



MEETING SUMMARY (DRAFT)

Friday, December 13th, 2024

All presentations from the meeting can be found at:

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2024/12/13/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-policy-committee/>

DECISIONS & ACTIONS

- *FARM members approved the August meeting summary.*
- *Staff will coordinate with the Regional Ag Workgroup and DMV Food Council Collaborative to report on their workplan strategies for 2025 during FARM's February meeting*
- *The Committee will also vote on proposed Bylaw changes during the February Meeting.*
- *Proposed Legislative Priorities for FARM will be voted on by the COG Legislative Committee in December and by the COG Board in January.*
- *A draft Citizen Centric Report will be shared with members for feedback before the February Meeting.*

WELCOME

Councilmember Jon Stehle, FARM Chair

Chair Jon Stehle called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. Chair Stehle outlined the meeting agenda, highlighted the August meeting summary, proposed changes to FARM's bylaws, and food security legislation. Stehle also introduced a slide presentation reflecting on the DC Farm Tour, inviting participants to share their observations.

FARM COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Jon Stehle, FARM Chair

Council President Andrew Friedson, FARM Vice Chair

Sydney Daigle, Regional Food Systems Consultant

Vice Chair Friedson reflected on the recent tour, noting its diverse insights into agricultural policy across urban, suburban, and rural settings. Supervisor Laura TeKrony expressed enthusiasm for integrating agriculture into school programs, advocating for its inclusion in new schools in Loudoun County. Heather Bruskin highlighted the effective collaboration between the faith community and local government to enhance food production accessibility.

Sydney Daigle shared updates on recent FARM Committee Workgroup meetings, including the November 14th joint work session of the DMV Food Council Collaborative and the Regional Agricultural Workgroup. Membership of both workgroups is set to expand, and the groups will present strategies from their workplans at the next FARM Committee meeting in February.

Chair Stehle called for a motion to approve the August meeting summary which passed unanimously.

Chair Stehle introduced new 2025 leadership for FARM: Montgomery County Council President Andrew Friedson will serve as Chair, DC Councilmember Zachary Parker will continue as Vice Chair, and Laura TeKrony, Loudoun County Supervisor, will join the leadership team as a Vice Chair. Incoming Chair Friedson emphasized the importance of teamwork in tackling food system issues, while incoming Vice Chair TeKrony highlighted her commitment to agricultural sustainability and education in Loudoun County.

Chair Stehle emphasized the significance of knowledge sharing and initiated a discussion on proposed changes to FARM's bylaws, with plans for a vote in February. The proposed updates and changes are intended to provide consistency with COG Board bylaws and respond to feedback from members. Vice Chair Friedson identified a discrepancy in the bylaws regarding the role of the chair emeritus, which staff will correct. The conversation then shifted to the upcoming changes in FARM Committee membership, with Chair Stehle encouraging participation and communication among members to help fill vacancies.

2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Jon Stehle, FARM Chair

Sydney Daigle, Regional Food Systems Consultant, COG

Chair Stehle shared an overview of the annual process to approve COG's Legislative Priorities which in turn guide COG's advocacy efforts. Ms. Daigle shared that the work group and committee members provided several rounds of feedback to support the draft of the FARM legislative priorities. She highlighted two new strategies members suggested adding: protecting the dignity and safety of immigrant communities receiving food assistance and promoting the use of publicly owned lands for food production.

ASSESSING FARM'S PROGRESS AND MEMBER ROUNDTABLE

Jon Stehle, FARM Chair

Andrew Friedson, FARM Vice Chair

Chair Stehle opened up an interactive discussion for members on the accomplishments of the committee over the past two years. Chair Stehle shared that FARM is developing a Citizen Centric Report (CCR); he emphasized the role of CCRs in conveying government actions and fostering community trust. He shared insights from the FARM's meetings in 2024, noting the alarming trend of increased rates of food insecurity among those earning over \$100,000. Stehle also addressed the significance of the committee's urban farming discussions and the need for strategic policy changes to support local growers.

Chair Stehle also presented an overview of the committee's work on outreach and organizational development, focusing on the onboarding of new members and upcoming tasks for 2025. He invited participants to share their thoughts on past initiatives and any additional topics that should be included in the report.

Supervisor TeKrony raised concerns about agricultural processing challenges in Loudoun County, sharing the need for regional collaboration to support small farmers. Supervisor TeKrony emphasized the importance of collaborating with HOAs to allow small farming practices, as many residents are interested in gardening despite restrictions. District Supervisor Tom Gordy discussed the conflict

between suburban living and agriculture, noting that new developments threaten existing farms. He mentioned efforts to educate the community about small farming options and the need for larger lots to accommodate agricultural activities.

Councilmember Marybeth Connelly highlighted the City of Falls Church's efforts to implement composting, including a proposed third bin for compost and educational initiatives in schools. Elisa Solomon shared the Fairfax Food Council's pilot program that provides composting resources to schools and the necessity for a larger commercial composting strategy. Chair Stehle proposed the idea of on-site composting for restaurants to reduce waste transportation costs.

Chair Stehle initiated a discussion on planning for the next couple of years, inviting feedback from the team. Vice Chair Friedson confirmed that they are in the early stages of this planning and noted the importance of considering the intersectionality of issues like food and land use. Arlington Board Member Libby Garvey, who is retiring from public office at the end of December, thanked the group for their efforts and emphasized the critical role of local government during challenging times.

REGIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURN

Elizabeth Borst highlighted the Virginia Fresh Match program, which has facilitated approximately \$2 million in SNAP benefits this year, supporting local farmers and improving food security for participants. She emphasized the collaborative efforts of the Virginia Food Access Coalition in advocating for food access initiatives, including increasing senior SNAP benefits and addressing broader food insecurity concerns.

Annika La Fave from the Maryland Department of Emergency Management announced that the Maryland Food System Resilience Council's Communication and Coordination Committee will begin weekly legislative tracking meetings for the Maryland General Assembly's 2025 session, starting January 13th.

Carla Cash highlighted an upcoming succession planning session for farmers in Fauquier County on December 18th, addressing the aging farmer population.

Chair Stehle provided closing remarks for the meeting, highlighting his gratitude for the opportunity to serve as the Committee's chair.

The next FARM meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 14th.

Chair Stehle ended the meeting at approximately 11:29 a.m.

FARM MEMBER ATTENDANCE

Jon Stehle, Chair, City of Fairfax
Andrew Friedson, Vice Chair, Montgomery County
Zachary Parker, Vice Chair, District of Columbia
Marilyn Blount, Town of Bladensburg (Alternate)
Llatetra Brown Esters, City of College Park (Alternate)
Marybeth Connelly, City of Falls Church
Libby Garvey, Arlington County
Tom Gordy, Prince William County

Caroline Howe, DC Office of Planning, DC Food Policy Council
Carrol McBryde, Town of Bladensburg
Danielle McKinney, City of Greenbelt
Denise Mitchell, City of College Park
Laura TeKrony, Loudoun County
Bob Weir, Prince William County (Alternate)
Heather Bruskin, Montgomery County Office of Food System Resilience
Tara Clemons Johnson, Montgomery County Council (Alternate)
Charles Green, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Julia Gross, MD Hunger Solutions (Alternate)
Sara Hoverter, Georgetown University
Rachel Jones, Maryland Department of Agriculture
Meredith Ledlie Johnson, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Hugo Mogollon, FRESHFARM
Radha Muthiah, Capital Area Food Bank
Sadaf Parveen, City of Laurel Community and Economic Development
Katie Stevens, Frederick County Office of Agriculture

PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Alex Cordova | Jocelyn Tidwell |
| Alisa Brooks | Kenner Love |
| Alyssa Wooden | Kim Rush Lynch |
| Amy Crone | Lawren-Christian Dolland |
| Annika La Fave | Linda Jones |
| Beth Brewster | Lorien MacAuley, PhD |
| Brittany Cook | Margaret Morgan-Hubbard |
| Carla Cash | Max Broad |
| Carol Jones | Melissa Jensen |
| Catherine Nardi | Pamela Montesinos |
| Cindy Gibson | Piper Phillips Caswell |
| Darren H Jarboe | Rachel Weisz |
| Eleni Shepard | Selena Singleton |
| Elisa Solomon | Stephanie Hopkins |
| Elizabeth Borst | Stephanie Lansing |
| Emily Landsman | Taddeo Harmonie |
| Jason Sierra | Wendy Nevett Bazil |
| Jennifer Freeman | Yuki Kato |
| Joanna L Fitzpatrick | |

COG

Steve Bieber
Sydney Daigle
Christine Howard
Wyetha Lipford
Lindsay Smith
Lisa Ragain