



**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER AD-HOC COMMITTEE (FARM)
MEETING SUMMARY (DRAFT)**

June 11, 2021

LINK TO ALL MEETING PRESENTATIONS AND MATERIALS:

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2021/6/11/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-ad-hoc-advisory-committee/>

DECISIONS AND ACTIONS:

- Short Term
 - FARM approved a minor amendment to the committee bylaws.
 - Update the FARM Committee's FY22 Draft Work Program and priorities to elevate the importance of farmland preservation and improving land use regulations to support food and agriculture.
 - FARM approved the level of effort in the draft FY22 Work Program and Budget, the request to the COG Board to make the FARM Committee permanent, and the development of a sustainable funding stream to support this.
- Medium and Long Term
 - Vice Chairs Stehle and Rice noted language in the American Rescue Plan's Interim Final Rule on racial equity and children's health as language which could support food security funding.
 - Board Member Garvey talked about the need to think more about how COG can help bring together cross-cutting issues such as equity, food security, housing, economic opportunity, etc., in support of the integration of services that Radha Muthiah spoke about.
 - Supervisor Gross recommended Senator John Tester's book *Grounded* as an important defense of the family farm.

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER, AND ROLL CALL

Councilmember Mary Cheh, FARM's Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:06 am.

RECAP OF PREVIOUS MEETING, MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL, AND OTHER COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Chair Cheh noted several membership changes. Conaway V Haskins, III, FARM's representative from Virginia Cooperative Extension, has taken a new position. Alternate Meredith Ledlie Johnson will serve as VCE's representative. The Chair also welcomed Brenda Henry who is serving as an alternate to Victoria Treski at Bainum Family Foundation.

Chair Cheh recapped the April meeting which included a presentation on Bowie State University's approach to addressing food and security on campus, looking at data on SNAP enrollment in the region, updates on childhood nutrition programs. and a farmer panel that included a discussion on the need to preserve farmland, connect farms to land and other needed resources, and addressing issues of systemic racism

underlying our food system. There is a need for transformative policies to address this and to support the leadership of farmers of color.

FARM considered and approved a minor amendment to the committee bylaws to introduce flexibility into the number of elected officials and organizations supporting food security that would be on the committee.

Members also approved the April meeting summary.

FOOD SECURITY: DREAMING OUT LOUD DC

Christopher Bradshaw, Dreaming Out Loud's (DOL) Executive Director, shared DOL's mission and work to support food security. DOL's mission is to create economic opportunity within marginalized communities by building a healthy equitable food system. DOL's work has evolved as the organization realized there was a need for more than finding healthy food options for students, families, and communities but using the food system as a lens to advance policy change and transformative justice.

DOL is informed by a historical understanding of the ways in which racialized violence, policy, discrimination, organizing, and resilience have impacted African American communities and the food system. DOL is both a farm and a food hub, based in Ward 7 in DC, anchored by the Farm at Kelly Miller. The farm sits behind Kelly Miller Middle School near Lincoln Heights, one of the largest public housing communities DC. DOL works with the community at large and the school on programming on gardening, farming, food, history, and advocacy. They also hold festivals, have started the Black Farm CSA subscription, and host a food entrepreneurship program for black and brown businesses. DOL will also be taking over the Fort Stanton Urban Farm.

DOL has grown significantly during the pandemic which has been positive and bittersweet because of the circumstances that the community has faced – inequities have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Collaborating with partners like World Central Kitchen, DOL's entrepreneur partners were mobilized to provide thousands of prepared meals, DOL's Black Farm CSA grew from several hundred members to 1200, and its sourcing relationships with black farmers for other relief efforts expanded as well.

It's critical to increase food security and bring more economic opportunity to the communities DOL works in, but also to have conversations like today's about intersectional justice, public policy, and what types of legislation is needed to shape for the future that we want to see.

FARM members asked Mr. Bradshaw about how DOL approaches outreach and engagement. As one example, DOL spent 1.5 years in listening sessions and other meetings with community members to design The Farm at Kelly Miller.

FOOD INSECURITY IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON: CAPITAL AREA FOOD BANK UPDATE

Ms. Muthiah briefed the FARM Committee on Capital Area Food Bank's (CAFB) operations and plans for supporting food insecure residents and partner provider organizations over the next year. CAFB has been serving the region for 41 years. It has seen clearly in the last year how hunger affects all people of all ages, race, religion, and zip code in our area, however, the disparities and inequities in food insecurity that existed prior to the pandemic have been exacerbated. CAFB has seen that almost 600,000 individuals were in need during the pandemic. It has distributed more than 70 million meals worth of food through partners and directly in the region.

CAFB has been flexible in its response at a time of increased need. Some community partners shut down due to COVID-19, so CAFB developed new partnerships and distribution channels. For example, it has expanded partnerships with local health departments in developing shared messaging around vaccinations. Due to supply chain changes, reduced retail donations, and growing food insecurity, CAFB now purchases most of its food. As an example, it used to purchase about \$3.5 million in food per year. Last year, CAFB purchased close

to \$25 million. CAFB continues to develop sourcing relationships with local farms and plans to expand relationships with growers of color.

CAFB's core mission is to support those who need food today. It also seeks to leverage the power of food to enable brighter futures so that we don't have as many food insecure individuals in the future. Although CAFB is still in response, it has started to help its network recover and think about the need to rebuild stronger.

CAFB recently completed a 2000 person survey that will inform its forthcoming [2021 Hunger Report](#).

Working with other partners, CAFB is working to integrate and co-locate food assistance with other needed services such as education, skill development, and health care to facilitate easier access. A goal is to help vulnerable residents move from a state of focusing on survival to achieving stability through living wage jobs and healthier lives.

Ms. Muthiah shared several principles and frameworks for the region to think about as we consider how we emerge from the pandemic and work to narrow the divides that existed before. Many in the region are providing support, however, too much of it is not connected for the individual who needs it: it's too disparate and there are too many cliffs. Making services much more seamlessly integrated in terms of how they are provided is one of CAFB's largest recommendations. We need to look deeper at gaps that exist at each life stage, what are people experiencing, and providing greater referral services and support when needed. Ms. Muthiah echoed other speakers the FARM Committee has heard from about the need to screen for multiple needs. Research, collaboration, and cross sector partnerships will be important to achieving this.

Board Member Libby Garvey noted that thinking about how COG can support greater integration of this cross-cutting work would be important; highlighting how COG is also focusing on equity. It's hard for any individual group focused on different critical needs to bring all of issues together. The Region Forward Coalition may also provide an opportunity to support this integration.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT: LOCAL FUNDING ALLOCATIONS, ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES, AND FOOD SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

Mike Belarmino, Senior Policy Advisor at the Government Finance Officers Association (GFAO), provided a high-level overview of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) and allowable expenditures. He began his interpretation by emphasizing that there are still a lot of questions about allowable expenditures and guidance that the Treasury Department continues to release.

Mr. Belarmino reviewed several major differences between CARES Act funding and ARP funds. ARP funding is being released in two tranches and there's a broad definition of allowable uses over the period that expenditures are allowed. December 31, 2024, is the obligation deadline for ARP funds, however, the period of performance can go up until December 31, 2026.

Mr. Belarmino discussed eligible entities, the process for receiving funds, big categories of allowable uses, the process for revenue replacement, audit and reporting requirements, and shared links for more information in his presentation [available here](#).

GFAO encourages direct recipients to submit comments, respond to questions, and even raise questions on the Interim Final Rule that Treasury released in mid-May on use of ARP funds. This will influence whether there's more flexibility on things like allowable expenses.

With respect to categories of allowable uses and FARM's interest in food security, right now, a number of GFAO members are somewhat stuck on category C: Government services to the extent of the loss of revenue. Most of this is related to figuring out how to calculate the loss and what's considered included in government services in this category. GFAO has developed a loss of revenue calculator tool to try to assist with this.

Mr. Belarmino reminded local governments that they will have reporting requirements coming up in the next 6 months, even though they are just starting to receive funds. The team at GFAO is happy to answer any follow-up questions that the FARM Committee may have.

Councilmember Stehle observed that in the quick reference, final guide, there is language that is equity focused. And also language that seems to relate to children's health which he believes relates to food.

FARM FY22 PROPOSED WORK PROGRAM AND PRORATED BUDGET

FARM Vice Chairs Jon Stehle and Craig Rice provided an overview to FARM on what the committee has accomplished to date, as well as work in progress. FARM members discussed priorities and elements of the work program. Steve Bieber, COG's Water Resources Program Director, provided an overview of the proposed FY22 budget and expenses for the FARM Committee. Sustainable funding from COG members will be needed to move FARM's work forward and make FARM permanent.

Supervisor Penny Gross founded the Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee at COG. She noted that while some things have changed in 22 years, some things remain the same. She believes that FARM's priorities are by and large what they should be, however, there needs to be more emphasis on land, and farmland preservation to ensure protection of larger parcels of land needed for farming at scale. FARM also needs to look at how it can influence improving land use regulations and Zoning to support food and agriculture, including on small acreage, vacant properties. She also recommended Senator Jon Tester's book *Grounded* as an important defense of the family farm.

These recommendations were noted as action items.

Following discussion, the Committee voted to approve the level of effort contained in the FY22 work program and budget with the amendment from Supervisor Gross on priorities, to make the FARM Committee permanent with support of a sustainable funding stream. FARM members were invited to continue giving input on the Work Program until mid-July and the Executive Committee's presentation to the COG Board.

Councilmember Stehle offered to work with any FARM members that would like to share more information with the COG Board prior to the presentation.

ADJOURN

Vice Chair Stehle thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting a few minutes before 1 pm.

ATTENDANCE:

Mary Cheh, Chair, District of Columbia
Jon Stehle, Vice Chair, City of Fairfax
Craig Rice, Vice Chair, Montgomery County
Reuben Collins, Charles County (alternate)
Matt de Ferranti, Arlington County (alternate)
Libby Garvey, Arlington County
Penny Gross, Fairfax County
Ann B. Wheeler, Prince William County
Amy Jackson, City of Alexandria
Tom Ross, City of Fairfax (alternate)
Ona Balkus, District of Columbia Food Policy Council

Heather Bruskin, Montgomery County Food Council
Jeremy V. Criss, Office of Agriculture, Montgomery County
Meredith Ledlie Johnson, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)
Kate Lee, Office of Urban Agriculture, District of Columbia
Brenda Henry, Bainum Family Foundation (alternate)
Chris Van Vlack, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District
Michael J Wilson, Maryland Hunger Solutions
Sara Hoverter, Georgetown University
Rachel Clark, Office of Councilmember Cheh (alternate)
Hugo Mogollon, FRESHFARM (alternate)
Nick Stavely, FRESHFARM (alternate)

Other Participants

Stacy Carey, Office of Supervisor Kershner
Sharon Ledner, Office of Councilmember Rice
Alex Cordova, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO
Mark Scott, DC HSEMA
Lars Hanson, CNA
Kevin Molloy, Perses Consulting, LLC
Chris Bradshaw, Dreaming Out Loud
Radha Muthiah, Capital Area Food Bank
Michael Belarmino, Government Finance Officers Association
Stephanie Hopkins, Arlington County Department of Human Services
Debbie Noymer, George Washington University
Kimberly Haun, Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation
Bridget Warren, Prince George's County Health Department
Daniel Dolan, Fairfax County
Denia Palmer, Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Max Broad, DCVFA
Lauren Goldberg, Crossroads Community Food Network
Ethel Shepard-Powell, Community Support Systems
Gretchen Greiner-Lott, Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

COG Staff

Lindsay Smith
Steve Bieber
Tom Gates
Brian LeCouteur
Chuck Bean