

**Minutes – Food Council General Assembly Meeting**  
Thursday, November 13, 2025 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Virtual Zoom

**Present:**

Asia Simms, Howard County Health Department  
Brian Ralph, Howard County Public Schools System  
Brielle Pinzini, Maryland Hunger Solutions  
Carrie Ross, Community Action Council of Howard County  
Danielle Clifford-Earles, Howard County Office on Aging and Independence  
Erika Strauss Chavarria, Columbia Community Care  
Erin Ashinghurst, Accessible Resources for Independence  
Genesis Caplan, University of Maryland Extension – Howard County  
Gerardo Benavides, Horizon Foundation  
James Zoller, Howard County Office of Agriculture  
Jereme Scott, Howard County Library System  
Jess Harris, Howard County Housing Commission  
Kathy Johnson, Howard County Office of Economic Development  
Laura Crovo, Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center  
Lisa Dolce, Pinnacle Empowerment Center  
Liz Banach, Morgan Chapel Food Pantry  
Lynn Moretz, Howard County Health Department  
Mary Wilde, Three Dozen Daises  
Niti Srivastava, Feed Hoco  
Petra Guiland, Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity  
Rev. Jim Skillington, Morgan Chapel Food Pantry  
Samuel Wilson, Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington  
Simon Sauvageau, Community Ecology Institute  
XingXing Liu, Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington

**Staff Present:**

Nathan Glenn, University of Maryland, Extension - Howard County  
Reena Rambharat, Howard County Health Department  
Yekatit Bezooayehu, Howard County Food Council

Topic/Agenda	Discussion	Action/Follow-up
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	Ms. Yekatit Bezooayehu, Food Council Administrator, called the meeting to order at 10:04a.m. She provided a welcome to members in attendance and indicated	Howard County Food Council information can be found on the Local Health Improvement Coalition's (LHIC) website:

	<p>that the minutes will be shared after the meeting and available on the Food Council's webpage.</p> <p>Yekatit shared the goal for this Food Council meeting was to introduce the new food council members to staff and network with organizations within the community that are doing the same type of work.</p> <p>Members introduced themselves, their organizations and shared announcements.</p> <p>Danielle Clifford Earles, Howard County Office on Aging and Independence (OAI), Nutrition Coordinator: Provides reduction in meals but could be able to do so now.</p> <p>Liz Branch, Morgan Chapel Food Pantry: Morgan Chapel's pantry is on the border with other communities. Howard County Government pulled together and got food pallets for the community.</p> <p>Lisa Dolce, Pinnacle Empowerment Center: Helping to expand food distribution.</p> <p>Lynn Moretz, Howard County Health Department Bureau of Infection Prevention and Public Health Readiness: Tuberculosis (TB), HIV program clients facing food insecurity but can give gift cards for grocery stores.</p> <p>Carrie Ross, Director of Food Bank at Community Action Council of Howard County: They have been extremely busy this November, offering encouragement that everyone in this work will make it through.</p> <p>Jereme Scott, Howard County Library System (HCLS): Looking to see how they can be of service and assistance.</p> <p>Laura Crovo, Grassroots Crisis Intervention: Two food pantries; 24/7 at Crisis Center and no barrier to entry;</p>	<p><a href="https://www.hclhic.org/council">https://www.hclhic.org/council</a></p> <p>CEI Upcoming events:</p> <p><a href="https://www.communityecologyinstitute.org/upcoming-events.html">https://www.communityecologyinstitute.org/upcoming-events.html</a></p>
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	<p>Day Resource Center at Jessup; significant increase in people</p> <p>Simon Sauvageau, Community Ecology Institute (CEI): Agriculture program; working through staff transitions.</p> <p>Brian Ralph, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS): 1/3 of students are eligible for Free and Reduced-Priced Meals (FARMS) program.</p> <p>Gerardo Benevides, Horizon Foundation: Request for Proposal (RFP) for food insecurity now open.</p> <p>Genesis Caplan, University of Maryland Extension-Howard County SNAP-Ed: Funding extended until February to support education for staff and community members.</p> <p>Petra Guiland, Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity: MLK Food Pantry</p> <p>Brielle Pinzini, Maryland Hunger Solutions</p> <p>Kathy Johnson, Howard County Economic Development Authority: works with the Office of Agriculture</p> <p>Niti Srivastava, Feed HoCo: Distributing food since COVID and Feed HoCo now being launched.</p> <p>Erika Chavarria, Columbia Community Care: Hunger Relief with pantries; Pop Up for Federal Workers; Thanksgiving meal prep</p> <p>Rev. Jim Skillington, Morgan Chapel Food Pantry in Woodbine: Feed 400 families a month on every Saturday and community gardens will be developed with the Rural Resiliency Hub</p> <p>Samuel Wilson, Korean Community Center of Greater Washington: Received the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Reach Grant focused on the Korean Community; also working on a Produce Prescription Program</p>	
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	<p>Jame Zoller, Howard County Office of Agriculture: working on the New and Beginning Farmer Program</p> <p>Asia Simms, Howard County Health Department, Food Protection Program.</p> <p>Mary Wilde, Three Acres Farm: Food farm to community</p> <p>Xingxing Liu: Korean community and look forward to collaboration.</p> <p>Erin Ashinghurt, Accessible Resources for Independence (ARI): Focuses on people with disabilities including peer mentorship and resources.</p> <p>Jessica Harris, Resident Service Coordinator, Howard County Housing Commission.</p>	
<b>New Business:</b>	<p>a) Ice Breaker Activity</p> <p>b) Group Discussion</p> <p>c) Meeting Cadence</p>	
<b>Agenda Topic – Ice Breaker</b>	<p>Ms. Bezooayehu started the group discussion by asking the group: “What are you harvesting in your work”</p> <p>Members shared: transition, growth, expansion, lettuce, consistency, collaboration, safety, community, relationships, kiosk for all Howard County resources in affordable communities, harvesting next generation of food producers, trust, empathy</p>	
<b>Agenda Topic – Group Discussion</b>	<p>Members discussed the launch of the Pocket Pantry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three community fridges that will be stocked with fresh food 24 hours like eggs and milk</li> <li>• Collaboration with many partners</li> <li>• Lisbon site is operational but not others</li> <li>• Sponsorships are welcome not only lead organizations</li> <li>• LHIC will include it on the Food Connection Map</li> <li>• Preserves dignity and it can be healthy like a meal from a restaurant but not something that is about to go bad.</li> </ul>	<p>Visit the Howard County Food Connection Map: <a href="https://www.hclhic.org/foodmap">https://www.hclhic.org/foodmap</a>. If updates to the pantry details are required, please email <a href="mailto:LHIC@howardcountymd.gov">LHIC@howardcountymd.gov</a></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If successful, then it can be expanded to other locations.</li> <li>• Signage shows a list of items that are acceptable</li> <li>• Continuous oversight is not needed</li> <li>• The Food Bank covers liability for the fridges and there are no cameras; each organization does not have to check food every day</li> </ul> <p>Ms. Bezooayehu presented the group with questions to gather feedback:</p> <p><b><i>What has your experience been with food security efforts?</i></b></p> <p>Simon: CEI works with food producers for food assistance programs to ensure people are getting the fresh food needed.</p> <p>Genesis: What is the difference between the Food Security Committee and Food Council? Yekatit mentioned that the Food Council is comprised of different sectors working on policy solutions. It also works on advocacy with legislative actions in terms of issues and priorities; is narrow and very focused on upstream systems-level solutions.</p> <p>Erin: ARI is led by people with disabilities and more on work that impacts people with disabilities to determine priorities for policy and advocacy such as written testimony and training along with the opportunity to share.</p> <p>Brielle: Maryland Hunger Solutions has experience working with Food Councils to bring together experts in food to share. They also do SNAP outreach and is an advocacy organization working on policies with legislators to expand access to SNAP and other nutrition programs They also offer direct service with hunger-free work and food access.</p>	
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	<p><b><i>How would you describe your hope for the Food Council?</i></b></p> <p>Members mentioned identifying barriers that may exist for people to access these wonderful food services and address them.</p>	
<b>Agenda Topic – Cadence of Steering Committee Members</b>	Ms. Bezooayehu gathered feedback from members about the frequency and format of the meetings, and they indicated quarterly with some virtual and some in-person opportunities.	Members are asked to share any Agenda or presentation topics for future meetings with Yekatit Bezooayehu: <a href="mailto:ybezooayehu@howardcountymd.gov">ybezooayehu@howardcountymd.gov</a>
<b>Wrap Up and Adjournment</b>	<p>The meeting adjourned at 11:20a.m.</p> <p>Ms. Bezooayehu said that a schedule of future meetings will be included with the follow up meeting minutes.</p>	

**Future Meeting Dates:**

**Food Council General Assembly (2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday every 3 months) \***

- **Wednesday, February 11, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (In-Person) TBD**
- **Wednesday, April 8, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (Virtual) Zoom Meeting**
- **Wednesday, June 10, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (In-Person) TBD Activity/Volunteering/Day of Service**
- **Wednesday, August 12, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (Virtual) Zoom Meeting**
- **Wednesday, October 14, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (Virtual) Zoom Meeting**
- **Wednesday, December 9, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (Virtual) Zoom Meeting**

***\*In case of inclement weather, in-person meetings will switch to virtual or cancelled if the Howard County Health Department and the University of Maryland, Extension – Howard County are closed.***

Respectfully submitted by,  
Ms. Yekatit Bezooayehu  
Food Council Administrator  
Howard County Health Department