



## Meeting Minutes: Governor's Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers

DATE: 11/15/2021

MINUTES PREPARED BY: CINTHIA MARTINEZ

Attendance

### Committee Members

#### Present

**Colin Laffey**, Staff Attorney, Agricultural Worker Project, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS)

**Jim Gleb**, President, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1189

**Nicole Blissenbach**, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

**Rodolfo Gutierrez**, Executive Director, HACER

**Sarah Berry**, Public Health Director, Waseca County | CHS Administrator, Le Sueur – Waseca Community Health Board

**Susan Bishop**, Supervisor, Minnesota Department of Health, and Migrant Agricultural Worker Response Lead, ICS

**Tamara Nelsen**, Executive Director, Minnesota AgriGrowth Council

#### Absent

**Andrea Vaubel**, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

**Gary Wertish**, President, Minnesota Farmers Union

**Rena Wong**, Director of Organizing, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 663

**Stephanie Low**-Interim Executive Director/ Chief Medical Officer, Community Health Service Inc.

**Emilia Gonzalez Avalos**, Executive Director, Unidos MN

**Hamse Warfa**, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

**Kevin Paap**, President, Minnesota Farm Bureau

**Kiza Olson**, CHS Administrator, Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services

**Staff Present:** Ben Wood, Safety Consultant Principal, Minnesota's Workplace Safety Consultation

Unit; Carrie Rigdon, Operations and Planning Section Manager, Minnesota Department of Agriculture;

Blake Nordin, Environmental Health Supervisor, Minnesota Department of Health; Cinthia Martinez,

CareerForce Office Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development;

Jessica Grosz, Director of Labor Standards and Apprenticeship, Minnesota Department of Labor, and

Industry; Lorrie Janatopoulos, CareerForce Director, Minnesota Department of Employment and

Economic Development; Maureen Ramirez, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Minnesota

Department of Employment and Economic Development; Mike Zastoupil, Food Access Associate,

Minnesota Department of Health

### Agenda

1:00 PM **Welcome**

1:05 PM **Guest Introductions**

1:10 PM **Approve Minutes & Agenda**  
1:15 PM **Updates – DC Vaubel**  
1:35 PM **Migrant Services Consortium November 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting**  
1:40 PM **AWWC Recommendations**  
2:50 PM **Public Comments**  
2:55 PM **Final Thoughts & Next Steps**  
3:00 PM **Adjourn**

## Meeting notes

### Guest Introductions

No members of the public introduced themselves.

### Approve Minutes & Agenda

Approved.

### Updates- DC Blissenbach

At this meeting the recommendations and progress of the report will be reviewed, and the Committee members will provide feedback in order to make any changes and updates before voting at next week's meeting AWWC meeting. Maureen Ramirez will be sending out an email to the committee members on November 17<sup>th</sup>, with the recommendations report for Committee members to review and add comments or changes. Any concerns or questions related to this report should be directed to Maureen.

### Migrant Services Consortium November 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting

AWWC members attended the Consortium meeting on November 10<sup>th</sup> to present the progress this committee has made on the recommendations. A number of themes came from the discussion including housing recommendations, logistics of the report, questions about who is doing the inspections and reporting, and the importance of the enforcement piece. Other questions included penalty conformity and how that would look. Overall, the consortium did not have any objections to the recommendations and expressed their gratitude for the work this committee has been doing.

### AWWC Recommendations

The Committee tested consensus on the recommendations at the November 8<sup>th</sup> meeting using the fist to five approach with five representing high consensus. All recommendations received a vote of 4-5. Some received feedback regarding possible concerns and/or considerations. It is important to note that there were Committee Members who weren't present for the consensus fist to five exercise who may also have concerns. Staff took the feedback from last week and grouped the recommendations into two categories – those that seem ready to go at this point in time and those that need more work (That Word document will be in the meeting attachments).

#### **Recommendation feedback/comments:**

Recommendation 1.

- Would it be possible to look at other stakeholders that are on the committee?
- Do we also want to include something regarding the goals of the committee?

Recommendation 2.

- The ombudsperson role would have responsibility to improve coordination and communication with workers. The role will work internally on inter-agency coordination, and also be external facing, so that workers and advocates have a centralized place to go for questions and answers.

#### Recommendation 3.

- Do we vote on this one as a package or separate?
- It might be worthwhile to submit them with an overarching statement that we are looking to address existing laws so that we improve conditions for all agriculture workers across existing law.
- Will work on getting more specific language on getting what needs to be included.

#### Recommendation 4.

- Concern on there being a shortage of housing in greater Minnesota.
- Is the goal to help employers provide adequate housing or help those who have housing fix the problems?
- Concerns on how it will be implemented and what it will look like.
- Will revisit this recommendation.

#### Recommendation 5.

- Clarification on not adding additional penalties but to bring them to conformity with the federal penalties.

#### Recommendation 6.

- This program is already in place. This recommendation was more for broadening the alliances already in place. It would be helpful for committee support in creating this program.

#### Recommendation 7.

- Adding clarification on food processing also includes meat and poultry packaging.

#### Recommendation 8.

- DC Blissenbach had to leave the November 8<sup>th</sup> meeting prior to discussion on this recommendation. She expressed concerns about the recommendation given that a process like this is already in place and is meant to be used only in the most extreme situations. Changing this would require legislative action and she expressed doubt that the legislature would consider that.
- The Committee decided to remove this recommendation and further exploring after the December 1<sup>st</sup> date if necessary.

#### Recommendation 9.

- Last week there were questions on the 'how'.
- How long does this recognition program last and how long would employer keep the badge?
- Where will it be stored?

Recommendation 10.

- How do we ensure employers will provide this and how do we make it easier for employees to have access to these?

Recommendation 11.

- Agreement from the Committee.

Recommendation 12.

- Is it possible to align standards for those conducting the inspections?
- Development of continuity across inspection authority.
- Second bullet point may be further reviewed and separated by work group.

## Public Comments

No members from the public.

## Final Thoughts & Next Steps

Maureen will send out recommendations report on November 17<sup>th</sup> for the Committee members to review. At the next AWWC meeting there will be a majority vote taken on each of the recommendations.

## Adjourn