MLFCN Public Policy Advocacy Webinar Transcript

Megan Masson-Minock: Okay. So, good morning. I'm Megan Masson-Minock. I'm one of the facilitators for the Michigan Local Group Council Network. Welcome, everybody. This is our first webinar. We're going to discuss public policy advocacy. Jean Doss is with us who's a consultant and lobbyist, who's going to give us her words of wisdom about lobbying advocacy at the state legislature. I'm going to chime in on also the [inaudible] level. And at the end we are hopefully going to be able to get [inaudible] from Detroit Group Policy Council, the report back to us on the webinar on urban agriculture. We'll stop occasionally for questions. We're using Zoom for the first times so bear with us. But in principle, everybody should be unmuted so you should be able to, when we get to questions and ask for them, we should be able to -- you should be able to speak. I think we're a small enough group that that will work. Also if you feel free to use the question and answer box. Also I think we have a -- do we have one poll?

Participant: No.

Megan Masson-Minock: No, no polls, so maybe next time. And then at the very end we'll have some time to talk about next meetings and network activities. So, with that, I am going to hand it over to Jean Doss who is going to talk about public policy advocacy. And thank you, everybody, for taking the time this morning. Okay.

Jean Doss: And switch sides here?

Megan Masson-Minock: We're going to switch sides.

Jean Doss: Okay. We're going to switch sides.

Megan Masson-Minock: On your presentation, you mean?

Jean Doss: Yeah. Thanks. Well, good morning. How are you all doing? I have to tell you, one of the things about webinars with this particular group is I know I'm speaking to at least, oh, two or three people who could be sitting in this chair right now giving this training. So I hope you'll jump in and let me know, you know, what you'd like to add that's really worthwhile for you in terms of public policy advocacy. So I've been doing this about 24 years. I was an advocate in domestic violence. I worked representing customers of public utility law. And then I kind of fell into a multi-client lobbying firm. I know that sounds strange. I've been on my own for about 10 years, and I represent associations, nonprofits, social justice groups. I've got a few corporations. And as Megan said, I work primarily at the state level. But in all my years of

doing advocacy training I really strongly believe that everything that works well, or for that matter doesn't work well at the state level, applies very easily in other settings. I want to -- I'm just so grateful Megan has been here because her expertise is so deep and in many ways the work that the local food policy councils are doing are going to be much more in the area of local municipal government. And so I'm just really grateful that she agreed to work with me on this presentation. So we're looking at sort of strengthening those of you that already have good skills in this. Some of you are newbies. But the question is, how can we become more effective in public policy advocacy? We're going to spend a little bit of time today talking about barriers. I'll be honest with you, to me the biggest barrier of advocacy, at least at state legislative level, is the process itself seems completely mystified. So we're going to spend a few minutes talking about that. Also, and I hope this is where we are able to share with each other, share being the operative term here, is tips and tools for being really effective, so. And then one of the things you received in advance is a worksheet that we're going to talk about in terms of developing or refining what you may already have in your own strategic public house advocacy plan, and that's the worksheet, "Developing a Roadmap for Action." So what's public policy? You know, it really ranges from like it is my policy to always take a nap after lunch. It's something unwritten as a social norm to highly formal laws, case law, judicial decisions, and obviously about state laws. I have to tell this group. It was in a local food council network that I first heard, now don't laugh, this idea of Bit "P" and Little "p," and it baffled me. And I spend a lot of time online. Still trying to figure out where did this come from and what does it mean? And from what I can tell it has to do more with the who, not the what. But Little "p" being organizational guidelines, internal agency decisions. Big "P" being formal laws, rules, and judicial decisions. And I think that it kind of -- it also could come, the Big "P" versus Little "p" can come from groups that feel they can do Little "p", but they can't do Big "P." And I'm not entirely sure again. This is something that because it was part of your vocabulary I feel like I needed to understand it and incorporate it in today's training. And I'm going to sort of go with the idea that it's possible that the idea of Big "P"/Little "p" comes from some folks feeling that they can do the Little "p" but they can't do the Big "P." So let's talk a little bit about Little "p." I think Little 'p" could be another term for advocacy. That's an umbrella term. It includes lobbying. But many, many other activities that have to do with promoting a cause, promoting change both to political and nonpolitical venues. And then there's lobbying. Now lobbying is very, very well-defined in law. It's asking an elected official or an appointed official to vote to act in a very particular way on a specific piece of legislation, rule, ordinance. So, advocacy more of a general term that includes many things including lobbying. Lobbying, very, very specific. Now, some of you by virtue of your employment, by virtue of your funding, have been told, have been threatened, that you cannot lobby. So let's talk about that a little bit. What is not lobbying? Many people confuse any activity in the area of public policy as lobbying, and so they avoid it like a plague. But monitoring public policy making, both within your local municipality or the state legislature, just knowing what's going on is not lobbying. Relationship-building, inviting elected officials, folks that, yes, are lobbyable officials, but inviting them to open house, inviting them to your garden,

inviting them to your food hub, that kind of relationship building, not lobbying. Raising awareness and educating officials, none of this is lobbying. So if you look at your funding stream that has lobbying prohibitions, if you look at your employer, if you look at other restrictions you have, it's really important to understand what you can do to raise awareness and educate. Now, I -- and just repeat myself, organizations can involve themselves in issues of public policy without actively being considered as lobbying. Now we're going to spend a few seconds here on State Legislative Process 101. And, again, I've kind of had to think about where these folks are going to be spending most of time. Are they going to be looking at stuff that's happening in the Lansing State Capital? Or are they focusing on their local city council? Are they looking at the township? Are they looking at their county? The fact of the matter is, you know, probably most of them are going to be looking, not at Lansing, but at your local community. However, we do know from the Urban Livestock Report, we do know legislation is going to be coming probably soon. It's going to be looking at the issue or urban farming. And that's going to impact every single council in the state of Michigan. So bear with me as you think this may not be relevant. We want to just be prepared. So consider that, what we're doing right here. Now I'm going to cover the State Capital, the place, the players, the process. Interestingly enough, there's been three capitals. We first had a territorial courthouse in Detroit. There's a rock with a brass plaque there now. Michigan became a state in 1837 and about -- so we had this courthouse/state capital. And then in 1847 the capital moved to Lansing. This is our first Capital Building in Lansing. It was basically a swamp, but it got us away from the north/south/east/west debates, so they chose a swamp that basically nobody really cared about as our State Capital. I love that. And then the cornerstone was laid for the capital as we know it in 1872. I love these old pictures. Bear with me. This is one of my fun activities here. You can see the dome going up. And then you can see the finished capital in 1879. Now, I'm not going to get off track much, but I will tell you some of the early, early women -- oh, we've got somebody -- Oh, okay. Oh, somebody's -- okay. One of the first women activists at the capital, and I'm sorry, I should have come more prepared for that story. But it's interestingly enough. What motivated her to lobby, to come to the capital, was a law that prohibited local communities from accessing fresh fruits and vegetables from anybody other than grocers. And they knew that these grocers in these urban areas were providing not fresh, not high-quality good. And so she was arguing that farmers should be able to come into cities and people should be able to go to farmers. And I just think that's so interesting. When you think about advocacy that food has been at the heart of many groups and what they brought to leaders in Lansing. What's this? Checking for updates. I don't know what you guys are seeing.

Participant: No.

Jean Doss: They won't be seeing this? Okay. So, basically, next what we have is -- let me just -- the players. Now it's something you're going to hear to the point where you're sick of it, is effective public policy always comes down to relationships, relationships with the individuals

that have the title -- mayor, city council member, state representative, state senator, and their staff. So let's look at who's at the State House. Now, first of all, one of the things that people do a lot is they say, oh, Congresswoman, you know, Congresswoman or Senator Stabenow. Those individuals are in D.C. We have State Representatives and State Senators in Lansing. We have 148 Legislators. In the south end of the Capital Building, in our State Senate, there are 38 members. In the north end there's 110 members. And you can see here just how many Standing Committees and Appropriation Committees we have in both chambers. There are Joint Committees. We have nonpartisan House Fiscal Agencies and Senate Fiscal Agencies. And, of course, then there's the Administration and the Administration's Department. Now right now, we're in the 98th Session. I often will tell people, let's say you turn on a basketball game and you know the two teams that are playing. You can see the score. What's the next thing you want to know? You want to know how much time's left on the clock. And the same thing applies to the Legislature. The Michigan Legislature is full-time. You've heard of other states that have part-time legislatures. We are full-time. We work in two-year blocks. Bills are introduced starting the first day. And I actually had a bill introduced on the last day of a session. My sponsor said, "I don't understand why you want me to do this." But I wanted to do this because you kind of stand near the head of the line the next session to get your bill introduced. But anyways. So bills are introduced throughout those two sessions. And if you're trying to pass a bill, that clock, that shot clock that's running for two years, as it runs out, the clocks are not your friend. As you're trying to kill a bill, as you watch the clock run down on two-year session, the clock is your friend. And in our House, right now it's always really important to understand the political landscape. I was so naive when I got to Lansing. I can't even tell you. I really thought you had to declare Republican/Democrat just to run for office, you know? Just to be on the ballot. And I thought once you were on it, once you were sworn in and came to Lansing, those little D or R, or red or blue, meant nothing. Uh-uh. It is the anatomy of the organization. It's the anatomy of leadership. It's the anatomy of way decisions are made. And right now it is solidly red in Lansing. We have 63 Republicans in the House. We have 27 Republicans, and a microscopic Democratic caucus in the Senate. And, of course, our Governor's Republican. Now I'm showing you pictures of our gorgeous Capital. And I want you to imagine at one time all the state government was in the State Capital. And, in fact, we have the State Supreme Court chambers in the State Capital, which now is used for Senate appropriations. There's actually a Treasurer's Office in the State Capital with a massive bank vault. But, obviously, state government has grown. And in Year 2000, at the corner of Capital and Ottawa, this gorgeous House Office Building was built. And it's named after the first woman to ever serve in the House, Cora Belle Anderson. She was a woman, part Native American. Served one term before her own party challenged her and got her out of office. Just to think about that. Here's our Senate. Now this building, this is the Farnum Building. It's on the corner of Allegan and Capital. And both of these buildings -- if you stand at the front steps of the Capital Building, you kind of look to the left, you see the House; you look to the right, you see this Farnum Building. Supposedly it has asbestos and all sorts of problems, and they're

trying to sell it and get rid of it. We don't know if it will still be on slideshow in 10 years or not, but there it is, so. And you can see Senate seats are much, much larger. I want you just to consider if you were the State Senator representing the 38th District, that's Senator Tom Casperson. He's got a logging business. I want you to think about the fact that for Tom Casperson he is closer to seven other state capitals than he is to the Michigan State Capital. And that's true for many of our [inaudible] legislators. So let's talk about the process. I want you to know I spent time on this this morning just so that you could hear this. Oh, please play, please play.

Okay. So you're so impressed with me here. Okay. So let's think about this. In a -- remember we talked about that two-year legislative session. We're about halfway through the 2015/'16 legislative session. There's close to 5000 bills introduced every session as well as budget bills. They're all bills. And in that time, only about 20% of the bills ever actually succeed, ever actually pass that finish line, get signed into law by the Governor. And it's interesting because this has been pretty consistent over time, and it applies to Congress as well. You find that's pretty much true. Although I think it's probably even more difficult in Washington, D.C. But the ideas for bills come, even though a lawmaker, a legislator, is the only one that can introduce a bill, ideas come from all sorts of places. And, in fact, as we go through this process, I want you to understand the really unique partnership that occurs between, that exists between elected officials. You know, my expertise is the State Legislature, but I'm sure it's true at every level. These elected officials, they depend on citizens to come to them with problems and solutions. And it's that dynamic relationship that I find the most exciting in my work, is that it's not -- its lobbyist is out here, and legislators have to protect themselves from lobbyists or from advocates. What I love is that I come in and I -- you know, advocates with me and we can describe what's going on in a community and say, you know, in another state, in another community, in another school, this is what they tried and they think we should try that. And it's that dynamic relationship that is what you will find if you haven't already started doing this that is so much fun. In the legislative process, a bill has to go through the same steps in the House and the same steps in the Senate. So you have a committee that is supposed to specialize, or the House Insurance, House A. This is the place where the public, by our constitution, is expected to come forward and provide comments and testimony. And, by the way, when I use to provide testimony and, trust me, we're going to be talking about providing testimony at some point, probably this year, I don't -- this is not a courtroom. You don't put your hand on a bible and swear. It's just you're giving comments; you're giving your reactions to a piece of legislation. But the committee is where that's supposed to happen, okay? Most bills get assigned a bill number. They are assigned to a committee where they are dead. So looking at what bills are going to be heard or not heard, that's the Committee Chair. And that tells you the power of the Committee Chair. It can take just one Committee Chair to kill your bill, and this has happened to me, session after session. Then if you're lucky enough to get a hearing, you're lucky enough to get a vote, you're lucky enough to pass committee, then it goes before

the full chamber, whether it starts in the House, that would be the House. It has to repeat that entire process over in the Senate. So if it was the House Ag in the House, it has to go to Senate Ag and pass the Senate. And the, of course, we have to always consider where's the Governor on this issue. Now, it was so funny when I was doing this, I was trying to find a nice schematic of how a bill becomes a law in Michigan. And you can find this all over the place. But the most beautiful schematic, wouldn't you know, came from MSU Extension 4H Youth Development. So there you go. It's a good thing to take a look at. There's some things that add to the confusion like we're on second reading, we're on the third reading. You know, those are things that -- the best way to learn this stuff is to do it. It's easy to intellectualize the legislative process, but once you're concerned about a bill, that's when this stuff becomes more real, and we can certainly talk about it. And I guess I just want to offer that one other thing about things about the council, the way things have been set up by the Center for Regional Food Systems is that you have Megan, you have me, you have Rich, you have Liz, you have folks here who are available to you as resources and, you know, that's one of those things I want you to remember. I'm never going to say, "Oh, my gosh. People are asking me too many questions before calling me." You know, Liz and Rich are the people, and if you have a question for me, I want you to, or Megan can get a hold of me anytime. This is something you should feel free to ask. Okay. Now I'm going to, I refuse to do any training without talking about the thing I hate the most, which is called term limits. Michigan has these hideous things they voted into our state constitution, early '90s. They are lifetime term limits. You can see I'm getting worked up. Our House terms in office -- every State Representative serves a two-year term. I want you to think about that for a second. Can you imagine if your job expired at the end of every two years, okay? And you had to run for office? Ach. But what makes it worse is these folks are limited, lifetime limited, to running for office three times. And if they win, they can only serve three terms or six years in the House. Now I want to tell you something. Before term limits, six years and you were still some little chump in the House, and you were supposed to be quiet, sit in the corner, and listen to the experienced legislators. There was never a Speaker of the House that had only served four years. There was never a Committee, a Chair of Appropriation, that only served two or four years. Our Senate term limits, Senators serve four-year terms, a little bit better. Their lifetime limit, two. So I get a State Senator. I get to educate them for a maximum of eight years. My House members, I get them for six years, to educate them, work with them. And I've got to learn about my groups, my advocates, and right now, this year, we have 41 members who are rookies in 2017. Twenty-seven of the 38 Senators will be new, and our Governor will be new. Now I want to just tell you, don't freak out because, frankly, almost every Senator with an exception, started out as a House member, got turned out, and is looking around for a job, and says, oh, look it, there's a Senate seat. I'll run for the Senate. So term limits really changed my job. Maintaining relationships is just incredibly hard because, as I said, just when you get to the point where -- oh, we got somebody who says the video is cutting in and out. Okay. Are others having this problem? Thank you, [inaudible], for letting us know that. Hmph. Okay. Let us know if you're having -- if there's technical problems here. So

maintaining relationships is incredibly hard with this revolving door. There is no institutional memory. I have much less time to get to know lawmakers. It used to be Megan would come to town and I would say, "Oh, your State Representative is Chuck Erwin and, you know, he really likes to eat a Kewpie's. And you know, he has talked to him. I would know more about the legislator than the local voter would know. And this all got turned on the head. Here this fancy lobbyist has to turn to Megan and say, "Okay, tell me about your State Rep. You knew him when he was on City Council." And so it really amped up the importance of local advocates. The thing I would say, and you're going to hear more about this as time goes on, is our legislative districts are -- okay, we got -- thank you. By the way, videos cutting in and out and I'm just -- I'm looking at what you're saying. Okay. I think I'm hearing and seeing about 80%. Hmm. Has the -- has it been recent? I know we had a couple of messages that that Internet connection was unstable. Probably five or so minutes ago. I don't know if there's a whole lot we can do about it [laughter].

Participant: No.

Megan Masson-Minock: Okay. So let us know if it keeps happening I guess.

Jean Doss: Yeah. Thank you for letting us know. We're not entirely sure what we can do about it. Hmm. Okay. Liz Gensler: Yeah.

Jean Doss: Liz is thinking about it. I'm going to keep going. Liz is going to try to work some magic. So as I was saying, that one of the things to understand about Michigan, and I think this is true across the United States. The process by which we draw the boundaries for our state seats and our House seats has become so highly technical and controlled by whoever party is in the majority that seats are drawn in highly partisan fashion. So in other words, they -- the party in control of districting creates as many districts that a majority, their party, and few districts are majority of the other party. Liz has got some magic she's working here. We think this might help. And I'm watching her instead of doing my thing here because it's kind of fascinating. Okay. She just plugged in this green cable. We're going to see if that works. Okay. So what I'm saying about this is a lot of people -- you know, it's kind of interesting. People who consider themselves really engaged vote in the General Election. And they're really proud of voting. But the Primary that comes along in, you know, in August when folks are on vacation. People don't vote in the Primary. And yet the vast majority of elections in Michigan are determined in the Primary, not in the General. Now -- so, for example. And I don't mean to be crude or crass or rude but if Jesus Christ ran as a Republican in Detroit, Jesus Christ would lose. It's who won the Democratic Primary in Detroit. If Jesus Christ ran as a Democrat in Grand Rapids, Jesus Christ would lose, okay? That's what we mean when we say that most elections are decided in the Primary. And I know, we don't do electoral advocacy, right? So you're thinking why is Jean talking about this? I can't do this stuff. Uh-uh. Even though you

can't do electoral advocacy and maybe you can't do lobbying, you need to be politically savvy, and that's why I'm hitting some of these issues. And, trust me, this boils down to the minds and the motivations and -- of your local elected officials, too. Okay. So now we talked about how it works. But let's talk about how -- you want me to take a break? Oh, I'm sorry.

Megan Masson-Minock: So -- so really quickly, is the quality better now than before? And also we are recording it and we will share the recording so that folks can see the whole thing without interruption at a later date.

Jean Doss: Oh, I'm narrating [inaudible].

Megan Masson-Minock: It's not cutting out as much. It seems to be better that you --

Jean Doss: Okay.

Megan Masson-Minock: All right, good. So while we're paused, are there any questions that we have for Jean before she gets into the Boiler-room of the State Legislature? All right. Let's see. No, 13. So we're going to take silence as agreement. And we're going to go forward and then we'll talk a little bit more about State Legislature and how it really works behind the closed doors, and then I'll talk about municipal government.

Jean Doss: Oh, okay. All right. Thanks. And thanks, everybody, for your patience.

Megan Masson-Minock: Wait, there's another woman.

Jean Doss: Ah.

Megan Masson-Minock: So, real quick. I love all the women's history.

Jean Doss: Yeah [laughter]. Okay. Yeah [laughter]. All right. We're actually having fun here. I mean, you have to have fun. You don't control everything, but -- okay. So let's talk a little bit about how it really works, okay? I got to tell you a story. Now, remember, I got this -- I kind of fell into this job. And I was really hoping that my bosses wouldn't realize how little I knew. I was hoping I would get my business cards ordered. Let me get myself ensconced before they figure out I really don't know what I'm doing. I've done advocacy, you know. But I had never done lobbying of the State Legislature. And I heard there was this old State Senator who was old then. He's still around. And he was going to talk about how effectively lobby. And he's been a member of the cancer caucus which we call the smoke that is at the Capital. And I went to hear him. And he said [clearing throat], "You know, it's a lottery. All you got to do is be able to count to 56 and 20." And you will hear that from the old-timers especially. They'll tell you, "Hey,

you got to be able to count." They're not saying that to their colleagues in the Legislature. They're saying that to the advocates. They're saying that to the lobbyists. It's very interesting. We turn to you and say you've got to be able to count. So what's the magic of 56 and 20? Fifty-six and 20 -- you have to have a minimum of 56 votes for a bill to pass the House. And you've got to have a minimum of 20 votes for a bill to pass the Senate. And I think Amy Zaagman is one of my -- she rose. She's a young woman. She was in the Senate. She was the Chief of Staff to the first ever female Senator to lead the Senate Health Policy Committee. She's now the Executive Director of the Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health. And I love this quote. "Elected officials don't have power. They count power. And they depend on advocates to help them negotiate a balance of power among competing interests." I've got a bill that's up in House Regulatory Reform. We had two hearings which is -- that's pretty decent to get two hearings. And the Chair said to me, "I'm going to hold off. I'm not going to have a vote until the fall on your bill." And what's going to happen very soon is he's going to say to me, he's going to say, "Do you have the votes?" And it's not that he won't exert some leadership, but he sees this as very much a partnership between I'm doing my part, but your part is to reduce the conflict, make amendments, make compromises. Do what you have to do to get to the majority of votes needed to get this bill out of committee. And I think that this is something that happens a lot. Back in the day when we were trying to get universal healthcare -- don't laugh, that's how far back I go -- I ran into people that would say to me, "This year, Jean. This year we're going to get universal healthcare." And I don't want to be a buzzkill and I don't want to discourage people because hope and enthusiasm and belief is also critical to being an advocate, but you know, there's just some issues that they're not going to win, you're not going to win. It's just not feasible right now. Now I happen to think I've made a career of taking on issues where people have told me, ah, no, never happen. But it is your job as an advocate to recognize right now there's no way this particular bill can probably pass the legislature. So what do we need to do to create the environment in which it is feasible? And this is something -- and I'm going to tell you. I've done this a long time and I have a lot of bad days and I'm a crier and a screamer, and when I'm really bad I call [inaudible] and have to apologize. But I can tell you my worst days. What I love is that these elected officials, and they're mostly really good people who want to do good things for their community and for the state, they really don't hear from a lot of the voters in the district. They get one letter, but they know there may be a lot of other people that feel that way but only one person took the time to send an e-mail or a letter. If they get 10 letters on an issue on a bill, it's practically a mandate. That should make you feel good as an advocate. That should make you feel good to know that you don't have to quite your day job. You don't have, you know, devote your whole life. You can do -- you know, you can do what you can do and it can make a great impact. Just because so few people -- so many people are cynical. So many people feel powerless. That when you take even the smallest steps on an issue, and again, I'm telling you, this tracks and applies at every level of government -- from the very smallest -- we're talking PTA, school board, city, county, township -- all the way to the State Legislature and Congress, that so few people actually take the time to treat their elected

officials as you've been elected to represent me. So I'd like to share my views with you. And Legislators will tell you, this is kind of an old-timey phrase, but they'll say, "Hey, Jean, you dance with the one that brung you," which is his or her way of telling me I'm not hearing about this back in my district. And I'm not -- you may come to be and tell me this is something that I need to vote for. But I haven't heard that this is a problem from anybody in my district. So that gives me hope because it means that they still see it as their job to listen to the people in their district. So here we have the numbers. Can you count? Do you have 56 votes in the House? Do you have 20 in the Senate? And, oh, by the way, don't ever forget you got to get one signature. Megan's going to talk here about a second, and remember, can you count? I'm looking over at her. This applies at the local level as well. So with this, I'm going to turn it over to Megan. This is a good place to pause. Do folks have any questions or concerns? I'm just going to turn this over. I don't want to un --

Megan Masson-Minock: Well, some of the questions might be for you, so let's see if there's any other questions specifically about State Legislature. All right, so --

Jean Doss: Okay, cool.

Megan Masson-Minock: -- let's switch seats.

Jean Doss: Let's switch seats.

Megan Masson-Minock: All right. So I'm going to talk about municipal government and the players. And by municipal government what we mean, what we mean as county government and then also at your local level which may be a township. Or it may be a city or a village. And all of those are enabled differently by the state and have different folks who are active. So I'm going to go over briefly and what I'm really going to encourage you to do, though, is in your city, village, county, township, to find the charter that enables that municipal government, and then find out who everybody is, what their voting power is, and when they are elected, and in what matter, because that city charter or that township charter is going to have a lot of information on that. But, basically, in any municipal government you have an Executive Branch and a Legislative Branch. So if the City Council, a Township Board, or at county you have the County Board of Trustees. Executive Branch, it varies at the county. Sometimes you have an Administrator; sometimes you don't. But always an Executive Branch in cities and villages you have mayors. And in townships they're called supervisors. All of these areas of government are enabled by the state to have Planning Commissions and Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Commission acts as a recommending and administrative body. So it almost acts as a committee dealing with [inaudible] in terms of -- and they have to recommend things to the Legislative Branch to be approved. The Zoning Board of Appeals is a Judicial Branch for zoning. And also throughout -- and, again, you need to go back to that charter. There are these

judicial bodies kind of riddled throughout municipal government on tax appeals. There may be things on signs, if sign ordinances are different from [inaudible] the zoning, et cetera, et cetera. Also they'll have a myriad of committees. Most will have a Parks and Recreation Committee, and that sometimes comes into play when you're dealing with food, food systems, and urban agriculture. Also your municipal staff have a lot of input in a different way that they are from the state level because they're just much closer to these publically elected or appointed officials. So the Department of Public Works -- that's all the pipes in the streets. Planning which is what's going on with land use. And the Community Development, Economic Development, and Parks. Also sometimes your city has a day-to-day executive. We have a City Manager or Township Superintendent. They are hired by municipalities but they administrate the day-to-day, and they're more like the Chief Executive Officer of the municipality. And then the City Council and Mayor become more a board and the Mayor becomes the Board Chair. So how they work is that they usually go on a fiscal year. You're going to want to know what your fiscal year is. Sometimes it's March to March. Or sometimes it's July to July. Sometimes it's actually the calendar year. But that's important for you to know in terms of how they're sending things through. Their sessions don't necessarily end like the Legislature, but what that fiscal years and how they spend their money in the budget affects what they do and what they have time and space to do. So one of the things to ask is that executive. Is he or she a Republican or a Democrat? In the legislative, what are the sides? And, again, kind of what Jean said on township board, one of the township board trustees I knew. He also sat on a Planning Commission I staffed. He said, "It only takes four vote, four votes win." Because on a township board you only have seven votes. And the Supervisor, while it isn't a leadership position, and Mayor. Usually they don't have a veto like the Governor does. But they are usually seen as a leader, and more often than not a lot of times the Legislature --the City Council members or the Township Board Trustees will go the direction of the Mayor if they feel that that fits in with what they want. And, again, not ever municipality is the same. And, also, after each election cycle, each of them aren't the same, too. So you're really spending time to get to know them, attending to meetings, for even watching on cable access, you'll learn a lot about how your local municipality works. Again, also to know when's the next election because that affects how people are acting. And then also know that founding charter of your municipality. That will lay out what the different responsibilities are, what their different terms are, and also which committees or Planning Commissions, or CBA's, what their powers are and how those feed into the public policy-making decision. Also you need to know the bylaws for each body if you are interacting with those bodies because that says how they make rules, how they vote, how they meet. So, for instance, I've worked with lots of Planning Commissions who will say, "We don't make good decisions after 10 o'clock at night. We start at 7:00, so at 10 o'clock at night we're going to take a vote whether to extend or not." Well, if you're number three on the agenda, and it's 9:30, you know, you're going to be at a point where you think, maybe it's going to be the next meeting. But that a lot of times, and especially in smaller communities, that means a delay of a month. So without knowing that, and then when you see where you're

placed on the agenda, then you're going to know when that decision is made. And while these things seem like small things, when you're getting into deadlines, and I've worked with also local advocates who are getting a special land use or whatnot, you might have a [inaudible] ready to go up on your urban lot, and the delay of a month is actually a big deal. So, in terms of how does this municipal government, how does that process work? And I also put up on here, in terms of the pictures, a picture of the City Hall in Ypsilanti. But also a township hall. And this is in Hudson, Michigan. And they are, you know, cities and townships have different constituencies and different ways that they act. The city of Ypsilanti, they have a lot -- they have staff, they have paid staff, and they can do a lot more than Hudson Township which is all volunteer run. They don't have any paid staff. Anything that needs to happen on the municipal level, the county takes over for them, like their tax assessment. How does ordinance adoptions or amendments work? If they are typically developed in the committee or by the Planning Commission. So the City Council or the Township Board might have a committee. The ideas come from those elected and appointed officials, those come from citizens. They'll come from businesses within the municipality. They'll also be generated due to nuisance problems. Something keeps occurring. Special interest groups and staff actually will bring things forward to Planning Commission or to City Council. And that actually also happens a lot when they're talking about the budget of the local municipality. If it has to deal with zoning, the Planning Commission recommends after a public hearing. And that's important. So that Planning Commission often does the bulk of the work. And they're required to have the public hearing by state law, and that's the time when it's really important to show up and hear your views. And it's also important even before that when you have the germ of the idea, if it's the Planning Commission or the City Council, to go there during public -- hearing public comment which they have to have for every single meeting, and they -- look, this is an issue in our community, or this is things [inaudible]. The Legislative Branch may have a reading. They always have a reading. They may have a public hearing. Again, it depends on their charter. And they may have two hearings. So know that municipal process, even sketching it out as a flowchart like the 4H document that we put up earlier, that's important to know. And, again, it depends on the municipality if the Mayor can have a veto. If you're in a township, the Supervisor doesn't' have a veto, not by state law. But a village or a city, that absolutely they could have that sort of power. Again, I mentioned the budget before for municipalities. Usually that budget development starts three to four months before that fiscal year starts. And this is really where a municipality starts its priorities about what it's going to do, especially if it's going to take on any new public policy. And those come, again, from that group of folks we went through before. Again, that Legislative Branch has a reading. They may have a public hearing. They may have two reading. And it depends on the municipality if the mayor can veto. Now, how does this really work when we get down to brass tacks in a municipal environment? Again, that quote still resonates about have and count. And they're in that act because it's the right thing to do. But it's also right and feasible. And then it's your job as an advocate to educate them about what the right things are and how it's feasible. And I've amended what Jean said in terms of a

letter that, you know, it's not 10 letters that is a mandate. It's 10 people showing up at a public meeting. And I work in planning consultant for 15 years now, probably staffing about 20 different municipalities in Michigan. And when a crowd of more than 10 people shows up, everything stops. And people really -- that elected officials and those appointed officials, they will really listen, even if they have had a year-and-a-half of work into it, or two. One of the things that you need to know, though, in the municipal [inaudible], that this process is slow. So if it takes three to four months to do a budget, you can see how long it might take to do a backyard chicken ordinance. And speaking of backyard chicken ordinances, that's something that you will need to try multiple times. Anything where there's powerful interests or powerful emotions on either side, again, it's creating that atmosphere where it is feasible. So discussions beforehand about -- with both sides, and airing those views and trying to find the common ground, that's really important. And I think, you know, you just need to look around the different things with urban agriculture and for some folks it's really -- it's something that they don't want in their midst probably. And for some people, it's something that they absolutely want. And so that passion on either side is really hard sometimes for municipal officials, elected and appointed, to navigate. Also to know that every public meeting allows for public comment according to the Open Meeting Act. So you can go to any municipal meeting -- Parks and Rec Commission, City Council, Township Board, Planning Commission -- and there should be a time and space for you to show up and to discuss what you want to discuss. Also, a lot of times, if they have a paid staff, coming in, making an appointment with that paid staff, and telling them what your idea is or what the advocacy point is, or what the policy change is -- they're going to give you very good advice on a one-to-one basis about how the best way is to navigate that. But the bottom line is to check out the municipality's charter and really know how many votes are needed and what that process is. So at this point, before I turn it back over to Jean, I just wanted to ask if there are any questions or comments in terms of your -- about local policy advocacy at the municipal level. I know also there are some people who have a lot of experience doing this, and so if you could, feel free to share anything you'd like. People are still awake, right [laughter]? Okay. Well, as we go through, if there's something you want to share or if there's lessons learned that you really feel it should be part of the report that we send out to the whole network that you would like to share, please send them to us. All right. I'll turn it over to Jean.

Jean Doss: Megan, that's great.

Megan Masson-Minock: You're welcome.

Jean Doss: That's really great. Okay. I'm sort of opening up my toolkit. And a lot of the things that we're going to talk about the next half, these are things that, if I don't do this, and sometimes I skip this step myself, I always regret it. It's a kind of, you know, what's a simple tool to rounding yourself, rounding yourself, and as an advocate, even in a very, very long-term

campaign for policy change, you're going to have to be repeating, you know, what it is that you're about. And you start by asking, what is it you want? Who can give it to you? Is it the township? Is it the county? Less likely. Is it the state legislature? Is it Congress who can give it to you. The next is, what do they need to hear? Now this is very interesting. You may think you know what they need to hear. And this is something you want to spend a few minutes on. You may think they need to hear how the food system is broken. But, in fact, what they may need to hear is that a backyard chicken ordinance is something that connects our children to responsibility and connects our children to, you know, daily jobs and maintaining their responsibility. So -- and we have somebody else [inaudible]. So when you think about what do they need to hear, this is actually something -- you need to sort of check your own lens, your own biases, and think about it. Not what do you think they need to hear, but what do they really need to hear from their perspective? And then the question is, who's the best messenger? Now I can see Liz -- we're seeing you in our screen here. I think she's working on --

Megan Masson-Minock: Yeah. I'm going to go talk to her, so --

Jean Doss: Okay.

Megan Masson-Minock: -- hold on.

Jean Doss: Okay. So here's another thing. What do you want? Who can give it to you? What do they need to hear? And who, or from whom do they need to hear it from? This latter point is really important. We often just assume that we're the best messengers. We've worked on this for 10 years. We've worked on this for five years. Or we're the most expert. Or we're the leader of our organization. It could very well be that instead of you introducing this concept for the first time to an elected official or policymaker, it may be one of their colleagues from the Rotary that you actually know. It may be better for you to prep that colleague from the Rotary to speak and introduce the idea to that decision-maker. Always ask yourself, who is the best messenger? And, again, watch the ego. We can have devoted so much of our life, and clearly know so much more. But that still doesn't necessarily make us the best messenger. Now this template, these four questions, really are -- there's a little bit more detail to it, but you'll notice that's really the underlying organization of the worksheet, "Developing a Road Map for Action." Now, first of all, I don't want to insult you on this webinar. My assumption is many of our local councils already have a strategic plan. I've actually seen some of them. And they've been just, you know -- and you may have used a totally different template. That's cool. There's so many ways to do this. This is just one way. And though I may have offended you by making it sound like I don't think you have a written plan, let's just be honest. Local groups that succeed and local groups that don't succeed, often the difference between the two is a written plan. And we want to make sure that -- and the other thing, too, is you got to revisit that written plan. It's got to adjust to changes in the environment, changes in the issue, changes in the players. So I've

given you -- Megan's shared with you this worksheet. We're hoping, and Megan's going to jump in here just real quickly.

Megan Masson-Minock: Yeah. What we'd like is for you to take this worksheet for your already developed advocacy plan, and revisit it with your council, either the worksheet or your advocacy plan, in August and September. And then what we're offering in our in-person meeting in October is that Jean and I will be there in Detroit, and also all of your peers, and to spend some time looking at the advocacy plan and peer review and making them better and answering any questions. But we didn't want to have you go through the worksheets here today because we know that you are representatives of councils and you want to have the whole group represented as part of that. So think of this as a tool to really look at advocacy and then a chance to have that advocacy plan, have a chance to have that peer-reviewed in October.

Jean Doss: Thank you. Thanks. We have one of the documents that provides us with sort of a roadmap, our own roadmap on a statewide view is the "Good Food Charter." And it's really kind of interesting. It's been divided according to local. Of the 25 goals of the "Good Food Charter," 25 or a certain number are local, a certain number are statewide, some are legislation-based, some are community-based. This is an interesting document to look at. I mean, I'm sure you've all looked at it. But going back, you know, under this there's one item here, Number Two, and it's -- this is organized under the "Good Food Charter" under community-based priority. And it says, "Improve school food and environments, and reduce school sales of low-nutrient, high-sugar, high-fat, and calorie-dense foods to snack and vending machines or competitive food sales." So what just happened this last spring? Did this happen on a community level? No, no. We had a bill introduced by Representative -- excuse me, Senator Patrick Colbeck. Local constituents in his district were complaining that the Department of Ed based on rules to the Smart Snacks and School Rules. That rule, that Federal rule, gave local -- excuse me, gave state education agencies, the Michigan Department of Ed, the option of allowing for any or none exceptions to those Smart Snacks Rule. Our Department of Ed said no exceptions. And so, French clubs that sold croissants for a trip to Quebec were cancelled. Honor Society students that used to sell Blizzards, Dairy Queen Blizzards, for their trip to Washington, D.C. You know, you name it. All of these fund-raisers ended. And so this bill, Senate Bill 139, was introduced, and flew -- and I mean, flew. And it was the laughing -- you know, it was called free-the-bake-sales in Lansing. And this is where it -- you know, I remember thinking, we're in the middle of culture change. And what happens with this bill will tell us a lot of where we're at because on one hand we have this bill making it sound ludicrous that the Canton Township Honor Society can't sell Krispy Kreme Donuts in their high school. On the other hand, we know Michigan is leading the nation in childhood obesity. And if you're going to invest in anything, I'd be investing in dialysis industries because we know the lifespan of the children of today is likely to be shorter than

their parents because of obesity. I wish you all could have been a fly on the wall. I had a huge argument with my nephew. He's in Ann Arbor. He's a senior. And his younger sister is the one that the French club couldn't sell croissants. And, you know, talking about, you know, if kids eat, what, the percentage of their calories every day in school. Schools are the one place we can start getting handle, getting a traction on obesity. Well, I think we all know the story. This bill, it passed the Senate. And, of course, as you know from that schematic, it had to then go to the House Education Committee. Child health advocates were a little bit better organized at that point. There were more hearings, longer testimony, a little bit more pressure. And it was interesting because some of the members of the House Education Committee had just sat in on a hearing a couple of weeks before in the House Health Policy Committee looking at obesity in Michigan. And so they were starting to make the connection because these individuals had sat in on two different, you know, committees. Had been -- their awareness had been raised. But the bottom line is this bill is law. It goes into effect September 1st, and it basically says that, "The Department of Ed is doing -- take all steps necessary," I'm reading this, "to ensure maximum local control over the implementation of school breakfast and lunch programs, and to establish an upper limit on the number and frequency of fund-raising activities during [inaudible], and that require," listen to this, "that the upper limit of these food sales that are not in compliance with the Health Food Rules to be not less than two such activities a week." So, you know, that was kind of -- I'll be honest. And you know, there's good arguments on the other side of this. I don't want to say that, you know, that maybe changes didn't need to be considered obviously, but it was just, to me, hearing the laughter. And yet here we are paying for the outcome of childhood obesity. It's kind of a sad day for me in Lansing. But there's an example of where, you know, you'd like to think that there is local control over these things. But our State Department of Ed had established a no exceptions. That raised the ire of our State Senator, Patrick Colbeck. So here's another -- you know, I don't know. I'm trying to figure out why I threw this in here. You know, when we look at different types of policies, there was something that we thought would be a local school board policy or a local school policy. But the Department of Ed was seen as imposing on local control. So it suddenly became a state legislative issue. Here's a state bill that I'm keeping an eye on. It basically creates a homestead subsistence farming act. It's introduced by Representative Kelly. This is interesting because it basically is protecting individuals that are, you know, growing food, livestock et cetera, for their own consumption, and protecting those rights. Kind of interesting. I'm just giving you some ideas of other policies we're keeping an eye on. Oh.

Megan Masson-Minock: Oh, Jean, going back on that slide, how do you track that legislature, that legislation when it's going through? Or how can folks track it when they're on their computers via the Internet.

Jean Doss: Okay. The Michigan Legislature -- I'm glad you asked this. The Michigan Legislative Website, michiganlegislature.gov, and I think that Liz here is going to put that up. They have a wonderful website. It's worth spending a little bit of time. You can sort by Bill Number, you can sort by topic, you can sort by very detailed topic. And it also has a monitoring system where you can ask to be alerted when there's action on a bill. You can actually -- now this is before the Committee on Agriculture. You can see at the top of my screen here. You can actually go to the Committee on Agriculture and ask that Committee Clerk to send you their Committee Agenda notices so that you would be able to see what's the House Ag Committee taking up this week. I also would tell you that we've talked about this. And this is going to kind of be a work in progress. I do legislative monitoring for the Center for Regional Food Systems, and the question is -- Megan and I met to sort of see what's of interest because the worst thing is to give you a list of a hundred bills when only two or three interest you. And local food councils are very interested because -- are interesting to me because some things you may not consider food-related, like the Earned Income Tax Credit, which is a topic of debate in Michigan right now. You know, is that something we should monitor? So we're looking at ways to make sure you have information. I would first of all just say that there's a lot of tools online that make it very easy to track legislation. We are also going to try and make sure that you receive bimonthly updates and also --

Megan Masson-Minock: Yeah, within the guidelines of the funding and being associated with Michigan State --

Jean Doss: Right.

Megan Masson-Minock: -- so there's a few things we have to work out in terms of offering that service, and what the parameters are in terms of part of the network. But it would be also helpful to know from you what type of legislative tracking you're interested in.

Jean Doss: Any questions at this point? I'm having them check. This is a question on --

Okay. On our computers -- Is everyone unmuted? Okay. So our type box seems to be disappeared. But everybody is unmuted from our end, so if you unmute on your end, and you have something to share, or questions, let us know. Shout out. Okay. All right. Let's go back to the -- Okay, cool. All right. Okay. Whoops. So another thing just to let you know that we're watching carefully. Obviously, you know, we don't have time today. I'm not sure we have time this week to talk to right farm, talking about the 2014 site selection GAAMPs and those are updated periodically based on the Ag Commission. We know that there was a recent report from the Urban Livestock Group that was a response in part to complaints about the 2014 site selection GAAMPs. We know that one of the recommendations of that workgroup was going to be an urban farming act, and we're going to want to make sure that everybody is aware of this.

My biggest thing is people oftentimes find out about workgroups, policymaking legislation, far too late to actually impact it. So my goal is to make sure that you hear about things as soon as possible. You have the opportunity to participate in the dialog. You have the opportunity to provide comment. We have the opportunity to advocate. And we're watching very carefully Senator Hune is like to be the key sponsor in this. We know that Senator Rebecca Warren out of Ann Arbor was also a part of this workgroup, and she'll be looking out carefully to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to raise their voice on this. I think that really whether we're talking about GAAMPs, whether we're talking about legislation, whether we're talking about backyard chickens, the key to all policy is relationships of the advocates to their elected officials and staff. I was so glad you brought that up because I've learned that if you know the individual's administrative support staff by first name, are very polite and respectful and take a few minutes to get to know that person, oftentimes they can provide you with just critical information. Oh, need to understand we're probably going to change this committee, or we're probably going to do this in the time he she's going to make this decision, so getting to know staff is golden. I think that we talked a little bit about -- if elected officials see that you're passionate, if they see that you're in it for the long haul, that your expectations that things don't change overnight, it's -- they will want to work with you. I think it's the folks who sort of want, expect things to happen very, very quickly, it's frustrating for elected officials because that's one of the few things they can't change. They can't change the fact that most changes take time. But if they see that you're in it for the long haul, that they see that you're interested in building a relationship for them, that you're -- want to get to know them a little bit, want to take time, this is all about one meeting does not a relationship make. This is probably the local government. We talked about term limits. And I can tell you right now if you look at the bios of the State Representatives and the State Senators, I would say almost all of them have some local government experience, either City Council Member, or County Commissioner, or Sheriff. That's an important launching pad to state office. So the interactions you are having right now at the local level will shape the actions of tomorrow's State Legislature. And again, remember how I told you term limits kind of flipped my power on its ear? I used to know and I used to play golf with these folks. I don't play golf. But let's just say I did. You know, it used to be that I would know these folks better than my clients would. But I actually now pick up the phone and say what do you know about this person? He was in your city, your township. Did you work with him? So the work you are doing, and investing in our local food policy councils, is truly the work of shaping food policy of the future. There is nothing like having an elected official show up in Lansing and already understand the power of food as a tool for economic development, as a tool for public health, and as a tool for quality life and place-making. So when we look at this, and you're going to want to look at this kind of information for every one of the individuals in the body that you're trying to influence. It's worth taking a few minutes to do this homework. And, you know, looking -- you know, obviously -- I'll be honest with you. I don't know all 148 State Legislators. But the committees I work with the most, you better believe I know them. And that's the way you're going to prioritize your work, too. You're going to look at what

committee assignments or positions or what decision-making bodies are most important. The Ten Commandments -- I actually put this together working with local food policy councils 10 years ago, yes. And everybody on this phone call, if I said to them, what do you know now that you wish you knew then? What would you like to go back and warn your younger advocate self about? Because I can tell you, they're 10 commandments not because I never break these rules. They 10 commandments because I break one of these rules every week. And I would love it, to hear your favorites. My guess, Megan, if I had to choose her favorite, it would probably be number three, the world is run by those who show up.

Megan Masson-Minock: Yeah.

Jean Doss: Be there.

Megan Masson-Minock: That, and do your homework.

Jean Doss: Do your homework.

Megan Masson-Minock: Know the opposing arguments because you're going to have to be in the same sphere with those folks who have an opposing viewpoint.

Jean Doss: Yeah, yeah. And, again, I'm telling you, I make these mistakes all the time. But it's still important to take a look at some of these. We've given to you before as a handout. And I would be really interested to hear what you'd like to add to this 10 commandments. There's no reason it has to be limited to 10. So, you know, I'd love it. If folks on the phone, by the way, want to speak up. We've all had those experiences where oh, my gosh, if I did that over again, let me tell you what I would do differently. Some of my favorites are have a plan. And again, it's important that it's a written plan. And it's important that it's a -- it's obviously something that's going to have to be revised and changed as time goes on. Do your homework, and I'm going to repeat you only because -- repeat what you just said. As people who are passionate about food, as people that are passionate about social justice, this is the way we argue. This is good because, because, because, because, because. And instead we need to actually practice making arguments against our own position. And that is a really good exercise. Think about what the opposition thinks. And respect their perspective. Think about why their sincerely-held view, they oppose the change you're trying to make. And I will tell you if I could pick one thing, if you're looking at homework with general, the one thing that my advocates, it's a easy mistake to make, is they only look at this issue through their own lens, and they don't anticipate. Well, why would anybody not like this idea? Megan, you look like you want to jump in here.

Megan Masson-Minock: Yeah. No, well. And also the other question a lot of times in my consulting will be talking about issues like this with the overall community. And sometimes advocates come from the point of view of well, why don't you want this? Where maybe sometimes the better argument or question to the folks who are opposing it is, how could you live with it? Under what circumstances would you be comfortable with this happening in your backyard? Because a lot of times if you get to, if you start the discussion that way, you'll have a more constructive discussion.

Jean Doss: Right. That's true. So any other thing to -- be in it for the long haul. It's frustrating how long it takes. It's actually shocking sometimes. It took 16 years to get a seatbelt law in Michigan. Think of how long we had to fight to get tobacco-free public spaces. Think of how long it's taken to get nutritional standards for food in schools. It's ridiculous how long. But what I find is that it's helpful to maintain your spirit and your well-being by looking at defining small wins along the way. As you grow your organization, as you have fun, as you have events that include elected officials, as you finally find yourself being able to talk to your enemies locally, and go to lunch with them, and even though you still don't agree you find yourself building this understanding, and they are no longer enemies but people that sometimes oppose you. These are the little victories you have to take time, step back, and say we're making progress, though it may not look like it sometimes. But we are. So this is the basement of the Capital [laughter]. When I have friends come and visit, you know, I don't take them through the very front door with the glorious, you know, two-story walnut doors, and all the painted walls, and the -- just amazing. I bring them into the basement, and this was the area. This hallway was never meant to be seen by the public, and yet it has its own just amazing beauty. And these light fixtures here were initially from -- for gas. And it's -- there's something wonderful about being comfortable in your own State House. And you'll feel this way, too. There's something comfortable after sitting in 10/15/20 township meetings. There's something wonderful about being comfortable. You know the cameraman from the local access. You know the clerk. You know the city. You start knowing these people and you start feeling comfortable like you belong there. And that's where some of you already are. And that's where we hope you all will be. So, any -- I would hope you would unmute and jump in at this point. And I'm going to thank Liz for all the time she spent getting us ready. Megan has been just wonderful presenting with you.

Megan Masson-Minock: Yeah, it's been great. Thank you.

Jean Doss: Yeah. So questions, parting thoughts.

Megan Masson-Minock: Now the sound's back. Okay. So I'm going to repeat what I said. So Tanya's asking about urban agriculture in Battle Creek. The City Planner says only non-commercial areas because there's no state legislature that enabled that per se. Because the

GAAMPs on site specifics says cities of 100,000 or more. Which -- believe of which there are only five now and it depends on what sense that some people may be -- some cities may be dipping in and out of that. There are other communities that have gone forth and taken the risk of urban agriculture, so city of Ypsilanti specifically and city of Muskegon. So I would say for -- you could look at those two as examples and bring those to your city planner. Also, you know, then in terms of that urban agriculture act we're not sure what's going to be in it and what the scope of it is. I suspect that it'd probably start very large and then get windowed down to what's feasible. So in terms of what is going on right now in your city, I wouldn't bank on that happening in the next year. I do know you're going through a master plan process and I would say it's very important in that master plan. Even though it's enabled by state legislation explicitly, right now for that master plan to say that it's a desired policy to have urban agriculture at all scales throughout the city; so -- and that's from small to commercial. Also Flint and Detroit have good ordinances around and master plan, but again those are cities of over 100,000, so I would look at Flint, Detroit, Muskegon and Ypsilanti as examples. And anytime when you're doing local municipal work you can find examples from other Michigan communities or other Midwestern communities, it's really quite helpful. Sometimes some of the other states, like California have some of the most -- have made the most progress on laws like this. But you'll immediately have township board member or city council member saying, "Well, this is not California." So it's great when you have those examples but if you can find a Midwestern or a Michigan example to go along with it it's a lot more powerful. And also, they're more prone to take the risk if they've seen that other folks have. And a lot of times your city planner might be -- your city planner might be hesitant, which I can understand if I was in their spot. I might be as well if I didn't know a lot about these other folks. Their lawyers through township -- the municipal lawyer's going to be hesitant. But those city council people -- so city council or township board, they can push them to take a risk, they can ask them to explore it further. And that's really where those public policies changes have happened. And a lot of times that pressure comes from advocates coming to city council saying, "We want this change." Or, these are the reasons that we want this change. And I know in Battle Creek it has to do a lot with economic development and youth development, And also, [inaudible]. Okay. Yeah. Hopefully you can convince the planner. Remember the planner works for city council, so.

Okay. We don't know if people can read all the stuff so I'm going to read what Amanda Admins has put in. Said, "Hi friends. So many comments and questions, not sure how the phone apps make value work. Don't worry, just pulled over to write this. Just arrived into Battle Creek with Michigan mayors. Can you share the point of view of importance in inviting the local officials at all levels to local food, meetings, conference events, et cetera? I think the food limit is pretty bad about this critical chance to educate, build relationships, engage in movement."

Jean Doss: You see, you just said it Amanda. Any event is an opportunity to invite elected officials to join you. And that's not lobbying, that's just -- it's almost like you're throwing a party. Why not invite everybody? And it is good if you know a mayor, you know a township supervisor's coming. Have sort of a point person there to kind of be a special host to that person. But it's long before you're sitting across a table and negotiating with these folks. If they've seen you at a community garden, at the food hub, at the opening of a new hoop house. If they can walk through and get a sense of what you're about -- and remember during these tours they often find out. Oh, you know, both of our kids are in diving. Or you know what? I grew up right next to your house. I mean that's where the little connections start, at these informal gatherings.

Megan Masson-Minock: So if you have a food summit, by all means invite -- send a letter to invite the local news polity so other city council members and what not -- or better yet go to their meeting during public comment and invite them all to come. And so, those big events also, I think, really showcase for the good food movement how many people are passionate about this, how many people believe in this, and how diverse also that group is and where they come from. And then, it offers that ability and time for locally elected and appointed officials to chat with folks, to hear their stories, to hear both sides. Because they may only be hearing one side of the story and this gives you a chance to have them -- you know, hear the other. Also with the good means that things -- we have great food. And one thing I will say about any food event I have been at, the food is always excellent. And people get to know people over eating together, and talking together, and breaking bread and having meals together. So I think that is critical to invite folks to things like that.

Okay. All right. So what's next?
And I have figured out a way to get everybody able to speak I believe. So hopefully it works and doesn't mess anything up for me.

Megan Masson-Minock: Technically she's on our end, we just needed. All right. Kibbe the floor is yours.

The webinar that I'm on, on the [inaudible] for agriculture, like, an urban agriculture, because some of the things that we just discussed a few minutes ago in terms of Right to Farm Act and GAAMPS I actually thought that was really a key part of that webinar. Because it, like, it gave a really easy to understand confession of having to know what you -- what applied to you and what doesn't, and what you're actually allowed to do. But talking a little bit about the Right to Farm Act and GAAMPs in terms of there is sort of three things to consider. To figure out if there -- if you're sort of -- what you're allowed to do and what you aren't in terms of jurisdiction

and then, determining what specific things are covered, and then determining if there's anything that's delegated back to you. So -- and I'll just get through it, like, pretty quickly. But the first thing was determining jurisdiction. So if an activity is a farm operation producing a farm product, if there is commercial production and if it's complying with the GAAMPs, which that was a little bit more sticky. But basically then you're dealing with something that Right to Farm Act and GAAMPs applied to you, so you know you have to stay within those restrictions. And then, the second thing is determining what's covered. So basically being -- knowing what is included in the Right to Farm Act, which are typically things like exemption from big city's complaints, and they're pretty standard. And then, also the GAAMPs, which change every year. So the things -- anything that's not covered by those is open for local regulation as rights. But then what they've been doing the last couple of years is that the GAAMPs have been -- or some of the [inaudible] -- remedies for that are the GAAMPs are delegating back from authorities to local jurisdictions. So like, Megan mentioned earlier, the 100,000 rule that was added in 2012. And you know, here in Detroit we actually dealt with that a lot, look at that one. Because that was part of our major road block in our -- in getting our end cap was dealing with the GAAMPs. So the population of 100,000 or more -- and you know, there are still some regulations. You do have to have a zoning ordinance amendment and have a written or non-conforming preventions for existing farms in the ordinance. But it gives, like, an incredible remedy for the larger cities that are working under a zoning ordinance. The other thing is the siting category four which talks about animals. And it gives local jurisdictions ability to regulate those types of things in a place that's primarily residential, where the local zoning law -- there's [inaudible] and where there's a local ordinance that regulates -- having specifically farm animals. But then the other thing they talked about that I didn't actually know about is that, the commission on agriculture and rural development will allow you to make -- will allow a municipality to be exempt from Right to Farm Act and GAAMPs if they apply to the commission with their ordinance. And the presenters mentioned if there aren't any municipalities currently who have been through that process. There are maybe one or two who are trying to build up their process but haven't have completed it yet. But it is sort of something to think about when you're dealing with a local ordinance and trying to figure out how you can -- in an urban setting. When you're in an urban setting but you still -- but the Right to Farm Act and GAAMPs don't apply to lengths that you're talking about really well. Like in Detroit, but you're not over 100,000. So it's another remedy to sort of -- to configure. So webinar also focused obviously on the sample agriculture right and agriculture ordinance. And so -- I'm sorry. One thing I didn't mention is that first catch, whether something is an activity from a farm operation, producing a farm product, commercial production in compliance with the GAAMPs. So if you're going through your vet checklist and the things that you have don't meet all those criteria then that's what [inaudible] agriculture like for the time being, because there isn't really a term addresses that kind of activity in any of our current legislation. Okay. So the samples on the ordinance itself is -- they also focus, like, Megan said, on updating -- reviewing and updating your master plan. So first reviewing it to see if the talk of agriculture -- but also updating it. Because you

want to have whatever your goal or purpose for urban agriculture for your community, you want your master plans reflect that so that there's some longevity to what you're doing, there's sort of some institutional memory built into the thing that you're doing. So then there's several ordinances -- and it's written as the draft version. So it's designed to be a zoning ordinance amendment to your existing zoning ordinance that you can fine tune and craft to fit what you -- your existing zoning ordinance. They give -- it includes an outline definition and some sample regulations. So the sample regulations cover just specific areas, so crops, poultries, small farm animals, large farm animals, agriculture and farmers market. And then, gives you some sample regulations, so you can ship food, which means you're allowing -- or not include, which means you're not allowing any or all of those categories. And then, once you have -- and then, in those categories they give you some sample regulations to help you figure out what kind of things you need to include when you're talking about -- in your sample ordinance. And then, also some suggestions for language about using the 100,000 population rule or using the -- or talking about the difference between gardens and farm. Which in the latter is important since they're not dealing with the garden activities, they're only addressing more agriculture or farm activities. So it was really helpful to have those things sort of spelled out. And especially in terms of knowing what applies, what kind of conditions you're looking at, to help determining what you actually need and what your options are in terms of what things you can regulate and what things you can't regulate, what - who you talk to help you figure that out. And then, they also gave some resources, which I send -- you know, if they gave, like, a very long list of resources that I can send to Megan this year with the full group outcome.

Megan Masson-Minock: Great. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I sat through multiple presentations by MSU extension on what is a farm operation and what not. And it's really kind of amazing that breadth of that law about what a farm operation is, it's even if they have the intent to sell, that something is a farm operation. So it's a fascinating piece of legislator from 1983, with lots and lots -- I'm sure they went over by case law too that's behind it. But it's definitely something everybody should track. And the GAAMPs usually come up --new GAAMPs usually come out in February or March, but that committee that crafts them is a public committee. And they have public meetings, and usually they're held in a variety of places around the state. So that's another opportunity to for folks to come and give testimony or whatnot. And I know several people have done that pretty successfully and specifically around the animals. Right. Well thanks Kibbe.

Yep. No problem. And if anyone has any questions, I guess feel free to ask them also.

Megan Masson-Minock: Thank you. Yes. And thank you. Also I'll take this time to announce that you all are hosting our next meeting and we'll be talking more in the next month. But we're working with Michigan Association of Planning, they're having for their conference is helping at this -- happening at the same time. And they're having a bus tour of Detroit and the food

system, and hopefully we can all jump on the bus with them. And so -- but we'll talk more about where they'll be. And so, -- but we also have homework for you in between in terms of looking at your advocacy plans, using those work sheets, as much as they help you use other things, if you have other things that are better or existing.

Jean Doss: We got one more comment from Tanya.

Megan Masson-Minock: I also tend to [inaudible] what she's talking about, it was really great and helped to jumpstart my research. However, they contributed to the BC planner's hesitation to include commercial urban Ag. Yeah I'm sure it did. But I would loop your planner back to the -- that they can have the state Department of Agriculture Commission sign off on it, and they should be familiar with that because they have to do that with zoning for mobile homes. Any zoning dealing with mobile homes has to go to the mobile home commission, has to be signed off on. So it's not as if the state check on certain land uses doesn't exist. And they haven't had to do it before, this is just a new proof that they're unfamiliar with. And again I think it was Muskegon that is going through having their policy approved. And so finding out who that is and talking to them would probably be really helpful, and linking up your planner with their planner so they could talk. All right.

Okay.

Megan Masson-Minock: Anything else? All right. Well there are no more questions, or no more updates anybody wants to share, or requests for information or next meeting. That's it, I'm going to do my standard count in my head to ten, wait. All right. No. Well thank you so much for the spending time. We did have some comments back that it was very helpful. We will send out a evaluation to you in the next week. Really very helpful for us to hear as many comments and have everybody fill it out. And then, we'll get a report out to the whole network in the next two weeks. So if you have links to share and what not or things you'd like to have -- you feel are important to hit on that please email me or Liz and let us know. But thank you all for taking time out of your Thursday and a beautiful summer day to be on a webinar.

Jean Doss: Thank you.

And thanks for bearing with us through the technology glitches. On our first go around with this one. Signing off?

Megan Masson-Minock: We're signing off.