

Reinvigorating the Role of the MFPC and DCFC in Analyzing, Revising, and Recommending Ordinances and Other Legislation

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Beginning in April 2000 the Madison Food Policy Council adapted its work to respond to emergency food access needs and the challenges faced by the larger food system amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. MFPC began meeting jointly with the Dane County Food Council to coordinate these responses. Much of this joint work has been done within newly established work groups focusing on food access, systems planning and food sovereignty.

This shift in focus and resources has meant that the policy work ordinarily conducted by these Councils has fallen by the wayside. This fall and winter may be a good time to begin picking up some of the threads of policy initiatives that have already been started and/or have been emerging from the community as needs that could be addressed by these Councils.

This brief memo outlines those three items and should serve as the basis for discussion about if and how MFPC and DCFC should commence work in these areas.

- 1) **City of Madison Agriculture Leases** – MFPC members put considerable work into updating the template language for these leases several years ago, with the aim of shifting language to encourage more conservation and transition to organic agricultural practices. The Regional Agriculture and Food Sovereignty Workgroup has already begun tackling this issue and is working on developing a Policy Memo with recommendations for staff and Common Council.
- 2) **Update to Urban Agriculture zoning text** – In 2013 the City of Madison adopted a new zoning code which established permissive zoning for urban agriculture for the first time. Since then, there has been big growth in numbers of people practicing urban agriculture. Some of these happen on land that is zoned for it, much of it is not. Even on properly zoned land farmers would like to do things that aren't permitted by the code as written. There is a need to update the code to accommodate some of these practices. This may best be done in the context of a Regional Food Systems plan, but a new workgroup or task force could also be established focusing on this topic.
- 3) **Codifying agricultural and open space land use recommendations adopted in Madison's 2020 Comprehensive Plan** – In 2018 the MFPC [proposed 6 items to be included in the Comprehensive Plan](#). Most were adopted in the plan, but apart from the regional food systems plan recommendation, there has been little follow up on the others. In the meantime, 3 significant pieces of agricultural land within the city have come up for sale and public debates have ensued about the best use for this land. In 2020 the Northside Planning Council established a Land Use Working Group to establish a community-based positive vision and rubrics for use of this land. The MFPC could build on this work by establishing a workgroup or task force to develop a Policy Memo with recommendations for the Plan Commission and Common Council. Community members and Plan Commission members should be part of this group.