HOWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT | UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

Howard County Food Council
8930 Stanford Blvd | Columbia, MD 21045
410.313.5788 - Voice/Relay
1.866.313.6300 - Toll Free
www.hclhic.org

Minutes – Howard County Food Council General Meeting

Tuesday August 25, 2026 at 10:00 – 11:30am
In-Person at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center

Members Present:
Adrianne Fantasia, Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Carla Gates, Reclaiming Health Learning
Claudet Miranda, Maryland Hunger Solutions
Erica Jones, Edesiagurl Enterprises
Erika Strauss Chavarria, Columbia Community Care
Eunise Foster, Howard County Department of Social Services
Gerardo Benavides, Horizon Foundation
Irma Iribe, Howard County Department of Community Resources & Services
James Zoller, Howard County Office of Agriculture
Jennifer Holland, Horizon Foundation
Laura Crovo, Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center
Lauren Chilton, Howard County Office of Emergency Management
Maribet Rivera-Brute, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
Michael Maggio, Howard County Office of Agriculture
Michelle Feng, University of Maryland, Extension - Howard County
Ovan Shortt, Howard County Department of Community Resources & Services
Petra Guiland, Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity
Shannon Blount, HCPSS Community Schools

Staff Present:
Reena Rambharat, Howard County Health Department
Nathan Glenn, University of Maryland, Extension - Howard County
Emily Harris, Howard County Food Council

Topic/Agenda	Discussion	Action/Follow-up
Welcome and Introductions	Ms. Emily Harris, Food Council Administrator, Howard County Food Council called the meeting to order at 10:00a.m. She provided a welcome to members in attendance and indicated that the minutes will be shared after the meeting and available on the Food Council's webpage. She reviewed the meeting agenda. Ms. Harris stated that the goals for this meeting were to present workgroup formation plans and engage in a Howard County food system mapping activity. Ms. Harris then invited members to make announcements.	Howard County Food Council information can be found on the Local Health Improvement Coalition's (LHIC) website: https://www.hclhic.org/council

Member Announcements	**The following announcements were shared by the group:** Ms. Carla Gates shared about her Reclaiming Health Learning Lab In-Person Implicit Bias and Structural Racism Workshop taking place on Friday, September 25, 2026 from 3:00 - 6:30pm. Nurses will earn 3 CEs. Ms. Claudet Miranda shared about the upcoming training webinar SNAP for Immigrants and Mixed Status Families on 9/14 at 11:00. This is training on SNAP eligibility for Immigrants and mixed status households. This session will break down immigration categories that may qualify, common documentation challenges, and strategies to support mixed status households. It will cover key rules, recent updates, household scenarios, and best practices to ensure that immigrant families get accurate information. Ms. Eunise Foster shared that her team is taking part in a community service event with Rebuilding Together, which helps repair people's homes. Mr. Ovan Shortt shared information about Our Boys, Our Men, Our Future: Health and Wellness Fair on November 21 at 10:00am. Our Boys, Our Men, Our Future is a community event dedicated to promoting health, building meaningful connections, and inspiring the next generation through mentorship and support. A flyer will be available soon. Ms. Petra Guiland shared about the upcoming documentary viewing Reel Enlightenment: GATHER - The Fight to Revitalize Our Native Food Ways on Thursday, September 24 at 6:00pm at the East Columbia 50+ Senior Center. GATHER (2020) is an intimate portrait of the growing movement among Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political and cultural identities through food sovereignty, while battling the trauma of centuries of genocide. Directed by Sanjay Rawal and produced by Sterlin Harjo (Seminole, Muscogee), the film is a powerful reminder that Native food rights are human rights. This event is open to all ages. Mr. Gerardo Benavides shared about the event Hopeful Voices: Showcasing Stories and Art of Mental Health and Wellness on Saturday, September 26, 2026 from 2–6 PM. It will take place at the East Columbia 50+ Center. Ms. Maribet Rivera-Brute announced the event Through the Eyes of a Community Health Worker: A Photovoice Exhibition on Monday, September 14, 2026, 6:00 – 7:30 PM at Roger Carter Community Center, 3000 Milltowne Dr, Ellicott City, MD 21043.	Reclaiming Health Learning Lab In-Person Implicit Bias and Structural Racism Workshop Registration link. SNAP for Immigrants and Mixed Status Families Registration link. GATHER - The Fight to Revitalize Our Native Food Ways Registration link. Hopeful Voices: Showcasing Stories and Art of Mental Health and Wellness Registration link. Through the Eyes of a Community Health Worker: A Photovoice Exhibition Registration link. Walktober information.

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	Registration is strongly encouraged. She also shared that Walktober 2026 is coming. Planning is underway for the 7th Annual Howard County Walktober. Visit the Howard County Walktober 2026 website to explore upcoming events and learn how you can participate.	
Workgroup Formation	Ms. Harris explained that the Food Council plans to create workgroups for 2027. A feedback form will be sent to members to gather feedback on interest and preferred meeting options.	Workgroup Interest Form
Food System Mapping Activity	Attendees completed a facilitated Food System Mapping Activity to visualize a big picture map of our Howard County food system determining which sectors organizations fit into, understanding the current connections between the food system sectors, identifying gaps, and determining opportunities for collaboration.	Information will be synthesized and analyzed. Then, it will be shared with members.
Next Steps and Action Items	Ms. Harris explained that the information at this meeting will be synthesized and analyzed in the next few months. The results will be shared with members when it is ready. Ms. Harris shared details of the next meeting.	
Wrap Up and Adjournment	Ms. Harris announced the conclusion of the meeting and thanked the participants for joining. ● Shared plans to distribute meeting minutes ● Expressed gratitude and bid farewell. Ms. Harris adjourned the meeting at 11:30am.	

Respectfully submitted by
Ms. Emily Harris, MS, RDN, LDN
Food Council Administrator,
Howard County Food Council

Future Meeting Dates:

Food Council General Meeting (2nd Wednesday every 3 months) *

- Wednesday, October 14, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (In-Person) Harriet Tubman Cultural Center
- Wednesday, December 9, 10:00 – 11:30 am; (Virtual) Zoom Meeting

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