

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

October 8, 2021

LINK TO ALL MEETING AVAILABLE PRESENTATIONS AND MATERIALS:

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2021/10/8/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-ad-hoc-advisory-committee/>

DECISIONS AND ACTIONS:

* Short Term
  + COG will send the FARM Committee an update on the Board’s consideration of a Resolution to make FARM permanent and establish a regional fund to support it.
  + FARM Members will be sent the link to the Healthy Food Access Policy Compendium for review and comment. The Compendium will be updated, formatted, and ready to share at the December FARM meeting.
  + Prince William County Board Chair Ann Wheeler recommended a presentation on food rescue in the region as it relates to food security.
  + Arlington County Board Member Libby Garvey will share an update on the county’s food and agriculture work at the December meeting.
  + COG will reach out to FARM members to see if anyone would like to volunteer to work on 2022 committee priorities to recommend to the Chair who will make a recommendation to the COG Board.
  + Chair Cheh suggested an Appendix to the Healthy Food Access Policy Compendium that details how jurisdictions have responded to COVID-19. These may be measures that jurisdictions want to build upon for the future beyond the pandemic.
* Medium and Long Term
  + Chair Wheeler suggested that FARM consider the shifts in grocery, particularly e-commerce that is occurring.

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER, AND ROLL CALL

Councilmember Jon Stehle, FARM’s Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:06 am.

RECAP OF PREVIOUS MEETING, MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL, **AND ADMINSTRATIVE UPDATES**

COG provided the following administrative updates:

* COG’s monthly Thursday afternoon regional coordination calls on food security and food access issues continue in October.
  + Thursday, October 21st’s round table with area K-12, food service nutrition directors. They’ll share updates with us on how meal service is going with students back in school.
  + November 18th is 2022 food security legislative preview with elected leaders in the MD and VA General Assemblies, along with an update on what is ahead for the DC Council.
* COG will have the rescheduled date for the meeting on BIPOC farmers and land access shortly.
* The regional farmers market list is complete and has been vetted with our local governments. It has been added to the regional, emergency food assistance GIS layer that has been developed with the National Capital Region Geodata Spatial Exchange.
* At December FARM meeting, we plan to show some mapping and other farmers market data analysis.
* It is time for FARM to be thinking about its legislative priorities for consideration for inclusion in the COG Board’s 2022 legislative priorities.
  + COG will follow-up before the next meeting to see if we could have some Committee volunteers work on a recommend set of food and agriculture priorities.
* Action items are noted on page one.

Members approved the August meeting summary.

FOod For the PEOPLE: Eating and Activism In Greater Washington

Samir Meghelli, Ph.D., Supervisory Museum Curator, Smithsonian Institution, Anacostia Community Museum

Dr. Meghelli shared the history of the Smithsonian’s Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, D.C. and provided a virtual tour of its new exhibit: [Food for the People](https://anacostia.si.edu/Exhibitions/Details/Food-for-the-People-Eating-and-Activism-in-Greater-Washington-6536). The exhibit took more than 2.5 years to develop.

**Dr. Meghelli’s presentation is available on** [**the meeting webpage**](https://www.mwcog.org/events/2021/10/8/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-ad-hoc-advisory-committee/)**.**

* The presentation includes contact information for setting up tours for groups ranging from 6 to 12 people.
* The exhibit runs through mid-September 2022 and also includes free, virtual public events.

Mr. Meghelli provided an overview of the outdoor and indoor exhibits. Issues examined include: where our food comes from, local and regional food leaders, the food and agriculture supply chain, disparities in food access and food security, environmental and health consequences of our food choices, the history of policy advocacy and change, and more.

One part of the indoor exhibition follows the lifecycle of a chicken wing from production to disposal to raise awareness about where food comes from. Other sections include an examination:

* Local food culture in and around the District – food culture and preservation is an important element of food justice.
* Food as a Human Right – exploring the history of local and federal policy changes.
* History of how we’ve gotten our food in the region from local markets to supermarkets, including disparities that exist in grocery access.
* The history of labor issues behind our food at all points in the food supply chain.

There are several interactive pieces of the exhibition such as the outdoor tribute for essential food system workers and an indoor opportunity for participants to share their ideas to improve food justice.

FARM members thanked Dr. Meghelli for his presentation and raised the question about how participant ideas for transforming the food system would be collected and acted on. They inquired if there will be a book or video on the exhibit developed to help further spread the word. Another FARM member spoke about how historical approaches like this exhibit can help to explain how disparities in our region came to exist, including as these relate to [COG’s Equity Emphasis Areas](https://www.mwcog.org/transportation/planning-areas/fairness-and-accessibility/environmental-justice/equity-emphasis-areas/).

Dr. Meghelli said that they may do a book on the exhibit. They will likely make the videos in the exhibit more broadly available online, and are exploring other digital exhibit options.

FARM Healthy Food access POLICY COMPENDIUM Update

Debbie Noymer, MPH Candidate at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University, asked FARM members to review and comment on the draft document ahead of putting it in to final format.

**Action Item:** COG will email FARM members the Compendium for review.

FY22 Food Security Funding in Maryland

Steve Connelly the Assistant Secretary in the Office of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) MDA briefed FARM on MDA’s and MARBIDCO’s priorities for FY22 and planned use of federal relief funds.

**A detailed presentation from Mr. Connelly which includes specific program and budget information is available on** [**the meeting webpage**](https://www.mwcog.org/events/2021/10/8/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-ad-hoc-advisory-committee/)**.**

Mr. Connelly provided a high-level overview of Maryland’s agricultural industry and MD’s COVID response. This included updates to its MD’s Best online map to connect consumers to farmers, working with large industries (e.g. poultry) and providing funding support to farmers, tracking which sectors of the agricultural economy received federal relief dollars, etc. MD farmers received $93 million in federal relief payments through the Coronavirus Assistance Program.

Mr. Connelly also shared information on:

* The status of MD’s Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program, including outreach and promotion to farms that want to do business with state institutions.
* MDA’s matching grant for the Maryland Market Money Program.
  + MMM is Maryland’s matching farmers market incentive program.
  + MDA provides $100,000 annually as a matching grant.
* Distributions received from USDA’s Farmers to Families Food Box Program - $87 million in food was distributed in MD through this program.
* Funding provided by [MARBIDCO](https://www.marbidco.org/) through low interest loans and grants for issues such as land acquisition for new farmers, sector specific needs (i.e. seafood, forestry, etc.), infrastructure investments (i.e. cold storage, livestock processing), urban farming, and more.
  + MARBIDCO also provided additional funding for staffing support at MDA to support the Maryland Market Money Program.

Chair Cheh thanked Mr. Connelly for his presentation and indicated that the committee would like to reconnect with him in the future about FARM’s agriculture priorities. Mr. Connelly provided his contact information for any follow-up questions.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT Support for Food Security USING FEderal FUNDS

With the conclusion of state and District of Columbia briefings, FARM members started hearing from local member governments on plans to support food security in FY22.

Kate Garvey, the Director of the Department of Community and Human Services for the City of Alexandria shared several highlights from Alexandria’s use of CAREs ACT funds, as this experience informs the City’s future investments.

**A presentation from Ms. Garvey is available on** [**the meeting webpage**](https://www.mwcog.org/events/2021/10/8/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-ad-hoc-advisory-committee/)**.**

Highlights include:

* Importance of partnerships including for large-scale distributions, pop-up distributions to fill gaps, delivery of food assistance to quarantined families, etc.
  + At times, 8,000 residents reached/month.
* Use of mapping to help understand need, show where food is going out to partners on a monthly basis, including Alexandria Public Schools.
* Working with partners, funded successful Grocery Gift Card Program (GGCP) at total of $2.5 million.
  + More than 7,000 cards reached more than 2300 families. Participating individuals received $100/month while families received $400/month during the 6-month program.
  + Eighty-two percent of participants make less than $25,000 a year. Many make less than $15,000/year.
  + Many were not eligible for federal benefits.
* Success, flexibility of GGFP informed decision to establish a Guaranteed Income Pilot called ARISE.
  + Will be funded at $3 million over 2 years.
  + Families will receive $500 per month for two years, anticipate 150+ participants.
  + Wrap around support will be provided.
  + Virginia has given city policy authority to classify funds as gifts such that income, and eligibility for many other state programs, will not be impacted by participation.
    - Exceptions are childcare, WIC, and potentially, housing
  + Research will be critical.
    - Desire to understand how pilot may demonstrate what already known: families know what they need, know how to manage money, yet other program requirements can hold them back.
* Created a Resilience Fund during the pandemic to help nonprofits survive and to support community members in need.
  + Next iteration of program (Alexandria Community Access and Emergency Support Grant Program) will be support nonprofits in their efforts to enroll residents in all benefit programs they’re eligible for – whether they support food security directly or indirectly.
  + There will also be direct financial support to individuals in need that isn’t covered by other sources.
  + Will be funded at $4 million dollars.
* Alexandria will also create and hire a Food Security position in government to work with partners and help drive solutions for longer term, systems responses.
* Alexandria will work with [ALIVE!](https://www.alive-inc.org/) to establish two community food hubs in the areas where there is the greatest concentration of need.
  + Large scale distributions will continue but these are not ideal and would like to get back to serving families closer to where they are and using a choice model.
  + Food hubs intended to be client-centered, accessible places where people will feel comfortable.
  + Culturally appropriate food will be available.
  + City government staff and nonprofits will be there to help enroll clients in programs they are eligible for, provide other supports.
  + There may be evening and weekend hours.
  + The food hubs will be funded at $2.5 million
* Several other programs and investments planned to support Economic Mobility which has important impacts to food security (e.g Re-employment and Upskilling, Early Childhood Workforce Stabilization, Rental Resiliency, Digital Divide)
* ARP funds represent an important opportunity to transform systems serving low-income people.

Ann Wheeler, Chair of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors, focused her remarks on CARES ACT and ARP funds investments. She acknowledged the critical roles played by Prince William Food Rescue, Prince William County Public Schools, the county’s senior centers and Meals on Wheels in the county’s early response, and the additional time that would be needed to detail the county’s full response.

Highlights:

* Fortunate that Prince William Food Rescue (PWFR) was stood up in 2019
* County created Prince William Community Feeding Task Force with [ACTS](https://www.actspwc.org/) (PWFR home at the time), Manassas, Manassas Park, and the Prince William Community Foundation.
  + Together these jurisdictions are home to more than 500,000 residents
* Community Feeding Task Force used “hub and spoke” model for distribution model.
  + Hub is central warehouse, and 48 spokes were set up at different pantries, churches and other local partners.
  + Distributed 15 million lbs of food, equivalent to 13 million meals at a value of $27 million, in 18 months
  + Warehouse includes assembly lines, cold storage, box trucks, loading docs, etc.
  + Able to receive and redistribute product from other sources like USDA, Capital Area Food Bank, etc.
  + Prince William is most diverse county in VA and culturally appropriate food is part of strategy.
  + County provided close to $3 million of its $82 million in CARES Act funding just to food.
* County receiving $92 million in ARP funds to support a variety of needs.
  + Investing $2.5 million to continue hub and spoke model over next 3 years
* Food insecurity has been mapped by census tract
* Working on direct delivery to families
* Have a food “help line”
* Technology that PWFR uses to connect food to where it is needed is critical
  + PWFR is now [Northern Virginia Food Rescue](https://pwfoodrescue.org/)
  + Chair Wheeler acknowledged Aaron Tolson’s leadership of NVFR
* On another matter, Chair Wheeler recommended FARM hear from a grocer like Giant.
  + Moving to more delivery
  + Shutting down a grocery store to focus on delivery and believes it will expand access
  + Giant’s parent company is second to Amazon in food delivery in US
* Chair Wheeler encouraged anyone interested in learning about county’s response to contact her.

Ramona S. Carroll, Program Manager with the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services shared highlights from the county’s ARPA Food Access Program (FAP) for Community Providers.

* County has seen a significant need for food assistance
* CAREs funds have been allocated to community providers which serve residents for the purchase of food, however, need continues to be very high
  + Connection and coordination to county agencies and services
  + A number of creative partnerships and responses deployed to support residents
* County strategically coordinates with community providers, houses of worship to respond to human service needs.
  + Example has been the Community Provider Strategy Team (CPST) Food Access Subcommittee
  + Stood up at the beginning of COVID, now the Emergency Food Strategy Team
  + Partnership more important now than ever
* To allocate ARP funds, queried community food providers on capacity needs
  + Started looking at in 2018
  + Need for refrigerated and other storage, vehicles, and redesign of space for client choice
  + Surveyed providers again this year and infrastructure identified as need again
* Fairfax County ARPA Food Access Program (FAP) created
  + One of county’s programs addressing food insecurity
  + For community providers to expand or address gaps (geographic, population)
  + Nonprofits and houses of worship providing food will apply for funds
* FAP investment for next 3 years is $7.5 million
  + For food system infrastructure support and purchasing of food
  + $3.5 million will be administered in FY22
  + Remaining $4 million distributed in FY23 and FY24
  + Infrastructure support only available in FY22
* “Three lane” approach for FY22 funding
* Lane 1 is direct food assistance ($1.5 million)
* Will be proportionately allocated according to regional need
  + Derived from $1 million spent through CAREs.
  + Increased by 50% to acknowledge reported donor fatigue, reduction in federal food programs (e.g. Farmers to Families Food Box Program)
* Lane 2 is $500,000 dollars for new models of food service delivery and prepared food
  + Allows for innovative projects connecting small businesses and food providers, preparing meals via nonprofit service providers, culturally appropriate food purchasing
* Lane 3 will be $1.5 million for infrastructure investments which will enhance client support
  + Could be for vans, refrigerators, storage, shelving, reusable bags
* Continued coordination between county and community providers to strategically and efficiently respond to food insecurity is planned
* Collaboration on programming, funding opportunities, collective purchasing power
* Grounded in equity principles, Food Access Strategy Response Plan, and countywide Strategic Plan

Holly Freishtat, Food Policy Director for the City of Baltimore provided some high-level information on the city’s response and future plans. Highlights:

* Baltimore city has a very robust COVID-19 emergency food response.
* Still at same level they’ve been for the last 18 months
* Moving around 18,000 produce boxes at over 80 community sites/week
* Over 1.2 million boxes distributed in last year
* Been advocating for online SNAP for a long time
* Been collaborating with schools, rec centers, Dept of Aging, etc. to maximize the amount of federal meals
* Invested over $1 million dollars in urban and local regional food systems
* Entire response has been FEMA reimbursed
  + Strategy has been to mitigate COVID-19 transmission through addressing food security
* In process of working with city on proposal for ARP funds.
* Funds will support produce boxes
* Been working with The Common Market to support local and regional producers
* Spent over $5 million in local regional foods via procurement contracts
* Understand supply chain limitations, want to support organizations in agricultural infrastructure in the city for food resilience
* Want to double and increase significantly online SNAP participation
* Will request funds for outreach and marketing, supporting retailers, and digital equity for residents.

Ms. Frieshtat shared key findings on what the city has learned so far: <https://planning.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/City%20Covid%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

FARM Member UPdates

Radha Muthiah, CEO of Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB), provided an update on what CAFB is seeing in terms of community demand, data that CAFB continues to examine, etc. Highlights:

* CAFB work driven by partnerships
* First year of Covid, distributed about 76 - 77 million meals worth of food
* Hopeful and planning for less distribution this coming year.
  + Projecting 45 to 46 million meals range.
  + Prior to the pandemic CAFB, distributed about 30 million meals worth of food.
  + This year will still be about 50% more than pre pandemic
* In terms of supply chain challenges, CAFB’s are not as significant last year in terms of getting food needed on a timely basis.
  + There are different types of challenges this year: transportation truck driver shortages.
  + There will be some impacts but have different plans in place to ensure continuity.
* We know food prices have increased but so far CAFB not affected because it has diversified its supplier base.
  + Have held onto and established long term contracts, not knowing exactly how long COVID would last, but knowing the recovery would take a long time for many of our neighbors in need.
  + No increases in price at this time
* In terms of culturally appropriate food, this is going to be a bigger part of CAFB’s food supply which will go to partners around the region.
  + Includes engagement with many thousands of Afghan refugees
  + Been contacted by 3 of the 4 major agencies doing resettlement in region area to provide support
* CAFB has significant storage capabilities
  + Being asked more and more to house some of food that partners distribute.
  + Thinking about how to be a resource to partners or government agencies
  + Expanding Northern VA facility three-fold
  + Two additional warehouses in Prince George’s
  + 140,000 sq ft facility in Washington, DC
* Partnerships and collaboration
* Good amount of collaboration across food banks
* 2 Food Banks serve in Maryland: CAFB and MD Food Bank
* 7 food banks across Virginia (including CAFB) and close collaboration
* In DC, work across all 6 wards
* CAFB has a lot more partnerships, new and different kinds to help community members become more sufficient
* Increasing work with colleges and hospitals, and others to create nexus between food and health, and education and skill development.

Councilmember Cheh thanked Rachel Clark in her office who worked on food and other policy matters. She also engaged with COG and the FARM Committee. She is moving on to a new professional opportunity.

The FARM Committee also heard from MD Hunger Solutions and several others about a recent, successful effort they worked on with MD’s Department of Human Services and USDA to ensure that SNAP recipients could continue to receive emergency SNAP allotments from the federal government.

Review Action Items and AdJourn

Chair Cheh thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 1:01 pm.

ATTENDANCE:

Mary Cheh, Chair, District of Columbia

Jon Stehle, Vice Chair, City of Fairfax

Reuben Collins, Charles County (alternate)

Libby Garvey, Arlington County

Penny Gross, Fairfax County

Ann Wheeler, Prince William County

Tom Ross, City of Fairfax (alternate)

Ona Balkus, District of Columbia Food Policy Council

Heather Bruskin, Montgomery County Food Council

Jeremy Criss, Montgomery County Food Council

Sara Hoverter, Georgetown University

Meredith Ledlie Johnson, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Radha Muthiah, Capital Area Food Bank

Michael J Wilson, Maryland Hunger Solutions

Nick Stavely, FRESHFARM (alternate)

Victoria Treski, Bainum Family Foundation

Zachari Curtis, Dreaming Out Loud

Kristin Trible, Office of Councilmember Rice

Mike Porcello, Office of Councilmember Cheh

Stephanie Hopkins, Arlington County Department of Human Services

Kim Haun, Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation

Aaron Tolson, Northern Virginia Food Rescue

Rebecca Gates, Northern Virginia Food Rescue

Caroline Rankin, Fairfax County of Neighborhood and Community Services

Al Van Orden, Compost Crew

Kirsten Kelley, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Gretchen Greiner-Lott, Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

Carolynn Brunette, Prince Charitable Trusts

Julia Groenfeldt, Prince George’s Food Equity Council

Speakers

Dr. Samir Meghelli, Anacostia Community Museum of the Smithsonian

Debbie Noymer, George Washington University

Kate Garvey, City of Alexandria

Ramona Carroll, Fairfax County of Neighborhood and Community Services

Steve Connelly, Maryland Department of Agriculture

Mark Powell, Maryland Department of Agriculture

COG Staff

Ata Adeel

Lindsay Smith Steve Bieber

Brian LeCouteur