



**OLD COLONY**  
PLANNING COUNCIL

## **Regional Food System Action Plan**

### **Steering Committee Meeting, January 28, 2026**

The meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. and adjourned at 12 p.m.

#### **Attendees**

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Brenna Trollinger	Judith Henze
Chris Heffernan	Karen Peterson
Courtney Rocha	Liz Shea
Frank Basler	Liz Wiley
Huong Jami	Lydia Sisson
Jill Slankas	Meghan Riley
Joanne Zygmunt	Molly Vollmer
John Lebeaux	Roberto Carpenter
Judi Barrett	Theresa Vernazzaro

#### **Summary**

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- Barrett Planning Group presented a draft public survey for the Plymouth County Food System Action Plan that will be distributed to the general public and food-related businesses
- The survey includes separate sections for food producers/processors/distributors and consumers, with logic to direct respondents to relevant questions
- The survey will launch at the Southeastern New England Ag Conference and Trade Show this weekend and run through March 8th
- Multiple distribution channels will be used, including municipalities, libraries, senior centers, farmers' markets, chambers of commerce, and community organizations

- Marion Institute provided an update on their CARAT assessment tool work, which measures food system indicators across multiple themes

## Discussed topics

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The Barrett Planning Group team presented the draft public survey that will be used to gather input for the Plymouth County Food System Action Plan.

- **Jill:** Explained the survey aims to understand the food system better, including where food is processed, distributed, and grown in Plymouth County, as well as consumer preferences and food access information
- **Brenna:** Walked through the survey structure, which begins with demographic questions and then splits into separate paths for food producers/processors/distributors and consumers
- **Brenna:** Producer questions cover farm location, size, land use, employment, generational status, retirement plans, sustainability practices, processing methods, sales channels, and challenges
- **Brenna:** Processor/distributor questions focus on what's being processed, facility size, product sources and destinations, capacity, and challenges
- **Brenna:** Consumer questions address where people buy food, transportation to food sources, preferences for farmers markets and CSAs, food access issues, opinions on local food, and food waste management
- **Meghan:** Asked if non-producers could skip the producer questions
- **Brenna:** Confirmed the survey uses logic to direct respondents only to relevant questions
- The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete
- The survey will be available in multiple languages (Spanish, Haitian French, and other major languages in the region)
- OCPC has provided comments that are being incorporated into the consumer section

The group discussed strategies for distributing the survey to reach a wide audience across Plymouth County.

- **Joanne:** Outlined plans to distribute through municipalities, libraries, senior centers, farmers markets, chambers of commerce, community organizations, radio interviews, local papers, and social media
- **Karen:** Offered to include the survey in her newsletter and suggested South Shore Community Action Council could help with outreach through their food bank
- **Karen:** Mentioned Mike Jackman has a mailing list of about 200 non-profits in Southeast Massachusetts
- **Liz:** Offered to have the survey available at Marion Institute's table at the upcoming agricultural conference
- **Francis:** Suggested using Plymouth County's mailing list and asked about extension services lists
- **Molly:** Indicated they could assist with additional distribution channels

The group discussed challenges and strategies for reaching non-English speakers and diverse populations.

- **Karen:** Asked about translation services and interpreter support for non-English speakers
- **Joanne:** Confirmed the online survey will be available in the main languages of the region
- **Karen:** Shared that her organization had success with focus groups using interpreters, meeting people where they were already gathering
- **Joanne:** Noted they typically receive only about a dozen non-English survey responses despite outreach efforts
- **Liz:** Shared that working with the Immigrants Assistance Center in New Bedford was very successful for their 2021 assessment
- **Karen:** Emphasized the importance of trust and working through trusted community partners
- Working through trusted community organizations is key for reaching diverse populations

Liz provided an update on the Carrot assessment tool work being conducted by Marion Institute.

- **Liz:** Explained they are leading a community and agricultural resilience audit process using the CARAT tool
- **Liz:** Noted they've expanded the tool from 101 to approximately 152 indicators to include fisheries and aquaculture industries
- **Liz:** Reported they've completed themes one through four and are about to launch theme five, which focuses on local producers, farmers, fishers, processors, and distributors
- **Liz:** Mentioned they've had 13-15 participants in each session and will be identifying who is missing for one-on-one interviews or focus groups
- The Community Advisory Board meeting follows the Steering Committee meeting at noon to continue work with the CARAT tool
- The CARAT assessment will help identify people or organizations to include in further outreach

Lydia and John from Barrett Planning Group provided an update on their research and interview work.

- **Lydia:** Reported they've been interviewing people at MDAR, American Farmland Trust, and key folks supporting farmers and food system organizations
- **Lydia:** Explained they're reviewing existing plans and trying to understand on-the-ground agricultural producers
- **Lydia:** Mentioned upcoming meetings with town planners and plans for focus groups with farmers and food producers
- **Lydia:** Noted they're including food system infrastructure outside the study area that serves the region

- **Liz:** Highlighted that identifying infrastructure gaps was what precipitated the project initially
- Understanding infrastructure both within and outside the county is important for the plan

### **Action items**

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- **Joanne/OCPC**
  - Finalize and launch the survey at the Southeastern New England Ag Conference and Trade Show this weekend
  - Distribute promotional materials including flyers with QR codes and social media graphics
- **Barrett Planning Group**
  - Incorporate OCPC's comments into the consumer section of the survey
  - Continue conducting interviews and site visits
  - Meet with town planners and schedule focus groups
- **Liz/Marion Institute**
  - Share previous survey questions with Barrett to avoid duplication
  - Have the survey available at their table at the agricultural conference
  - Launch Theme 5 of the Carrot assessment
- **Karen**
  - Include survey information in her upcoming newsletter
- **Frank/Plymouth County**
  - Distribute the survey through Plymouth County's mailing list
- **All Steering Committee Members**
  - Help distribute the survey through their networks when it launches