Accomplished due to the ability to add new vendors for the county -- gave them an opportunity to thrive and stay in business
 - Also have a Grab N Go meals initiative in partnership with MD National Capital Park and Planning Commission and County Council -- To date, provided 145,140 meals at various locations throughout the county (north, central, and south county)
 - Distributed 5,760 Thanksgiving meal boxes for a total of 23,040 meals
 - Partnered with restaurants to support those businesses and increase ability to provide prepared meals to clients -- MD Department of Aging recommended to all Area Agencies on Aging to work with restaurants: Worked with Jordan's Bistro, Sweet Tooth, and Sardi's. Also partnered with Mom's Meals, Martin's Catering, Market Fresh Gourmet, and Dutch Mill Catering as well as expanded the Meals on Wheels program
 - Worked with key partners: Local municipalities, Melwood, the Arc, Supportive employment providers, M-NCPPC, County Councils, Senior Public Housing facilities, and DPWT
 - What's next?
 - Christmas 2020 meal distribution -- planning Christmas Grab N Go Meal Distribution -- anticipating 7,000 meal boxes going out
 - Also distributing Treat Boxes --delivering alongside meal boxes
 - Exploring opportunities to partner with other local restaurants
 - Exploring additional opportunities to provide meals to individuals with disabilities and families (that started via the CRF and CARES funding and prior could only provide meals to seniors)
 - Committed to ensuring all seniors and residents have meals plan on expanding the program to meet needs and support restaurants
- **Prince George's County Public Schools -- Joan Shorter, Director of Food & Nutrition Services**
 - Working to make sure all students, not just PGCPS, have meals. Because operating under the summer meal program, anyone can pick up a meal. Distribute on Monday and Wednesday for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Students can pick up for multiple days in a row.
 - They also participate in the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable program so students can pick up a bag of fresh produce
 - They're serving 10-12,000 (different from regular school year serving 70,000)
 - School district qualifies for 60% free or reduced meals
 - See that participation has declined from previous meals

- They will continue to provide meals and work with staff to do this
- In 108 schools -- Have 150 sites that can pick up meals
- Have 150 buses that are dispatched to bring meals to community locations during mealtime. Buses are parked from 10-1 in communities so children can walk to the bus to pick up the meals
- Due to USDA waiver, every child can pick up a meal and waives eligibility for afterschool meal program
- Always been the safety net for the families and students -- when you see that there are 50,000 students that are not participating -- where are they getting meals? They are working on this challenge. Principals are making robocalls to families to let them know where the meal sites are. They can plug that into the website. They have flyers and information available -- using social media and Facebook to let them know what is available. Spreading the word but not sure why the participation is low.
- Low meal participation is standard on a national level. Everyone is wondering the same thing -- where are kids getting the meals?

- **Questions & Answers Relevant to the Presentations:**

- **Challenges that presenters are facing and anticipate:**

- Ms. Shorter: Transportation -- they are dealing with issues of storage so they can't store everything for one week, so they need to do pick-ups twice a week. That might help. They also wonder if pick up timing is an issue for folks to get food
- Ms. Belon-Butler -- Transportation is also an issue. Not everyone has access so they can't get to a meal delivery site. In addition, the issue of identifying additional people and families with disabilities who can enroll in the program. Lastly, the need for additional funding to continue providing meals to people with disabilities as well as the expansion and the increase in need for the program
- Ms. Benbow -- Coordinated communication. They send out flyers and information but there are always folks who are not on those communications platforms

- **Given the data and updates presented to you today, what stood out for you?**

- Nicole Hall: Restaurants: There is a robust list of restaurants that are interested in participating in these programs. These programs are a win-win for food assistance and businesses.
- Elana Belon-Butler: Restaurants can apply for family services programs. CARES act is running out so they will need to assess how much funding is leftover and what they need to spend by the end of the year. There is uncertainty around what will happen with CARES funding and funding to the county
- Sonja Welborne: Lack of CARES funding will be challenging for Stand Up and Deliver. Part of the program is funded by donations from a national platform. It costs over \$3 million dollars to run the program at 13 sites for one year. They can't

meet all the need -- if they didn't have the resources from family services, it would be even more challenging. To get restaurants onboard, they need to have specific requirements for procurement process. They would hear back in 2-3 weeks.

- Aimee Olivo: District 3 delivered meals and boxes with volunteers. Looked at data from a survey for folks most in need.
- Now that the money is ending, could the Department of Family Services start reaching out to the smaller group of people that are most in need even though the CARES act funding is running out?
- Elana Belon-Butler: If folks are not enrolled in the program, they can enroll still and get signed up. As CARES funding runs out, there is a gap in services. There is some state funding through the MD Department of Aging but can't address all of the need
- Aimee Olivo: Her children have a 30-minute lunch break and with two kids their lunch breaks overlaps by 5 minutes. In theory, they could go pick them up but for many of the students, they can't physically walk to school because of safety or timing. Can we tap this group and the county executive to bring attention to these issues to help spread the word for the meals? Every week we need this information out there and communicated to families in need. The robot calls have dropped off over the past few months
- Joan Shorter: She will prompt principals to make the calls. Funding for schools isn't an issue as it's funded through the school meal program.
Kim Rush-Lynch: What happens to leftover meals. If they comeback on the bus, they need to be discarded. If they stay at the school, they can be saved. They can typically estimate what the rates of participation is at the bus route but can't donate because of safety issues. They have had products that they donated to CAFB when needed. They don't have the infrastructure to cook the meals or prepackaged them.
- Stacey Little: Do we know the collective number of meals provided across county agencies? We have some of that data but not all -- that can be something to include in our final report. We are still very much in the pandemic and need a way of understanding what the need is and what we're doing
- Daphne Benbow: SUD has numbers on meals and pounds and boxes that have been provided. They have not joined forces with other agencies and groups to put that together.
- Lindsay Smith: Are there updates on enrollment in federal nutrition benefits? What is SNAP, WIC, and other benefit enrollment rates? What is the status with P-EBT?
Joan Shorter: Numbers have doubled for students who automatically qualify for TANF and SNAP benefits. When P-EBT benefits are given, there is a decrease in school meal participation.
- Dennis Lewis, DSS: Will investigate numbers
- Sonja Welborne: Trying to get information out via SUD about health benefits,

food, and other support services. Toys for Tots - December 19th at 6 Flags. They will also provide meal boxes.

- **Are there any topics/issues that could be earmarked for further discussion to include in the taskforce report?**
- **Are there any additional programs and/or data you would like to be briefed on?**

5. Open Discussion & Assignments for Next Meeting

6. Announcements from Taskforce Members

- a. A lot of these conversations speak to the strengths of the CAFB and what they have been working on for a long time. This group will help solidify some of this work and coordinate it. They are currently working on priorities and recommendations for the county. They will be sharing it with the taskforce as potential recommendations that could be included in the taskforce report
- b. CAFB is working on a pilot for a mobile grocery truck that could locate in areas with limited grocery stores. They will be selling food at affordable rates in areas of need. They are finalizing permitting to launch this in the county by next year.
- c. Healthy Food Priority Areas legislation passed -- opportunity to provide tax credits to grocery stores and food trucks that locate in healthy food priority areas
- d. Healthy kids; meal bill passed unanimously -- first comprehensive healthy kids meal bill in the country
- e. Emergency Food and Shelter Program is releasing opportunity for bids for agencies to apply for funding -- over \$400,000 available. Phase 38 CARES will be available for organizations. They will be getting information out to folks when its available.
- f. Registration is open for holiday Grab N Go meals -- register online

7. Food Security Task Force Survey

- a. Initially drafted a comprehensive survey on assessing needs, gaps, assets related to COVID19 service.
- b. After consulting with Chair Turner and his team; the group decided to include this as a recommendation in the report instead given the scope of the Task Force and limited timeframe and resources. This survey will include questions related to what this group sees as priorities, challenges to help us identify priorities for the Task Force to include in the report.
- c. Currently finalizing the survey with a small team of volunteers -- we will be sending that to the group in the next two weeks. We ask that everyone fills out the survey before the January meeting.

8. **Next Meeting – Friday, January 8, 2021**

9. **Adjourn**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:00 pm.