



**Regional Food System Action Plan
Community Advisory Board Meeting
March 25, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., virtually via Zoom**

Attendees

Bill Napolitano	Joanne Zygmunt
Brenna Trollinger	Liz Miller
Cassandra Thayer	Meaghan Avery
Courtney Rocha	Michael Jackman
DeeDee Winterson	Molly Vollmer
Dennis Carman	Rhiannon Dugan
Frank Basler	Rita Higgins
Hampton Watkins	Theresa Vernazzaro
Jill Slankas	

Summary

- Community Advisory Board meeting focused on Theme 7: Place-based economics, examining local control, resource ownership, and participation in the food system
- Extensive discussion of marine economy resources including shellfishing industry, harbor infrastructure, and seafood processing in coastal Plymouth County towns
- Identified multiple organizations collecting social determinants of health data, including Beth Israel Deaconess, South Shore Health, and Plymouth Health and Human Services
- Zoning regulations vary significantly by town for backyard poultry, farm stands, and community gardens, with some HOAs prohibiting vegetable gardens
- Workforce development programs exist through Plymouth County Extension, vocational schools, and the Sheriff's Department
- Limited local investment identified in food packing, processing, and distribution infrastructure
- Next phase will involve scoring indicators to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in the regional food system

Discussion

Marine Economy

- Frank: Plymouth Board of Selectmen meeting featured Rick Vayo discussing local shellfishing distribution across the country
- Hampton: Active shellfishing industry in Plymouth-Kingston-Duxbury harbor embayment
- Hampton: Alex Mansfield with Marine Estuaries Program at North and South River Watershed Association tracks industry data
- Hampton: Each town provides shellfish licenses and DMF tracks takes from water bodies
- Rita: Cape Cod Cooperative Extension identified as state-level resource

Harbor and Port Investment

- Frank: Plymouth has small boat ramp for commercial fishermen at East Bay Grill with supporting parking lot
- Hampton: Chad Hunter, Plymouth Harbor Master, manages approvals for shellfishing licenses
- Cassandra: Cohasset does not invest in storage and ice infrastructure but has small boat ramp
- Frank: Main coastal towns with fishing fleets are Plymouth (largest), Scituate, Wareham, Green Harbor, and Marshfield
- Jill: Oyster farms need upland storage for equipment, facing barriers with land value and zoning

BIPOC Participation in Seafood Industry

- Joanne: Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe has fishing rights but unclear how integrated they are into Plymouth's seafood infrastructure
- Hampton: Melissa Ferretti, chairperson of Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe and Bourne Select Board Chair, would be good contact
- Rita: Important to examine if BIPOC fishers can access funding for seafood-related projects
- Rita: Question whether marginalized small fishers participate in designing processing and marketing infrastructure

Seafood Industry Training and Certification

- Molly: Cape Cod Cooperative Extension Marine team has significant relationship with aquaculturalists in Plymouth County
- Michael: Mass Fishing Partnership provides safety trainings and mental health support, with Judy Keding as Plymouth contact
- Rita: Serve safe certification also relevant for seafood industry

Leadership Acknowledging Food System Challenges

- Michael: Plymouth County Farm Bureau very active in advocating for legislation affecting zoning laws and regulations for farmers

- Michael: Farm Bureau concerned about immigration legislation at state level
- Dennis: Challenging to get former recipients to take leadership roles due to stigma
- Hampton: Catherine D'Amato at Greater Boston Food Bank has been powerhouse locally and nationally
- Joanne: State-level acknowledgment on land issues through land trusts and environmental organizations
- Joanne: Little attention paid to secondary water sources for drought resilience
- Rita: Old Colony Planning Council and Plymouth County have shown unique leadership on food production and economic development

Social Determinants of Health Data Collection

- Dennis: Hospitals do Community Health Needs Assessments
- Michael: Beth Israel Deaconess, South Shore Health, and Signature Healthcare required to do CHNA as part of non-profit status through Attorney General's office
- Michael: Plymouth Health and Human Services doing town-wide health assessment for public health accreditation
- Dennis: Community Health Networks set up by Department of Public Health are good avenues for data
- Joanne: Plymouth unique in having both municipality-led and hospital-led assessments
- Michael: Community health centers also have requirements for health needs assessments
- Joanne: Beth Israel assessment offered in multiple languages with focus groups using translators

Public Meeting Accessibility

- Joanne: All municipalities required to hold ADA-accessible meetings but virtual attendance not required
- Joanne: Translation and hearing devices available but must be requested 48 hours in advance usually
- Joanne: Child care and transportation sometimes offered for specific projects but not standard at meetings
- Frank: New Department of Justice civil rights law effective April 26, 2026 requires digital accessibility for communities over 50,000, expanding to all communities in 2027
- Frank: Law covers website translation, closed captioning, digital standards for fonts and colors, and descriptive text for images
- Cassandra: Cohasset meetings accessible but buildings old and need renovations
- Dennis: Halifax meetings meet accessibility requirements though buildings need renovations
- Joanne: Biggest barrier often lack of information about meetings happening

- Hampton: Plymouth meetings relatively easy to find with 48-hour posting requirement and many hybrid options

Food System Expertise in Government

- Joanne: Plymouth County has staff with food system expertise
- Hampton: Plymouth has Agricultural Commission with one vacancy, focused on small plot and residential-based agriculture
- Michael: Most towns have agricultural commission or board devoted to agriculture
- Michael: Farm Bureau encouraging local farmers to join farm commissions for policy input
- Joanne: Conservation agents in municipalities have varying backgrounds in food system issues
- Frank: Plymouth County Sheriff has agricultural team and experts on staff
- Molly: Some town ag commissions have gone stagnant or closed due to lack of interest
- Joanne: Some communities have herring commissions and other tangential bodies
- Bill: Boards of Health regulate value-added activities like community kitchens
- Bill: Agricultural commissions act as intermediaries between farmers and boards of health

Comprehensive Plans and Food System Input

- Joanne: Traditional comprehensive plans probably weak on considering food systems holistically beyond open space aspects
- Joanne: State law requires housing, transportation, and open space chapters but food system not explicitly required
- Joanne: Strongly agricultural communities might include food in economic development chapters
- Jill: Sustainability becoming more common cross-cutting theme in comprehensive plans
- Jill: Farmland conservation groups may be included but other food system entities not as much
- Jill: Recommendation to incorporate food system voices into next comprehensive or master plans
- Rita: Housing identified as major cross-cutting barrier to farming and food system work
- Jill: Team has scanned all comprehensive plans in project area
- Joanne: Team scanned hazard mitigation plans and municipal vulnerability preparedness plans with only 2-3 communities mentioning food

Economic Development and Food System Partnerships

- Joanne: Plymouth Foundation focuses on blue economy side of food system

- Joanne: Chambers of Commerce including Metro South, South Shore, Cranberry, and Plymouth Area Chamber do restaurant-focused work
- Joanne: Chambers organize Restaurant Weeks and campaigns to support restaurants
- Michael: Cranberry Chamber of Commerce includes bog owners and farmers as members
- Rita: Local Enterprise Assistance Fund does not appear to have footprint in Plymouth County

Zoning for Food Production

- Joanne: City of Brockton has zoning about poultry and bans roosters
- Theresa: Carver Board of Health had no ordinances for backyard chickens
- Hampton: Plymouth is right-to-farm community with 5-acre requirement for large animals
- Hampton: Plymouth previously prohibited roosters but now allowed
- Bill: Kingston allows backyard poultry with space requirements and roosters must be kept in darkened area 9pm-6am
- Molly: Acreage requirements typical and vary by town
- Molly: Hingham does not allow pig raising due to smell and manure concerns
- Bill: Nuisance regulations under Board of Health incorporated into Ag Commission regulations
- Bill: Must comply with USDA standards for farm animals
- Joanne: Some communities have noise ordinances used for animal-related complaints
- Joanne: some HOAs prohibit front lawn vegetable gardens
- Hampton: Some Pine Hills HOAs in Plymouth prohibit vegetable gardening and other items like wind chimes

Community Gardens

- Hampton: Multiple community gardens in Plymouth, particularly South Plymouth, with St. Bonaventure Church garden consistently oversubscribed
- Hampton: Wildlands Trust has community garden on its property
- Hampton: Sustainable Plymouth can provide comprehensive list
- Rita: Most community gardens in Southeastern Massachusetts oversubscribed
- Joanne: City of Brockton does not allow community gardens on park/municipal land

Land Banks

- Hampton: Legislation pending for Plymouth land bank, passed town meeting on 50-50 vote with moderator deciding
- Hampton: Legislation moving slowly through general court
- Hampton: Will return to town for town-wide vote after legislative approval
- Hampton: Intended for affordable housing, agriculture, and open space

- Hampton: Would be funded by transfer tax on residential sales based on property value
- Hampton: Would be independent of town government with 9-member board appointed by various bodies
- Rita: Nantucket land bank has been impactful with 2 community gardens, incubator farm, and leases to 3 new farmers

Workforce Development in Food System

- Molly: Plymouth County Extension offers Careers in Agriculture summer program for teens
- Molly: Program advertised through social media and job fairs at local high schools
- Molly: Bristol County Agricultural School serves some Plymouth County residents
- Molly: South Shore VoTech, Bristol Plymouth, and Silver Lake have horticulture programs
- Hampton: Plymouth High Schools have culinary programs
- Molly: Plymouth County Sheriff's Department has hydroponics certificate program for inmates
- Joanne: UMass has programs for food system education
- Joanne: Massasoit Community College has culinary program

Food Infrastructure Investment

- Theresa: Food Security Infrastructure Grant concentrates on packing, processing, and distribution
- Molly: Myers, Coastal Foodshed, and From Freshwood Island (?) are key distributors though outside project area
- Molly: Hope in Maine operates from Rhode Island
- Joanne: Spoonfuls food recovery program trying to invest in distribution infrastructure for region
- Rita: Martha's Vineyard Ag Society sends grant notices to farmers
- Bill: SEMAP good at sharing grant information

Urban Farming and Small-Scale Production

- Joanne: Limited urban farming in project area apart from Gerry's Farm in Brockton and some freight farming
- Rita: Question whether zoning or other factors prohibit small-scale farming
- Hampton: Plymouth has last remaining commercial trout farm/hatchery operating since 1860s