

Full Council Meeting Minutes

June 20, 2023

Attendees: Lori Adkins (Oakland Schools), Breanna Bradley (PACE), Robin Danto (OCHD), Tony Drautz (OCHD), Russell Estill (Lighthouse), Melanie Grund (Oakland County), Angela Gill (Lighthouse), Anne Ginn (Forgotten Harvest), Trevor Johnson (resident/local business owner), Carrie Hribar (OCHD), BreAnna Koenig (Macomb County Health Department), Theresa Krell (Trinity Health), Whitney Litzner (PHAB), Renee Metcalf (Gleaners), Jess Siegal (AmeriCorps Pontiac Community Foundation), Alejandra Solorzano (Benefit Data Trust), Lindsay TerHaar (OCHD), Madelyn Wright (OLHSA), Joann Wrobel (OCHD), Amanda Woods (OCHD)

Special Guest: Lisa Hansknecht Oakland Schools

Special Thanks

Amanda thanked the Council for their kind words while the Health Division staff mourned the loss of their Health Officer, Dr. Calandra Green.

Guest Speaker, Lisa Hansknecht

Lori Adkins introduced Lisa Hansknecht from Oakland Schools, Executive Director, Government Relations and Community Services. Lisa works directly with superintendents and public education stakeholders, advocating for Oakland County school districts in both state and federal policy. She also coordinates Oakland Schools staff efforts serving on associations, task forces, councils, and committees to ensure a unified approach and that their voice is present.

Lisa presented to the council members, PowerPoint slides included with meeting minutes. Lisa defined advocacy: advocacy is educating your policy members about what you (i.e., the council) care about. It can include asking for help, relationship building, grass roots organizing, and requires long-term thinking. Lisa provided the following key important points she's learned about advocacy.

- With advocacy, it is important to have a focused approach, know your issue well, and what you are trying to "fix." You should be able to explain the issue to stakeholders. Keep it short and to the point, prepare a one-pager to hand them, and be accurate and truthful.
- Know your legislators and build relationships. Look for something to connect with your legislators. Figure out what is important to them. Attend coffee hours. Build a relationship and become a known person/entity. If they are new, they are looking to connect with people who are in the know on subjects. You are not alone. Bring others together with the same goals to connect with legislators.

- Timing is important. Take into account your funding ask (if relevant) and the current political landscape. If there are going to be cuts, ask for what is of greatest importance, and recognize it might not be the time to ask for full program funding but maybe, for example, the program needs inflationary increases to maintain services. If there is an organization that will match funds, let them know that so they understand that if something is funded right now, the money will go farther. And again, join forces on larger issues with other organizers to show importance.
- Term limits have changed in Michigan. Legislators can serve for up to 12 years. It is time to invest in these people since they may be in the legislature longer now. Find champions for your causes or build one by talking to them and asking them to be the lead for your cause. Then give them an award, like “Food Policy Council Champion Award.” You want two champions, one in each chamber. Remember 56/20/1. You need 56 votes in the House, 20 in the Senate and one from the Governor to move something forward. Think long term. Many times it takes introducing legislation over and over to get it to pass. Your champion may have to change before something is passed so keep up with changes in people within the legislative bodies.
- As you are meeting with them, be flexible. They may be called away and you end up meeting with their staff. Don’t underestimate staff. They are very important and very influential. Be punctual and brief when meeting with people. Have statistics or get them if asked and you don’t have them tell stories. Be sure to state your ask before you leave, “And the reason I am here is because...” Be clear as to what you want and why it is important.
- Always say thank you. Thank them for meeting with you. Give them your business card. Come prepared. Thank them if they vote for what you want. This also lets them know you are watching how they vote and you are holding them accountable to what they said in the district. Don’t always just call with an ask. Call and invite them to events or to give them updates on data

The group discussed the difference between advocacy and lobbying. Advocating can be thought of as, “this group of people need X.” This is not saying vote one way or another on a certain bill. That would be lobbying. Advocating is giving all the facts pointing out the gaps and needs but not asking for a specific vote. The Michigan Local Food Council Network hosts an annual legislative day in the fall. They provide a training and prepare people to advocate and help set up appointments with legislators. Amanda will share more information when that comes available for this year’s program. Melanie attended last year and shared it was a good training experience, especially for those who may not be comfortable with this type of work.

Group asked Lisa questions about her experience. Amanda thanked Lisa for her time.

Developing the Council's Advocacy Strategy

At the beginning of 2023, the Council went through an extensive process to identify, refine, and vote on priorities for this calendar year. As a reminder, the top 3 were:

1. Expansion of DUFB locations in Oakland County. Oakland County will be working with Fair Food Network to expand locations in Oakland County.
2. Create a policy, systems, and environmental level strategy that addresses food security among Oakland County students and targets the whole household holistically. Oakland County will be completing a food landscape study, and hopefully the results of the study will help the council better understand the food security issues impacting students (including university students) in Oakland County
3. Identify and develop advocacy focus areas and strategic plan for the year.

The chairs recommended pausing current efforts for priorities 1 and 2, just in the interim. During this time, they suggested beginning building action for the third priority. Amanda pulled up a Jamboard to begin brainstorming specific state and/or federal bill priorities (see Jamboard results). The following three bills were initially identified:

- Community Eligibility Provision (this will increase the percentage allowable under the school meal program)
- Farm Bill (has many different parts)
- Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill

There were about the same number of votes for each bill. It was mentioned that CNR is tabled currently. Lori shared that universal school meals will likely pass. Lori shared there is some problem with getting the Farm Bill moving, and that is keeping the CNR in the background. Anne shared that she met last week with Senator Stabenow and they discussed how to and what to fund in the Farm Bill.

Hearing from Lori and Anne about what is happening at the federal and state level, Community Eligibility Provision, Farm Bill, CNR, and Double Up Food Bucks funding are on the table. Group agreed to focus current efforts on the Farm Bill. Amanda asked members if their organization is impacted by the Farm Bill and/or has an advocacy strategy around it, please let them know so the council can build a common strategy during the July meeting.

Workgroup Updates

DUFB workgroup

The flyers are done, and the digital version is posted on the Council's website. If you want printed copies, email Amanda. The workgroup is distributing the flyers across the county presently.

DEIJ workgroup

The workgroup has begun key informant interviews this month. They have identified people across the county in emergency food, County Commissioners, legislators, and other community leaders to interview for their perspective on food access, security, and the food system in Oakland County.

Leadership Committee

Thank you to Sarah Niskanen (Pontiac Community Foundation) and Melanie Grund (Oakland County) for volunteering on the leadership committee. Our current chairs terms are coming to a close, and the committee will begin the process to identify a new chair.

Future 2023 Meetings

Amanda polled members regarding future meeting preference: virtually, in-person, or a hybrid. There was a tie for virtually and hybrid. Amanda and the chairs will meet to discuss polling results.

Partner Updates

- Madelyn from OHLSA shared that Meet Up and Eat Up started June 20th. Amanda will send out flyer (attached with meeting minutes). They will be going all over Pontiac through August, Monday through Friday, closed on July 4th. They are offering free food for all children and any caretaker bringing children. They are encouraging the child to eat the meal on site, but they are not requiring it.
- Lori shared that Oakland Schools is preparing a list of sites for summer lunches which she will share this week (attached with meeting minutes)
- Amanda shared the map of MDE sites as well. Folks can text FOOD to 304-304 to find nearby sites. Madelyn shared sometimes the site information is not always accurate.

Next Meeting

July 18, 2023, at 9:00 - 10:30 AM, virtual