

Full Council Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2026

Attendees: Jared Barnett (Oakland Connects), Eric Candela (Forgotten Harvest), Robin Danto (OCHD), Melanie Duquesnel (United Community Family Services), Susan Erspamer (Hospitality House), Rhyan Frost (Micah 6), Melanie Gill (United Way Southeastern MI), Sana Hafeez (OLSHA), Angelya Higginbottom (OCHD), Carrie Hribar (OC HHS), Theresa Krell (Trinity Health Oakland), Rita Little (Corewell Health), Julie Lowenthal (AgeWays), Jennifer Lucarelli (OU), Kelsey Merz (OCHD), Ginnie Uhley (OU WB School of Medicine), Teagan Smith (resident), Joann Wrobel (OCHD), Amanda Woods (OC HHS)

Guest: Monicaarena, Starter of Hope

Welcome & Introductions

Members ranked recommended action items from the Food Landscape Study while entering the virtual room. Amanda welcomed new members and members made introductions around the virtual room.

Starter of Hope, presentation by Monicaarena

See presentation attached. If your agency would like to connect and work with Starter of Hope, email starterofhope@gmail.com.

Membership Charter

Amanda reviewed the new membership charter. The charter details four unique membership engagement options. The purpose is to define council roles, per membership feedback, support retention and over time increase Council capacity to address priority issues. All members are requested to complete and return form by Friday, January 30th. Membership form is attached in the email and [found on the website](#).

Post-meeting additional details: Amanda is requesting assistance with a secretary position. This individual would assist with taking attendance, compiling meeting notes and sharing notes with Amanda. The individual should be able to attend a majority of the full council meetings. Email Amanda if interested.

Partner Updates

- Jennifer Lucarelli: Seeking organizations to help prepare and bring in hot dinners (no onsite kitchen) and/or grab-n-go breakfasts and lunches for New Birth Church's winter only shelter for women and children. Shelter capacity is approximately 40 people. Email Jennifer

(lucarell@oakland.edu) for questions and/or to sign up.

- Kelsey Monks-Carry: Sign up is live for Trinity Health's farm share season.
 - [General Farm Share](#) information
 - [Enrollment in the Farm Share](#), including the Farm Share Assistance box
 - [Food as Medicine Internship position](#)
 - Email Kelsey (kelsey.monkscarry@trinity-health.org) with questions.

2026 Priority Setting + Action Planning

- Amanda recapped the Food Landscape goals members voted on in November 2025. Membership opted to focus on Goal 1 for 2026 activities.
 - Goal 1: Improve access to nutritious, local, culturally appropriate food for all Oakland County residents
- Based on ranked voting, the following two recommendations emerged:
 - Priority 1: Develop resource sharing mechanism between pantries and/or other food programs to share best practices for meeting needs and sharing food that would be wasted.
 - Workgroup members: Jennifer L., Joann W., Susan E., Kelsey M., Rhyan F., Theresa K.
 - Workgroup will meet next on 2/17, 10-11:30 AM.
 - Amanda will send out calendar invitation.
 - Priority 2: Educate community members and food-based business and organizations on food donation laws and the economics of food waste prevention.
 - Workgroup members: Teagan S., Sana H., Kelly H.
 - Workgroup will meet 1/26 at 1-2pm with reoccurring meetings.
 - Teagan will send out calendar invitation.
- Members interested in the two priorities went into separate virtual breakout rooms to develop SMARTIE objectives for each respective priority. The full council meeting concluded at the breakout session, and non-workgroup members were dismissed.

Federal and State Policy Updates

- State of Michigan:
 - 10 Cents a Meal: An advocacy group met in January and launched efforts to work towards program reinstatement for the FY27 Budget (note: the program was not funded in FY26). [Sign up here](#) for more information and/or to learn more.
- Federal:
 - [Dietary Guidelines 2025-2030 were released](#). Read statements from: [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#), [School Nutrition Association](#), and [Marion Nestle's Food Politics](#).
 - President Trump signed a bill on Jan 14, allowing whole milk back into the school meal program. This reintroduction also aligns with the new Dietary Guidelines introduced last

week. Implementation begins immediately ([USDA Press Release](#)).

- USDA is proposing to eliminate [broad-based categorical eligibility](#) for SNAP. Currently, broad-based categorical eligibility allows households who qualify for other income-based programs, like TANF, to be automatically certified for SNAP ([USDA Proposal](#)). Instead, households would be required to complete multiple applications for each respective program, increasing administrative burden both for households and responsible agencies.

Next Full Council Meeting: March 17, 2026; 9-10:30 AM, virtual