

**MEMORANDUM**

April 19, 2013

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst *Yome*

SUBJECT: **FY14 Operating Budget: Interim Recommendations of the Food Recovery Group Work Group and Incentive for SNAP purchases at Farm Markets**

At this session, the Committee will consider two items not included in the Executive's FY14 Recommended Operating Budget: (1) A request from the Council's Food Recovery Work Group for \$200,000 to implement a food recovery system during FY14; and, (2) a recommendation from Councilmember Ervin to fund \$25,580 to implement a SNAP incentive program for SNAP recipients when they shop at seven of the County's farm markets. A memo from Councilmember Ervin to Council President Navarro and HHS Committee Chair Leventhal supporting both efforts is attached at © 1-8.

These items are being discussed at this worksession because, if the Council funds them, the funds would be appropriate to the Department of Health and Human Service's Children, Youth, and Family Services section as it has income support programs including SNAP.

**1. Food Recovery Work Group**

On October 16, 2012 the Council approved Resolution 17-564 which established the Food Recovery Work Group (© 18-20). The Work Group was appointed November 27, 2012. The Work Group was asked to develop a report detailing how to create and implement a food recovery system in Montgomery County. The Work Group was asked to submit an Interim

Report in part to allow recommendations with budget implications to come to the Council during its FY14 budget worksessions. The Work Group's Interim Report is attached at © 9-17. The Work Group will complete its work in July 2013.

As stated in the Interim Report, "The Work Group is requesting \$200,000 in FY14 to continue its work to develop and implement a food recovery system. While the Work Group's interim recommendations are broad, it is important that funds are available in FY14. It is expected that some part of this funding will be needed to complete the community assessment, survey, and analysis that will provide critical information on donors, emergency food providers, and food recycling options and capacity. While some of this work is underway at the Food Council and the Work Group endorses a collaborative planning process, resources will be needed to accelerate the complete assessment phase. Second, the Work Group expects that there will be a need to procure technology solutions for matching suppliers and emergency food providers and to either create or supplement existing web resources. Third, an assessment must be made about whether additional equipment, storage, or staffing may be needed by emergency food providers or others in the food recovery system if large quantities of recovered food are available. Lastly, there may be a need for staff to oversee and manage the implementation process."

**Because the Work Group's recommendations are not yet fully defined, Council staff recommends that the Budget Resolution include the following language:**

*This resolution appropriates \$200,000 to the Department of Health and Human Services to complete and implement a plan for a food recovery system to increase food donations that will be distributed to people in need. A food recovery system may also include a component for composting food waste. The Council will receive the final report of the Food Recovery Work Group in July 2013. The Department of Health and Human Services must send a report to the Council on how it expects to spend all or part of these funds before all or a part of the funds are spent. These funds may not be spent for any other purpose.*

## **2. Pilot SNAP Incentive Project at Seven Farm Markets**

Councilmember Ervin is recommending the Council approve \$25,580 to pilot a program at seven County farm markets that would double the dollars (up to a certain amount) for SNAP recipients as an incentive for shopping for local, fresh foods. The seven markets that would be a part of this effort are equipped to accept Electronic Benefits Transfers from SNAP. They are: Burtonsville, Crossroads, Rockville, Shady Grove, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and Wheaton. About \$2,000 would be allocated to each of the farm markets for the incentive. Funds are also requested for printing the vouchers, marketing and outreach and administrative costs. Crossroads Community Food Network is the recommended recipient of this contract.

This pilot program is consistent with and supports other efforts in the County to improve nutrition, reduce obesity, and support local food producers. Double dollars programs are in effect in many jurisdictions throughout the country including the Baltimore Bucks program that is a part of Maryland Hunger Solutions. The Crossroads Community Food Network has a Fresh

Check program that is available at the Crossroad Farm Market. Crossroad Food Network notes that a 2011 USDA report concluded that subsidizing some food costs, including dark, green vegetables, was linked to a decrease in children's BMI. One hundred percent of those receiving Fresh Checks said it made it easier to buy fresh fruits and vegetables and 92% said that it was "important" or "very important" in their decision to spend Federal food benefits at the farm market rather than elsewhere.

Council staff recommends that the Committee recommend the Council fund this item through the reconciliation list. Council staff notes that while these funds are intended to allow the program to begin during the 2013 farm market season, if the contracting process does not result in the funds being available until later this fall, a 12 month contract can be executed that would allow the funds to be available for the beginning of the 2014 farm market season. There will be an important education and outreach component to this project that may be best used at the beginning of a farm market season rather than for a limited time toward the end.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN  
COUNCILMEMBER  
DISTRICT 5

**Memorandum**

April 11, 2013

To: Nancy Navarro, President, County Council  
George Leventhal, Chair, Health & Human Services Committee

From: Valerie Ervin, Councilmember – District 5

**Re: Council FY14 Funding for Food Access Initiatives**

I am writing today to propose two items for County Council funding consideration in the Fiscal Year 2014 Operating Budget: \$200,000 to support the Food Recovery Work Group's recommendation to implement a food recovery network; and \$25,580 to support the Crossroads Community Food Network's recommended approach to launching the County's first farmers market "double dollars" program to increase access to healthy foods for low-income residents.

As you know, the problem of hunger is ever increasing in our county, as approximately one-third of County students currently qualify for free and reduced-priced meals (FARMS).

The Food Recovery Work Group, which I sponsored and was unanimously established by the County Council in October 2012, was asked to develop a report detailing how to create and implement a food recovery system in Montgomery County. The primary goal behind my sponsorship of the Food Recovery Work Group is to help end hunger in Montgomery County. The Work Group is evaluating best practices; mapping existing resources; identifying ways to enhance communication among non-profits, organizations, service providers, and food suppliers; and recommending any needed legislative changes to assist in these efforts. The Council is scheduled to receive the Work Group's Interim Report shortly.

One of the Work Group's primary interim recommendations is to set aside \$200,000 in the FY14 Operating Budget to implement a food recovery network. Many steps will have to be taken to make a large scale food recovery network a reality, including: completing the resource mapping of existing and potential food donors and emergency food access sites; creating a mobile technology solution to match donors and emergency food providers; and creating and distributing information on the program, the Good Samaritan law, relevant health codes, and the tax benefits of food donation. While the Work Group discussed a variety of options to implement food recovery, at this time the Work Group is not making any recommendation on whether this funding should be used to create a new position or outsource work through a contract. Since funding will be needed to implement this important initiative, I believe the Council should set aside \$200,000 in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) budget.

The Crossroads Community Food Network, represented on the Council's Work Group, opened in 2007 as part of an effort to give residents of the Takoma-Langley area better access to fresh, local produce. Together with the Takoma Park Farmers Market, it became the first in Maryland authorized to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Assistance (Senior FMNP). It is also among the first nationwide to match food vouchers with market "double dollars" to multiply the buying power of low-income shoppers. The Crossroads Network has established itself as a great model for providing fresh, nutritious foods to those in need.

The Crossroads Network has proposed a way to duplicate what they do on a larger scale across the county through a pilot farmers market vendor incentive program. Through this proposed initiative, it will administer the double dollars program at eight of the 21 farmers markets already equipped with electronic benefit transfer (EBT) machines capable of processing SNAP and other government-provided benefits during the 2013 season. This includes Burtonsville, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Wheaton, and other the targeted areas for social services in the county. Crossroads will provide training, assistance, marketing and the distribution of the incentive funding. For your convenience, I have attached their proposal. This organization is uniquely situated to implement this initiative. I would like to request the addition of \$25,580 in the FY14 Operating Budget in the HHS budget to implement this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact my office at 240-777-7960.

Attachment

c: Councilmembers  
Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Department of Health & Human Services  
Jeremy Criss, Agricultural Services, Department of Economic Development  
Linda McMillan, Council Staff



## Background

Farmers markets play a central and growing role in the food landscape and have the ability to serve as an access point for low-income households. However, low-income families can only benefit from *affordable* healthy food sources; they are often forced to sacrifice food quality, forgoing fresh fruits and vegetables. This proposal will support the launch of Montgomery County's first farmers market "double-dollars" program, in which purchases made by at farmers markets using SNAP (food stamp) benefits will be matched with County dollars, doubling the purchasing power of low-income households to obtain healthy, quality food. This initiative will address food insecurity, diet-related illness, and stimulate the local economy by supporting local agricultural production.

Financial incentives that double purchases made at farmers markets using SNAP benefits, known generally as "double dollars," have demonstrated effective locally and nationally in increasing use of these benefits at markets and increasing fruit and vegetable consumption amongst participating low-income households. In 2012, 75% of double dollars surveyed at Crossroads Farmers Market in Takoma Park said that the incentives were "very important- would not have used their SNAP benefits at market without them" and 73% reported "increased" or "significantly increased" fruit and vegetable consumption. Similarly, a 2012 study conducted by Johns Hopkins University of the Baltimore City-wide farmers market incentive program indicated that the incentives were moderately or very important in the decision of 87% of respondents to shop at the market with their benefits.

## Pilot SNAP Incentive Project Implementation

Crossroads Community Food Network, a Montgomery County food access non-profit, will administer a double dollars program at seven County farmers markets during the 2013 season. At present, there are 21 farmers markets operating in Montgomery County. Seven of these (33%) are equipped with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) machines, the point-of-sale technically required to accept SNAP benefits, which are distributed on debit-style cards. Through this pilot program, Crossroads Community Food Network would accept and redistribute funds to the eight Montgomery County with EBT. These markets are: Burtonsville (formerly Briggs Chaney-Greencastle), Crossroads, Rockville, Shady Grove, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and Wheaton. In the first year of this initiative, the project will work with the aforementioned markets already accepting EBT with the goal of increasing SNAP usage and numbers of SNAP-recipients shopping at those markets.



Food  
Network

crossroadsmarket@gmail.com  
www.CrossroadsCommunityFoodNetwork.org

Based on market size, prior years' SNAP sales, and outreach plans, Crossroads staff will determine an appropriate allocation of County-issued incentive dollars for each market and will issue a check for the designated amount at the start of the market season. Crossroads staff will train participating market managers in EBT and incentive program implementation, offering resources, best practices, and technical assistance as needed for program management, promotion, and data collection. Upon receipt of funds from Crossroads, each participating market will provide a dollar-for-dollar match (cap determined by total available funding) for SNAP purchases at the market. The incentive dollars will be distributed as dollar-value paper vouchers that shoppers can spend directly with the vendors, as they would cash. At the close of each weekly market, managers will collect the vouchers from each vendor, record sales, and reimburse them the following week. Market managers will report weekly SNAP and incentive sales to Crossroads for budgeting and evaluative purposes. Crossroads will report on outcomes to the County Council and other stakeholders at the close of the market season.

Additionally, all participating markets will become partners in Eat Fresh Maryland ([www.eatfreshmaryland.org](http://www.eatfreshmaryland.org)), a program of Crossroads Community Food Network. Eat Fresh Maryland was founded in 2010 as a statewide network of farmers markets, non-profits, and state and local government agencies collaborating to increase access to fresh, local foods to low-income communities statewide. As partners, these markets will receive bilingual signage and marketing materials promoting the new incentive program. Materials to include: a large point-of-sale "SNAP Accepted Here" banner, bilingual "How to Use SNAP at Market" brochures, colorful customizable fliers, and inclusion in mailers to all Montgomery County SNAP recipients. Market managers will participate on ongoing Eat Fresh Maryland partner workshops, which serve as a forum for exchange of ideas and resources with other market managers focused on low-income families and for the development of best practices.

Note: For the 2013 pilot season, this proposed initiative is focused on increasing SNAP redemption at farmers markets already equipped with EBT technology rather than increasing the number of EBT markets. This decision was made based both on timing (most markets open in May) and the resources necessary to operate effective, successful EBT programs.

Beyond the costs of an EBT machine and corresponding transaction and wireless fees, the primary obstacle for markets to acquiring EBT is lack of staff capacity to operate the program. Most farmers market managers are volunteer or part-time and are already at capacity with regular market operations; repeatedly, market managers indicate that they lack the human resources to operate the machine throughout the weekly market the 2-6 hours/week of accounting



## Food Network

associated with EBT. To this point, the USDA allocated \$4 in 2012 for any interested farmers market to acquire an EBT machine. Of the \$68,000 earmarked for Maryland, only \$20,000 were used despite an extensive outreach effort to market managers; the reticence to take on this additional responsibility without added funds for staffing and operations indicates that simply making machines available will not sufficiently address this access barrier. However, based on the success of the 2013 pilot and future funding, we hope to expand this initiative 2014 to bring EBT and incentives to 50% of Montgomery County farmers markets, exploring potential staffing options to mitigate the burden on market managers.

### **Project Management**

Crossroads Community Food Network is uniquely situated to successfully implement a Montgomery County-wide "double dollars" program. Crossroads Farmers Market launched the first double dollars program in the county in 2007 and has six years of experience with program operation and evaluation. To date, nearly 500 markets nationwide replicate Crossroads' "Fresh Checks" program.

To streamline the technical assistance and support that Crossroads was already providing to local and national farmers markets interested in launching an incentive program, Crossroads founded Eat Fresh Maryland. Eat Fresh Maryland is a statewide network of farmers markets, non-profits, and state and local government agencies collaborating to increase access to fresh, local foods to low-income communities statewide. Since November 2010, Crossroads has provided the nearly thirty Eat Fresh Maryland partners with bilingual marketing and outreach materials, technical assistance, and when available, seed funding for incentive programs as proposed here. In 2012, partners reported an 87% increase in SNAP sales from 2011.

During the 2011 and 2012 farmers market seasons, Crossroads redistributed funding allocated by the USDA and Maryland Department of Agriculture for "double-dollars" to eligible Eat Fresh Maryland partners in a model similar to that proposed in this initiative. Crossroads/Eat Fresh Maryland has also received funding from Kaiser Permanente operate EBT and incentives at Baltimore City hospital and nursing home farmers markets and from the CDC to run the program in three Prince George's County farmers markets.

6930 Carroll Avenue  
Suite 426  
Takoma Park, MD 20912



Crossroads

Food  
Network

crossroadsmarket@gmail.com  
www.CrossroadsCommunityFoodNetwork.org

### Project Budget

SNAP incentives for seven EBT farmers markets- \$14,000 (7 x \$2,000)

Marketing and outreach materials, print costs for double-dollar vouchers- \$5,250  
(\$750/market)

Honorarium for Market Manager travel, workshop and training participation data  
collection and reporting- \$3,500 (\$500/market manager)

Program Manager Salary- \$2,330 (\$20/hour x 4 hours/week x 26 weeks + 12%  
taxes)

Project Manager travel- \$500

Total- \$25,580



Montgomery County  
Food Council  
[www.mocofoodcouncil.org](http://www.mocofoodcouncil.org)

April 3, 2013

Members of the Montgomery County Council  
Montgomery County Council  
Rockville, MD

Via email

RE: Support for Fresh Checks funding

Dear Councilmembers:

A number of weeks ago, Michele Levy (Food Council Co-Chair) and Lindsay Smith (Food Council Coordinator) participated in Councilmember Ervin's SNAP! the Silence of Poverty Challenge.

At the Councilmember's wrap up meeting on February 8th, participants were asked to contribute their ideas for addressing hunger in our community. We understand that Lindsay tried to complete the challenge using food purchased at local farmers markets and found the challenge of eating healthfully on \$5 per day to be just that: a challenge. At the meeting, she shared a recommendation for considering some level of County support for programs such as Double Dollars/Fresh Checks. These programs match WIC and SNAP benefits at farmers markets, extending participants' purchasing power of fresh, local food, in direct benefit of participants and the farm economy. Further, we know that Lindsay shared news from our August 2012 Food Council meeting in which both Milk Lady Markets and Crossroads Community Food Network announced that their supply of privately funded Double Dollars had run out before the end of market season. (Both were doing additional fundraising in an effort to meet demand.)

Although we aspire for a future in which less of our community members need SNAP and WIC to supplement their nutritional needs, the reality is that these benefits will always be a critical part of the safety net which helps low income community members feed themselves and their families. Given our mission to promote systemic change in our local food system, we are supportive of programming like Double Dollars (and Eat Fresh MD's educational programming) which increase access to fresh, local affordable food, encourage healthy eating, and support the farm economy.

Montgomery County Food Council  
4825 Cordell Avenue, Suite 200  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

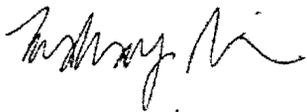
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web: [www.mocofoodcouncil.org](http://www.mocofoodcouncil.org)  
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We understand that County budget funds continue to be constrained however, we are grateful for Councilmember Ervin's understanding of the urgency of food insecurity and commitment to proposing timely solutions. We ask that you give your full consideration to the modest supplemental budget proposal that has come before you to extend the reach of the Double Dollars program in Montgomery County.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,



On behalf of Dick Stoner, Co Chair  
and Members of the Montgomery County Food Council

Montgomery County Food Council  
4825 Cordell Avenue, Suite 200  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

email: [mocofoodcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:mocofoodcouncil@gmail.com)  
web: [www.mocofoodcouncil.org](http://www.mocofoodcouncil.org)  
[www.facebook.com/mocofoodcouncil](http://www.facebook.com/mocofoodcouncil)  
Twitter: @mocofoodcouncil

## **Interim Report from the Food Recovery Work Group**

April 18, 2013

On October 16, 2012 the Council approved Resolution 17-564 which established the Food Recovery Work Group. The Work Group was appointed November 27, 2012. To date, the Work Group has met seven times: January 10, February 7, February 21, March 7, March 28, April 4, and April 18, 2013.

The Work Group was asked to develop a report detailing how to create and implement a food recovery system in Montgomery County. The Work Group is to submit an interim report and complete its work in July 2013. The final report should evaluate best practices; map existing resources; identify ways to enhance communication among non-profits, organizations, service providers, and food suppliers; and recommend any needed legislative changes to assist in these efforts.

**The Work Group agrees that as a part of developing a food recovery system to increase the donation of food to those in need, attention should be paid to three additional issues:**

➤ **End Hunger In Montgomery County**

The real goal of this effort is to help end hunger in Montgomery County. While emergency food will always be needed, the larger goal should be to reduce the number of people who cannot meet their own food and nutritional needs. It is important that the County continue to look for new ways to generate employment opportunities for those who are food insecure because they are economically insecure. When food is recovered in Montgomery County, it should stay in Montgomery County to help achieve this goal.

➤ **Prioritize Healthy Food**

Priority will be given to increasing the donation of and access to healthy foods. The Work Group is not excluding any type of food from the food recovery system but believes there are untapped ways to increase the amount of donated produce, fresh foods, meat, and dairy that can improve the nutritional value of emergency food. Increasing the capacity to receive leftover food from farm markets or farms and then preserving it so it is available throughout the year could help to meet this goal.

➤ **Minimize Food Waste**

The County should declare that its policy is to recover food. Recovery of good edible food can also lead to opportunities to recover, repurpose, and recycle food waste and prevent it from ending up in a landfill or being incinerated. In 2011,

19% of Montgomery County's waste stream was food. The County should work to eliminate food waste by composting food. Food composting is not limited to produce; it can include all types of pre-consumer food scraps and organic materials.

## **Comments and Interim Recommendations**

The Work Group does not yet have final recommendations or full funding requests but provides the following recommendations and comments based on this initial period of education and fact finding:

### **1. Funds Will be Needed in FY14**

- **The Work Group is requesting \$200,000 in FY14 to continue its work to develop and implement a food recovery system. While the Work Group's interim recommendations are broad, it is important that funds are available in FY14. It is expected that some part of this funding will be needed to complete the community assessment, survey, and analysis that will provide critical information on donors, emergency food providers, and food recycling options and capacity. While some of this work is underway at the Food Council and the Work Group endorses a collaborative planning process, resources will be needed to accelerate the complete assessment phase. Second, the Work Group expects that there will be a need to procure technology solutions for matching suppliers and emergency food providers and to either create or supplement existing web resources. Third, an assessment must be made about whether additional equipment, storage, or staffing may be needed by emergency food providers or others in the food recovery system if large quantities of recovered food are available. Lastly, there may be a need for staff to oversee and manage the implementation process.**

### **2. There is Potential for Adding Partners and Increasing Recovered Food**

- Grocery stores, including the major grocery store chains, are already donating significant amounts of food through the Capital Area Food Bank and directly to Manna Food Center and they should be recognized for these efforts. However, all County grocery stores, including large super stores that are now serving as grocery stores, and smaller chains and independent stores should be contacted to see if they are donating food. If they are not, they should be asked if they are willing to start.
- Work should continue to see if the types of food donated by the major grocery stores can be expanded to include more meats, non-perishables, and produce. Safeway has recently started donating dairy, which has been of tremendous

benefit to County emergency food providers. Emergency food providers continue to look for ways to increase the amount of dairy, produce and protein that is donated.

- Caterers, restaurants, hotels, country clubs, colleges and universities, hospitals, and food vendors should be contacted to see if they will donate prepared foods that would otherwise go to waste. Nourish Now and Shepherd's Table have received donations from caterers and a representative from Sodexo joined the Work Group to discuss potential opportunities. Nourish Now is regularly picking up prepared foods from some caterers and restaurants. The Work Group sees this as a signal that there is opportunity to expand the donation of prepared food.
- Many farmers and farm market vendors are donating food; however, all farmers should be contacted to see if they would be interested in donating. In addition, Manna also purchases food for their Farm to Food Bank program. To help with this effort information should be developed that describes the economic benefits to farmers from donating food. Stipends to local farmers may also be an appropriate way to increase the amount of fresh food available to emergency food providers while incorporating local agriculture into the food recovery system.
- The County should develop and distribute information on the benefits of food recovery including how and where to donate food, the provisions of the Good Samaritan Law that protect those donating food from liability, and potential tax and economic benefits of food recovery and donation.

### **3. Protocols, Contracting, and Regulatory Changes May Increase Food Recovery**

- A protocol should be created to respond when a grocery store has an unplanned event such as a loss of power and could donate large amounts of food if the County's response is quick. County agency resources such as refrigerated transport and warehouses could be a part of this response. Such a protocol might also be used if a large amount of produce becomes available but cannot be immediately stored or used by one of the County's non-profit emergency food providers. Manna has the capacity to pick up large amounts of perishable food but at times is operating at capacity with respect to its frozen and refrigerated storage.
- County agencies' contracts with food vendors and caterers should require that food be recovered or donated when possible.
- Health regulations should be reviewed to determine whether there are any that unnecessarily impede the appropriate donation of food.
- The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to make sure it provides the flexibility needed to recover food and close the food system loop by allowing the recycling

of food scraps. The Work Group heard about challenges for recycling because transporting food waste scraps from the originating source to an off-site farm or other location so the farmer-operator can recycle it into organic material (that may also be transported off-site) is not allowed. Such flexibility would increase capacity for food composting and could provide additional income to a farmer-operator. The actual operations would be regulated by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

#### **4. Education is a Must to Achieve Long-Term Goals**

- Educating people to recover food and reduce waste through food composting can start in our educational facilities. The University of Maryland has created signage that provides easy icon-based direction on how to sort and recycle materials appropriately. They are willing to share this signage state-wide for continuity with the purpose of expanding compost awareness and education.
- Montgomery County Public Schools should be challenged to rescue and compost food at the individual school level as well as from the central kitchen facility. To be successful, collaboration between MCPS' waste management group, individual schools, and County Government is a must. The effort should also be a part of the school curriculum.

#### **Best Practices**

The Work Group has identified City Harvest in New York and Angel Harvest in Los Angeles as organizational models. In addition, the Work Group will look at efforts in Austin, Texas; Boulder, Colorado; San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington to learn more about both food recovery and management of food waste.

#### **Resource Mapping**

A food recovery system must match supply and demand. The United States Department of Agriculture's Food Security Assessment Toolkit stresses the importance of good data and a community food security assessment. "A community food assessment will help you to (1) understand local food systems; (2) inform the setting of goals to improve these local food systems; (3) inform decision-making about policies and actions to improve community food security; and (4) establish a long-term monitoring system with a clear set of indicators.

The Montgomery County Food Council has begun to develop data sets with information on emergency food providers, food outlets, and farms that it is pleased to share with the Work Group and others. It is working with Johns Hopkins University's Center for a Livable Future on developing these maps.

Data sets that need to be developed for a food recovery system should be coordinated with the efforts already underway at the Food Council. However, there is also survey work and information about potential food donors that may need to be collected specifically for this effort.

## **Logistics and Technology**

The Work Group discussed the logistics of the current food recovery efforts at Manna, Nourish Now, and Food Donation Connection and the potential for technology to create a more efficient and robust system that could better and more quickly match a food source with someone who could pick up and distribute the food to those in need (either an organization or directly to a household).

The Work Group received information about Food Cowboy. Food Cowboy is an enterprise that will work to link very large quantities of unwanted food (such as truckloads of produce that might be rejected upon delivering to a store or distribution center) and smaller amounts of recovered food from restaurants and caterers to organizations that will use or redistribute the food to those in need. Mr. Gordon of Food Cowboy estimates that when the system is fully implemented a ton of food could be rescued from a supermarket each week. Food Cowboy has three components: (1) an online exchange that matches donors with charities, much like eBay and Craigslist match buyers with sellers; (2) logistics tools that enable large national retailers to coordinate with small local charities; and (3) an umbrella acceptance and quality assurance organization to protect donors and their brands. Food Cowboy will track the food and label it as Food Cowboy so that a supplier or store will not have a concern that the food would still carry a specific brand name and potentially be resold with the original brand name still attached. This same system can also link food waste to composting facilities.

The Work Group also received information on “zeropercent.us” which uses e-mail and text messaging to link donated food to those who can use it. When a restaurant or other food vendor has food to donate they sign into a system and the system sends out a text message or e-mail describing the donation. An organization wanting the donation responds directly to the donor and picks up the donation. The application can also be used by farms and farm markets. There is no charge for signing up but there is a fee to the restaurant for providing information that can be used for tax purposes. Zeropercent.us finds that about 95% of food is picked-up. This service is currently based in Illinois but can be used in any community.

## **Current Food Recovery Efforts**

The Work Group spent time during its first meetings learning about current on-going efforts by Work Group members. There is already a substantial amount of donated grocery and prepared food that is being donated and redistributed in

Montgomery County. The two major organizations based in Montgomery County are Manna Food Center and Nourish Now. Food Donation Connection, a national organization, operates in Montgomery County. Other members of the Work Group that make use of donated and recovered food include Shepherds Table, Interfaith Works, Rainbow Community Center, and Women Who Care Ministries. In addition, there are many community-based organizations such as the HELP and faith-based food pantries.

### **Manna Food Center**

In Fiscal Year 2012, through the Food for Families program, Manna Food Center served an average of 161 households per day or almost 41,000 households. Manna distributes food to the public at its main warehouse location, six mobile pantries and targeted apartment complexes. Each food package weighs 70-75 pounds. In addition, Manna distributed 69,278 Smart Sacks to elementary school children and provided food to 50 partner agencies.

Last fiscal year, 1.5 million pounds of food was donated by grocery stores and wholesalers. Another 427,000 pounds of produce was donated, primarily by the Capital Area Food Bank (87%). In addition, 126,762 pounds of fresh produce was purchased from local farms and farmers markets for a nominal fee with the support of the County.

Manna Food Center has regular food rescue from about 40 stores that include Giant Foods, Safeway, Bloom, Weis, Harris-Teeter, Shop Rite, Pepperidge Farm, Roots, Fresh Markets, Whole Foods, Mom's Organic Market, Georgetown Bagelry, Trader Joe's and Food Lion. There are other organizations such as Sodexo and Century Distributing that provide food. Manna has four refrigerated trucks picking up on specific routes each day. About 7,000 pounds of food are picked-up each day. Much of the food is redistributed within hours to clients.

Manna does not re-distribute many prepared foods. If they receive a call that there is prepared food to be donated, they will contact Nourish Now to pick it up directly.

### **Nourish Now**

Nourish Now was founded in May 2011 and runs four major programs: (1) collecting unused fresh food from over 30 food providers; (2) donating meals and healthy snacks to over 500 Montgomery County Public School students in need weekly; (3) hosting canned food drives at local businesses and grocery stores; and (4) hosting cooking projects to prepare large amounts of food for those in need.

All food collected is donated to families, schools, shelters, and social service agencies that assist in feeding the hungry. Since its inception, Nourish Now has donated over 104,000 pounds of food to those in need.

Nourish Now works with a network of volunteers. Food that is picked-up is either taken back to the kitchen or delivered directly to the organization that will use it.

Nourish Now works with a network of volunteers. Nourish Now recently moved to a new kitchen space located on Ziggy Lane in Gaithersburg. Previously, the Universities at Shady Grove provided kitchen and storage space.

**Both Manna and Nourish Now are operating close to capacity in terms of physical plant and transportation. If there is success in increasing the amount of recovered and donated food, the capacity of recipient organizations may also need to be addressed.**

## **Montgomery County Food Council**

The Montgomery County Food Council is an independent council formed and led by professionals, private businesses, government officials, individual members, community organizations, and educational institutions that broadly represent the food system both substantively and geographically. Its mission is to bring together a diverse representation of stakeholders in a public and private partnership to improve the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of Montgomery County through the creation of a robust, local, sustainable food system.

The Food Council's goals are to: (1) develop and sustain an economically viable local food system in Montgomery County that supports producers, processors, distributors, and retailers of local foods; (2) increase access to locally produced, healthy food among county residents, especially communities with limited access; (3) increase Montgomery County residents' understanding of the importance of local, healthy food through education opportunities that lead to healthier food choices by residents; and (4) improve agricultural soils and reduce the environmental impacts of local land and water use, and environmental footprint from non-local food in Montgomery County.

As a part of its efforts to increase food access, the Food Council has been working to map resources and conduct a needs assessment. This includes developing a resource list or wiki of organizations, non-profits, county offices and other entities that address food access. The Food Council has been working with Johns Hopkins University's Center for a Livable Future to develop resource maps on emergency food providers, food outlets, and farms. It is hoping to collaborate with the County's Interagency Technology Policy and Coordination Committee (ITPCC) and open data project to find a permanent home for this data and to develop a plan for data maintenance.

## **Food Donation Connection**

Food Donation Connection is a national organization that started in 1992. It is linked with over 15,000 restaurants and 8,600 organizations nationwide. Restaurants donate food that has never been served. Generally this surplus food is wrapped and frozen on-site which allows donations to range from small to large. If the food is

refrigerated it must be picked up within 72 hours. Donations are usually picked up once a week by a non-profit organization.

Food Donation Connection tracks the food and provides the restaurant or corporation with information on the value of donations. The organization receives 15% of the tax savings the donating restaurant receives, so if there is no benefit to the donator there is no charge.

In 2012, Food Donation Connection recovered and donated 183,000 pounds of food valued at \$1.2 million in Montgomery County from 11 restaurant concepts working at 67 locations. The food was donated to 34 organizations through the Food Donation Connection Harvest Program. Food Donation Connection would like to expand its work in Montgomery County.

### **Some brief points on Hunger**

The County Council understands the problem of hunger and food insecurity in Montgomery County as it was the reason for establishing this Work Group. The following are some brief points highlighting this growing problem:

- The 2013 Hunger Report from Bread for the World Institute notes that economists from Brandeis University calculated that in 2010 the direct and indirect cost of hunger in the United States, taking into account its effects on health, education, and economic productivity was \$167.5 billion. The Hunger Report further notes that data indicate that about 50% of children in the United States will, at some point before they turn 18, live in a household that participates in SNAP.
- The 2012 Montgomery County self-sufficiency standard estimates that a single adult needs at least \$256 per month for food; a family of four needs \$802 per month.
- The Capital Area Food Bank reports that 40% of its clients must choose between food and other necessities such as housing, utilities, medical care, and transportation.
- In January 2008, 25,977 people in Montgomery County participated in the Maryland Food Supplement Program (SNAP). In January 2013, there were 67,142 people participating – a 158.5% increase. The five-year increase for the State of Maryland was 117.9%.
- About one-third of Montgomery County Public School children qualify for the Free and Reduced Meal Program. Montgomery County Public Schools has a Universal Breakfast Program at 41 schools and covers the cost of a breakfast for reduced priced eligible students to give more children the opportunity to have

breakfast. Five schools are participating in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

- Maryland Hunger Solutions reports that 1 in 8 Marylanders are food insecure. There are 80 schools in Montgomery County that are eligible for the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program but only 32 (40%) are participating. During the 2011-2012 school year, 1,677 children participated in the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program at 38 sites.
- The Department of Health and Human Services' Senior Nutrition Program served 203,055 congregate meals to 4,666 unduplicated seniors in FY12 and 187,686 home delivered meals to 673 seniors.
- When adequate and affordable amounts of fresh food are not available people often choose food that is affordable and filling. Unfortunately, this food is often high in calories and fat, which can lead to obesity and other chronic health conditions.
- The 2012 Montgomery County Obesity Profile said that 54.3% of adults in Montgomery County are overweight or obese.
- Almost 4 in 10 (36.3%) of Montgomery County children are either overweight or obese.
- From 2000 to 2012, the rate of hospitalizations per 10,000 residents with a primary or secondary diagnosis of obesity increased three-fold for adults and four-fold for children.

Resolution No.: 17-564  
Introduced: October 9, 2012  
Adopted: October 16, 2012

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY MARYLAND**

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By: Councilmembers Ervin, Andrews, Floreen, Elrich, Leventhal, Navarro, Rice, Riemer  
and Council President Berliner

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**SUBJECT:** Establishment of Food Recovery Work Group

**Background**

1. The current economic crisis has forced more people than ever before to ask for public assistance. In 2012, the self-sufficiency standard, which is the minimum income families require to achieve financial security, for a family of four in Montgomery County is approximately \$82,877.
2. According to Montgomery County's Self-Sufficiency Standard, a single adult must pay \$256 per month for food to sustain himself or herself on a low-cost diet, which is based solely on home-cooked meals. For a family of four this cost is estimated at \$802 per month.
3. In 2011, the food index on the U.S. Consumer Price Index rose 4.4 percent. Federal officials expect grocery prices to increase by 3 to 4 percent overall in 2012. These prices are dramatically higher than 2009 and 2010, when food-price inflation was the lowest since the 1960s. For example, in 2011, meat, coffee, and peanut butter prices rose 9 percent, 19 percent and 27 percent respectively, and corn prices hit a record high of \$8 per bushel.
4. The Capital Area Food Bank reports that 40 percent of its clients must choose between food and other necessities like housing, utilities, medical care and transportation.
5. Low-income children are at the greatest risk of food insecurity. Often the meals that they receive lack the vitamins and nutrients essential for their development, which can have a dramatic impact on student achievement. This problem is ever increasing, as approximately one-third of Montgomery County students currently qualify for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), a poverty indicator and a figure that may be higher due to underreporting.

6. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, in 2010 more than 34 million tons of food waste was generated in the United States. This is larger than any other category except paper. Food waste accounted for almost 14 percent of the total municipal solid waste stream. Less than 3 percent of the food waste was reused or recycled and the rest was thrown away, which makes food waste the single largest component of the materials reaching landfills and incinerators.
7. In 2011, 19 percent of Montgomery County's waste stream was made up of food. The amount of food waste produced by the non-residential sector includes restaurants which accounted for 28,769 tons, supermarkets which produced 14,014 tons, and Montgomery County Public Schools which generated 5,301 tons.
8. Student volunteers at the University of Maryland, College Park have created a successful model of food redistribution called the Food Recovery Network. This group redistributes food that would otherwise be wasted to those in need. As of May 2012, the organization donated more than 30,000 meals from University of Maryland. After starting three other chapters at colleges across the United States, the organization is becoming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission of replicating the model in other communities. In addition, many cities have food recovery programs, such as the D.C. Central Kitchen in Washington D.C. and City Harvest in New York City.
9. A food recovery effort should be created in Montgomery County to provide our low-income residents with assistance and to bolster our non-profit community partners who focus on issues associated with hunger.
10. A Council Work Group is necessary to evaluate the costs associated with creating a food recovery effort and to develop a strategic action plan for implementation. This group would also evaluate best practices; map existing resources; identify ways to enhance communication among non-profit organizations, service providers, and food suppliers; and recommend any needed legislative changes to assist in these efforts.

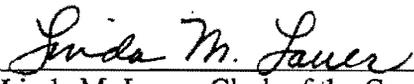
#### Action

The County Council for Montgomery County Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. The Council will appoint a Food Recovery Work Group.
2. The Work Group must consist of no more than 21 members and include representatives from: the Department of Health and Human Services; the Office of Community Partnerships; the Agricultural Services Division of the Department of Economic Development; the Food Council; Montgomery County Public Schools; Manna Food Center; the Maryland Restaurant Association; non-profit organizations; local faith-based institutions, farms, supermarkets, universities, and advocacy groups focusing on gardening, nutrition or ending hunger.

3. The Work Group must develop a report detailing how to create and implement a food recovery effort in Montgomery County.
4. The Work Group must submit a report to the Council that specifies recommended action steps and costs associated with creating a food recovery effort in Montgomery County. The report should also evaluate best practices; map existing resources; identify ways to enhance communication among non-profit organizations, service providers, and food suppliers; and recommend any needed legislative changes to assist in these efforts.
5. The Work Group must submit its interim report to the Council by March 31, 2013 and a final report by July 1, 2013.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

  
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Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council