

MISSOULA FOOD POLICY ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 23, 2026

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. Meeting called to order: 3:32 pm
- b. In attendance: Alex Brown, Stasia Orkwiszewski, Blake Lineweaver, Erika Berglund, Jamie Breidenbach, Virginia Harris, Bryce Christiaens, Sydney Young

2. Approval of Agenda

- a. Motion to approve: Stasia motioned to approve, and Virginia seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

3. Approval of January Meeting Minutes

- a. Motion to approve: Alex motioned to approve, and Blake seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

4. Comments on items not on the agenda

- a. None.

5. General Updates

- a. Vacancy Recruitment – one alternate position is still available. As a reminder, youth/students can apply to be a Board member.

6. New Business/Action Items

- a. Newsletter (Alex) – 2026 plan
 - i. March Newsletter due to Alex by February 23rd. Topics include Liz Carlisle's new book (Josh Slotnick), MCPS Agriculture Education program (Tom Andres), Montana Marinara (Blake Lineweaver)
- b. Climate Ready Missoula – per Bryce, nothing new. That organization is still waiting for grant funding.

7. Old Business

- a. Community Food Assessment scoping questions – Blake, Bryce, Erica
 - i. Erica - Funding Opportunity: Montana Healthcare Foundation, \$50,000 for one year available for planning and implementation projects. Applications are due March 31st. Priorities include projects that can demonstrate a clear health need, community and stakeholder engagement, and strong partnerships. No match requirement. Per Jamie – There's a potential connection to CHIP, also.
 - ii. Decision-use: What decisions should this work inform?
 - 1. What are the top 3 decisions waiting for better information?
 - a. Several themes were identified in the Rapid CFA's completed previously by the Board: *access to local, healthy, and nutritious food, hunger and food insecurity,*

and farmland access/protection/local food production.

Blake- relating to the funding opportunities, focusing on food insecurity and access to local food would make the most sense.

b. If this is wildly successful, what is different 12 months after completion?

- i. Policy adopted, programs launched & partnerships formalized. Stashia – Is it our role to identify what those policies and programs would be? Jamie – we would make recommendations to the City Council and County Commissioners.

c. Who is the primary decision-maker audience?

- i. Primary audience is the City Council & County Commissioners

d. Are you aiming for policy recommendations, investment priorities, program designs, or a mix?

- i. Policy and programmatic recommendations. Work would focus on asking City and County leadership to make policy changes and directives for staff.

iii. Learning agenda: What do you still need to learn beyond Rapid CFAs?

- 1. Sourcing and defining culturally appropriate foods since the demographics and population of Missoula have changed drastically since the first Rapid CFAs were conducted. How to encourage the usage of “Double SNAP” funds/what does Federal support look like moving forward? Refugees are losing SNAP benefits this year. Reassessing where post-pandemic food and nutritional insecurities lie in Missoula. Distribution and economic impact of local food products and affordability in the community. Defining and discussing what healthy food means, considering the impact of broader-scale food distribution on our environment. To what scale do Missoula County residents produce, hunt, and gather their own food or animal products? Food preservation.
 - a. Risk of assumptions – the primary bottleneck in the food supply chain is processing. Local food is healthy and nutritious, and local food is always more expensive.

iv. Engagement: Who must be meaningfully included for legitimacy?

- 1. What does “meaningful” mean: inform/consult/co-design/shared power? Assessment process originally included UM, Garden City Harvest, Five Valleys Land Trust, Office of Planning and Grants, and the Missoula City/County Health Department. Moving forward, UM is prepared to engage again.

Also need to engage: Montana Food Bank Network, Aging Services, Missoula Food Bank, Soft Landing, All Nations, local (what does local mean?) producers.

- a. It will be important to include these partners in multiple stages of the project.

v. “Done” definition: What does completion look like?

- 1. Open-access data sets to support food and agriculture organizations for future policy and program recommendations. Big picture implications for the Missoula Food System. Policy and programmatic recommendations and next steps for MFPAB and partners. Public engagement to build understanding within the community regarding food issues. Identifying pinch-points and opportunities in the food system.

vi. Roles + capacity: What can the Board own vs what needs paid leadership?

- 1. MFPAB would be the steering committee, but sub-committees could be developed with partners to accomplish tasks. A facilitator/coordinator would be integral to establishing and maintaining momentum for the project, analyzing and reporting data, and ensuring communication between the Board and any partners or sub-committees.
 - a. Stasia – question about reimbursement for UM professors or students potentially helping with this project. Depending on funding opportunities, there may or may not be funding available to pay students or others for their work.

vii. Geography: What do you mean by ‘Missoula County’—jurisdictional, or a lived foodshed?

- 1. There are a lot of community members who live outside of Missoula who travel to and from town for food (either to distribute food or to purchase food). There are producers that are closer to Missoula County than Seeley Lake, for instance. It makes the most sense to think of the geographic scope as the ‘lived foodshed’ of Missoula and the surrounding areas. Hopa Mountain is doing work to map where food travels within Montana ([Buy Local Food Montana](#)).
 - a. Local food markets (i.e., Clark Fork Market) – where are customers and vendors coming from?
- b. County Detention Center update (Bryce/Stasia) – no update at this time; there may be a time to approach the Detention Center again if their funding situation changes. This item will be removed from the agenda until such time.
- c. CHIP work group update (Jamie/Alex) – at a bit of a standstill. Stasia volunteered to help.

- d. Urban Deer Management (Jamie) – Discussion with FWP, overall positive feedback, but notes of concern about CWD. The biggest lift will be city council/mayor approval. Public engagement is needed to communicate about predator/prey interactions, changing deer behavior, and public safety concerns.
- e. New Developments to Watch: Paisley Park & West End Farms, and Grass Valley Industrial plan & Grass Valley Gardens
 - i. <https://westendfarmsmt.com/WEF-Future-Park.pdf>
 - ii. <https://www.grassvalleygardens.com/>

8. Round Robin communications/questions

- a. Missoula listening session for the 2026 Governor's Summit is on March 23rd at the Exploration Center (1075 S Avenue W, Missoula, MT 59801)

9. Next meeting: Monday, March 23rd at 3:30 pm

- a. Upcoming presenters
 - i. March 23rd – meeting Abundant MT, Erin Austin, 33x33 campaign
 - ii. April 20th – Tour of MCPS Ag Center and School House Meats
 - iii. Nathan, City Planning Department – May 18th
 - iv. Dana w/ All Nations Health Center

10. Adjourn

- a. Motion to adjourn: 5:03 pm Stasia, seconded by Virginia. All in favor. Motion carried.