

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Workgroup
General Action Team
12.3.20 ♦ 12:00 – 1:30 PM
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

Emily Arasim, NM Acequia Association
Jane Braithwaite, Office of Rep. Melanie Stansbury
Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
Tim Davis, NM Center on Law and Poverty
Allison Griffin, Cullari Communications Global
Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
Kyle Jim, Diné Introspective
Lacey Daniell-Miller, Save the Children
Bruce Hinrichs, NMSU
Derek Lin, NM Voices for Children
Brenda McKenna, Office of Congresswoman Deb
Haaland
Annmarie McLaughlin, (SFCF and NMAG)
Judy Messal, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
Roy Montibon, The Montibon Company
Dr. Amanda Montoya

Tsiporah Nephesh, NM Thrives & Covenant Pathways
Allan Oliver, Thornburg Foundation
Karen Plawecki, NMSU
Victoria Quevedo, La Semilla Food Center
Kurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministries
Tiffany Rivera –Government Relations, NM Farm and
Livestock Bureau
Erika Robers, NM First
Stephanie Rogus, NMSU
Anna Rondon, NM Social Justice Equity Institute
Ben Rasmussen, National Center for Frontier
Communities
Sofia Rose, NM Out of School Time Network.
Pam Roy, Farm to Table NM and NM Food and Ag Policy
Council
Daniel Valverde, NM Appleseed

1. **Check-in.** Prompt: What would you like to celebrate together?

- Rep. Stansbury not able to attend today but is knee deep in drafting legislation
- So thrilled to be able to get the \$5 million for food banks. The food bank association and banks were able to get critical info to the LFC. At first special session, Rep Ferrary was able so peak with director Abbey. Rep Stansbury was able to get information needed so LFC could support the special package. Mag, Sherry and Lorenzo were able to get the info out. This is funding that would have gone away that would have had to be spent by end of December. The funding is now encumbered through HSD. Human Services Division. She thanked everyone who worked so hard on it. Lilly asked her for her support.
- Thanks to Representatives Ferrary and Stansbury for their commitment to ending hunger in NM. Grateful for the Hunger Caucus, which is championing the effort to end hunger.
- I am celebrating the outcome of the special session: \$5 M for food banks, \$15 M for rent & mortgage assistance, and \$100 M for small businesses & nonprofits. Here's an article on the [bicameral effort on the part of lawmakers](#). I celebrate that we have a caring government and caring people in NM who came together to prevent our residents, colleagues, friends and families from falling off the end of the cliff at the end of December.
- I also celebrate the outcome of the special session. Good omen/optimistic for what we have to expect in 2021 session.
- The special session was really good, I was happy to see the legislature pass the relief package.
- Kudos to Deb Haaland for cosponsoring the bill to increase SNAP benefits in December. Sherrod Brown of OH and Rep. Alma Adams in the house were co-sponsors.
- I'm celebrating a new LEDA grant going out to create the NM Fresh Foods High Pressure Processing Plant in the ABQ area, which will also help growers/producers with cold storage.

- I celebrate the past and future willingness of folks to solve problems
- The relief package is great news and very, very needed at this time.
- I celebrate legislators. Citizen legislators with no salary, and all the effort they have to put in to understand so many aspects of our state.
- Our legislators are just marvelous. And the \$5 million will go to students who are struggling. Also to Sherry for the food waste committee. The European summit found that food waste causes carbon emissions. Hopefully that food waste group will get some mileage in the next year.
- I celebrate legislators who work with no pay and no staff except for volunteers like me. I also celebrate this group. The collaboration of this group is phenomenal. It's been a pleasure to be a part of these meetings and watch the work being done.
- I am celebrating that a lot of NM nonprofits have accessed new federal grants and federal funding. It's a testament to a lot of the great work going on in this state and is important to our food security and food and agricultural support systems.
- Today I'd like to celebrate my health along with my friends and family and all of you here today. Happy to be healthy and to be part of this conversation.
- I am feeling the gratitude for my colleagues and all the creative work that is happening. You all lift me up.
- What I'm celebrating this week is that Habitat for Humanity in ABQ is having a home dedication for a family. It's a reminder that there so many amazing nonprofits in the state and the incredible work they are doing on the ground. I also celebrate the \$5 million dollars. I was struck by how many legislators were unaware how the food banks work in the state.
- I'm celebrating the fact that we're all here and healthy still. Strong together. Take your vitamins and keep it going.
- I am celebrating our Mutual Aid networks. These calls helped us connect with Native relief funds.
- I am grateful to and celebrate bureaucrats. Hat tip to people who are unsung heroes behind the scenes getting the work done.
- Celebrating this group of thought leaders and expect working so tirelessly for so many months. I was just talking about you all on a national call – this doesn't happen in every state, having all of these people working on hunger, nutrition, food systems, agriculture together. I want to celebrate you and the victories you are achieving. Good to see you, Rep Ferrary and all the leadership.
- All of that energy all of those months has culminated in a beautiful blossom. Now we're going to be able to provide food to people with the most need. At McKinley Mutual Aid, we reached out through these calls and expanded networks through Lilly's leadership. Very thankful for this group here and allowing me to be part of it. Thank you all and I look forward to next year.
- I am celebrating food banks getting some more money to help the community. Go Sherry!
- This group is pretty incredible. There are a lot of synergies and good things happening between us, happening on and off these calls. I want to thank Kurt for a \$7,000 grant he helped put together with one of our food services groups in Las Vegas. I've never been on an NM First meeting where I feel I'm wasting my time.
- I appreciate everybody's words of support and motivation. We are building this network. I wanted to celebrate the new year. In Navajo culture we celebrate new year right before the beginning of the winter season. It's a new year for us. I feel very resilient with everybody working – if we can continue supporting and recognizing each other. We can pass this pandemic. We can know how to work and be more efficient.
- I am really celebrating the growers, farmers, ranchers we work with. Throughout a tumultuous year, growers are expanding production for 2021!
- I want to lift up unsung heroes: the farm workers, always grateful and celebrating their work, and everybody working through a time when they can be fairly paid; Restaurant workers and others who have to look at their own safety; Nurses and everybody working in the healthcare system. I'm grateful for everyone here and everyone working toward a better future in NM.
- I want to honor all of our acequia leadership. This time of year they are holding their annual meetings.



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- I'm grateful to be able to listen in on this group and learn so much from it. It's source of inspiration for me for my podcast.
 - I'm grateful for Zoom. Grateful for this group, learn more about NM and how to attack all the challenges. Grateful my dad only had bacterial issues and not COVID.
 - I am grateful for each of you. I know that when folks come together there is always a sense of urgency because food and hunger and water and strong local ag systems is no joke. There is pressure around getting nutritious food and clean water to folks and having sovereignty around that. It is pressing for NM and has been for generations. Even with sense of urgency you show up and share your stories. I really appreciate seeing how trust is growing, even in a time of crisis and challenge. The generosity of thinking, spirit and connections people bring forward is remarkable. In this hard time you are a bright light.
- 2. Special Session Lessons learned/hot tips navigating advocacy in a virtual space, etc.?**
- Kurt said that he was struck that some legislators didn't understand how the system work. It just speaks to the fact that we all need to continue to articulate not just the need, but also how the need is being met and where the gaps are.
 - Sherry said that just a week before the session they were celebrating how their outreach went and then were that in the Senate it became clear that there is lots of work to get done educating our legislators about hunger and about how people are being fed and the statewide network that is in place through the food banks, the food pantries, kitchens and shelters.
 - Rep. Ferrary agreed that there was lots of work to be done. "I'm glad we're going to be speaking before the Education Study Committee on the 18th, and if we can keep doing this, not only just for the food banks, but for all the other programs that we're going to need - to make people aware of how integral this whole system is of feeding our state and making sure that no one goes hungry – it's going to be really important that we just keep talking." She finished by saying they would be calling a meeting for the hunger caucus, and was looking forward to getting it more formalized again.
 - Lilly noted that as well as the work the group had been doing in the last special session and work between with state departments, the Governor's office, David Abbey and Ruby Ann, it was also doing parallel work around the SNAP Double Up Food Bucks efforts, and the local version of farm to food box. "Part of the wisdom of this group is that we really understand that if we want to do something that is transformative rather than stopgap when it comes to addressing hunger, we have to look at root causes of food insecurity. We have to look at how to strengthen our local food systems. And we have to still look at how to and how do we do that systemic work while at the same time addressing immediate needs." She added that not everything is about reinventing the wheel. There is a lot of great work already being done. It was a matter of figuring out how to pull those efforts together to really turn the dial on hunger.
 - Lilly added that ACI (which soon after the meeting changed its name to NM Chamber of Commerce) and others had been working on a kind of virtual platform that would allow folks to connect with legislators during the regular session. It would be a virtual environment with gathering rooms. While it was primarily being driving by business and chambers, their CEO had told Lilly that there might be options for nonprofits and public to use it as well. Lilly said she would share information out with folks as she learned more.
 - Kurt said that the last to special sessions it was frustrating for the general public to have any connection or to offer feedback to legislators. We have some email addresses and cell numbers, but it is unclear how to have an impact in a virtual setting. Kurt finished by saying that any sharing we can do as a group regarding how to effectively interface with legislators in this virtual environment would be very helpful.
 - Roy noted that it sounded like ACI was wanting to do what to what the Policy Workgroup was already doing but for the business sector. He added that pre-pandemic he found his legislators easy to work with and very open to conversations with regular citizens. Roy said he encourages everyone to reach out and talk with local representatives. Most of these folks are very open. It's up to citizens to reach out.



- Lilly said she was reminded of the work we did before the first special session when put a lot of thinking into some ways that a remote governing process might work that still allows healthy input into democratic processes. Lilly put a link in the chat to the [letter](#) the Policy Workgroup had sent to legislators. She asked those on the call to look at it and next time she would ask if there were additional suggestions.
 - i. Rep. Ferrary added that it is something the legislature had been thinking about. How to get through the emails they normally get, even during in-person session; and if they should consider getting an extra phone dedicated to the different text messages they might get. She noted that the ACI platform sounded interesting and a good way for us to be able to drop in on and listen, and perhaps comment.
 - ii. Lilly replied that even in the interim session she could see lessons being learned. She felt the chairs and co-chairs were doing a beautiful job of figuring out how to create space for civic engagement.

3. Interim Education Committee

- Lilly noted that members of the Policy Workgroup would be presenting to the LESC on December 18th. Rep Ferrary would introduce the panel. Then, Representative Stansbury would kick off the panel, and explain the Food and Farm Bill this group has been working on. Then Mag would present as a representative of the food banks. Helga Garcia Garza would present as the chair of the board of the NM Food and Ag Policy Council. Pam confirmed that Helga would present. Lilly noted that they had been given clear guidance that they could not have more than three presenters.
 - i. Rep. Ferrary said there would be an opportunity to do a dry run of the presentation for Las Cruces-based KTEL Radio on the 16th. She invited Pam and either Sherry or Mag and Rep. Stansbury to be on the panel. It would be for Peter Goodman's *Speak up, Las Cruces* show.
 - ii. Lilly reminded the group that the outline was available, as well as the consensus document the outline was based on, with broader detail. She asked coalition members to look at the documents if they hadn't had a chance to look at latest and greatest versions.
 - iii. [Draft food and ag bill outline](#)
 - iv. [Draft pandemic policy priorities](#)

4. Updates

- Pam noted that the NM Food & Ag Policy Council had several upcoming meetings. She said there is a form to fill out to register, or contact Pam at pam@farmtotablenm.org. The advocacy committee would meet on the 8th and the general meeting would take place December 15, 9-11 am, to set policy priorities for the legislative session. All welcome. Info would be posted on their [website](#) by Monday, and you can sign up for the info if you haven't already on the same website.
- Sherry gave an update on two workgroups. They are trying to get legislation through that has no budget impact, and where work could begin now.
 - i. Food waste – the gleaning workgroup report was in and had been distributed to legislators. They were looking at how to amend the current food liability act so there is protection for farmers if people come onto their land to pick or glean.
 - ii. The school food waste group was also looking at avoiding budget impact, and not requiring mandates. They are looking in which, if they have a food surplus in kitchen, school districts could be authorized to package and send food home with children in need.
- Tim noted that they are working on DWS funding previously discussed and potentially a bill that would require the Human Services Department to seek waivers from the federal government that would maximize participation in public benefits programs. He reiterated that HHS and the Governor's Office have done a great job seeking all available waivers during the pandemic. Tim added that he would love to see a world in which federal government makes those things permanent. This morning the Early Childhood Education and Care Department made a presentation to the LFC about their budget and right now it looks like their budget for childcare will be the same as last year. Tim added that any support that we can give to maintain that budget to make sure there are no cuts to the budget would be important. Fed government has done a done a great job



during the pandemic of relaxing regulations to the fullest extent possible under federal law, and they have proposed new regulations that would make access to the program easier as well as make it easier for families to stay in the program.

- i. Rep. Ferrary added that she had been listening to the seminar with the Early Childhood Education Department and agreed they were doing wonderful work, which needs our support.

5. Draft Legislation

- Victoria said they were still waiting to hear back from the bill drafter. Trying to stay optimistic, trying to reach out and get final draft since the beginning of October. They'll update the group when they know more.
- Kurt noted that work was being done to change statute to allow renters more time to pay their back rent. There is a workgroup working on that.
 - i. Tim said he could get more info on moratorium of evictions if anyone wanted.
 - ii. Kurt also wondered about the \$5 million appropriated in the special session. He wondered if the funds from HSD would still be maintained.
 - iii. Lilly noted that during first special session in June we had advocated for \$11 million, before we knew about the big drop in surplus food.
- Sherry said that they still to request another \$5 million. The CARES act fund was a gift and must be spent this month. She added that they were looking at using the food the first quarter of the calendar year. Regarding the other \$5 million, they were already serving a high number of people before the pandemic and now we're seeing 30% increase. NM is slow to recover when we see this kind of a downturn. Sherry said they predicted this kind of service to NM might go on for the next 12-18 months at the very least. She added that they would return to the legislature to request an additional \$5 million.
 - i. Regarding TFAP, Sherry noted that the USDA-funded program could be a huge reduction. Over the past calendar year the program provided about 25 million pounds of food, whereas next year it will drop to 5 million pounds.
 - ii. Kurt noted that the NM Finance authority was proposing a statutory change to provide more emergency rental assistance. The 2nd piece is the Uniform Owner Relations Act, which would allow tenants more time to provide remedy their situation and stay in their properties if they're being evicted. He urged the group to support the legislation.
 - iii. Tim said he would share info in the chat if his colleague responds during meeting.
 - iv. Rep Ferrary noted that in 2013 they had tried to pass a mortgage foreclosure bill that would stop the process. That's a bill that I think will become more important now than before. She wondered if groups working on the uniform owner relations act might want to include it, or support another bill alongside it.
 1. Kurt said he hadn't heard mention of it. Rep. Ferrary said she would provide that information to Kurt.
- Lilly highlighted a few issues.
 - i. Tsiporah has been organizing a policy workgroup focused on the anti-donation clause. Anti-donation issues have come up at NM First town halls for a long time. At this point the policy workgroup is thinking about doing better job of defining the term "indigent," and doing it in a way that is strength-based and proactive. In addition, there had been discussion about broadening how and to whom resources could be directed. At this point it was being framed by whether there was something to add to the definition of "nonprofit." It leaves out work being done in small business that are for-profit but have a social benefit, such as farmers. There was talk about whether this would be a constitutional amendment. Next meeting we'll ask Tsiporah for an update.
 - ii. Lilly noted that NM First is doing some work around legislative redistricting. Redistricting helps us figure out who and how bread and butter are distributed. NM First has gathered a task force of 25 folks from across New Mexico to think about how we can strengthen openness, transparency and fairness in the legislative redistricting process. In addition the group is thinking about how to maintain public faith that



voters are really picking their elected officials. In the next two sessions, they will be working through recommendations. Lilly added that NM First was part of a broader good governance group and would share information about the recommendations with legislators and other folks who were active or want to be active in policy change work.

- iii. Lilly gave shout out to Erika and the agricultural resilience work she was doing. There was a lot of good learning going on as well as emerging systems change ideas. Lilly invited those interested to take a deeper dive around AG resilience issues to contact Erika to find out when the groups would be meeting.
 1. Erika noted that much the work of the agricultural resilience group overlaps with the Policy Workgroup's work. She invited anyone on the call to join meetings in the areas of land and water, economic viability, food systems and value chain and next generation farmers and ranchers. She acknowledged that some of those present already attended those meetings and extended an invitation for others to join. Erika added that they had been hosting a speaker series to dive in a little deeper into some of the specific issues and obstacles that we see here in New Mexico. If you are interested in learning more, please reach out to Erika at Erika@nmfirst.org. Agricultural Resilience webpage can be found at <http://nmfirst.org/event-details/ag>
- iv. Anna said there would be hearings and discussions regarding whether to extend the junk food tax on the Navajo Nation. She added that the funds have generated resources to the chapters the past six years, which have been used to build gardens, greenhouses, foot paths, to address "dia-obesity". She encouraged those on the call to read the [news article](#) she posted in the chat.
- v. Lilly noted that 17th Annual NMPHA Health Policy Legislative Forum would be held on December 4 and was free of charge. It will be an opportunity to hear more and weigh in on some of their legislative proposals. www.nmpa.org is general website, and the link for the meeting was <http://nmpa.org/event-3991352>

6. Next Steps

- The next meeting of the General Action Team will take place January 14, 2021 from 12-1:30 pm.

