



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

DATE: 09/13/2021

MINUTES PREPARED BY: CINTHIA MARTINEZ

Attendance

### Committee Members

#### Present

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

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

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

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

**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

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

#### Absent

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

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

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

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

**Kristi Halvarson**, Executive Director, Community Health Service, Inc.

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

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

**Staff Present:** Ben Wood, Safety Consultant Principal, Minnesota's Workplace Safety Consultation Unit; Carrie Rigdon, Operations and Planning Section Manager, Minnesota Department of Agriculture; 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

**Guests Present:** No public guests introduced themselves

## Agenda

1:00 PM	<b>Welcome</b>
1:05 PM	<b>Approve Minutes &amp; Meeting Agenda</b>
1:10 PM	<b>Updates-DC Vaubel</b>
1:15 PM	<b>Guest Introductions</b>
1:20 PM	<b>Policy Framework</b>
1:35 PM	<b>Workplace Safety Presentation</b>
2:05PM	<b>Discussion</b>
2:45 PM	<b>Housing workgroup updates</b>
2:50 PM	<b>Public Comments</b>
2:55 PM	<b>Final Thoughts &amp; Next Steps</b>
3:00 PM	<b>Adjourn</b>

## Meeting notes

### Approve Minutes & Agenda

Approved.

### Updates- Co-Chair Deputy Commissioner Vaubel

Deputy Commissioner Vaubel announced that this committee does not have an expiration date. Although the recommendations are due December 1<sup>st</sup>, the committee itself will continue.

Cinthia Martinez is transitioning into this meeting and will be taking over the administrative role previously covered by Mike Z.

### Guest Introductions

No members of the public introduced themselves.

## Policy Framework

### **Presented by Darielle Dannen, DEED Government Relations Director**

Presentation and discussion on how AWWC can make recommendations to the Governor. Darielle discussed the three areas that the recommendations will likely fall within – state legislative recommendations; rule-making recommendations; and if there are recommended changes on a Federal level that the Committee surfaces in its work, those can be brought forward as well. Recommendations can be about both policy and funding.

Darielle outlined DEED’s experience with many Advisory Committees and how they are a great opportunity to get information, feedback, and comments from the public. This Committee has the opportunity to untangle what can be a confusing area and provide recommendations regarding worker wellness and worker safety.

When the Committee makes recommendations to the Governor, his office will look at the problems and issues identified, and what the recommendations/potential solutions are made regarding those issues. It is important to remember the Governor will consider these recommendations and decide which to move forward and how. It is also important to think about the bigger picture. The recommendations will be public and can also be taken up by advocacy groups, or individual legislators with an interest in these issues.

If the Governor takes up recommendations, this is the process for the upcoming session:

- o The Governor makes both policy and budget recommendations to the legislature
- o The Minnesota House and Senate will release their policy and budget recommendations after the Governor in early spring (usually around Easter/Passover)
- o Session starts in January and ends in May
- o The Governor and the Legislature will get back together in mid-May before the end of the legislative session to negotiate the final bills

Although AWWC is putting recommendations forward in December for the upcoming legislative session, this Committee will continue. There are many Committees that go over a number of legislative sessions.

We post these reports on our website: <https://mn.gov/deed/about/what-we-do/agency-results/mandated/>

## Workplace Safety Presentation

### **Ben Wood, Safety Consultant Principal- Overview of “OSHA” and Agriculture Workers:**

(Presentation will be in the meeting documents)

### **Robert Lopez, Sate Legislative Representative- Meat packeting is unsafe for workers**

(Presentation will be in the meeting documents)

### **Gregorio Mendez Ortega, Agriculture specialist, Pesticide & Fertilizer Management, MDA -Worker Protection Standards for Agriculture Pesticides (WPS)**

(Flyer will be in the meeting documents)

## Discussion

**Question 1: What specific workplace safety issues should the committee address?**

**Question 2: What ideas do you have for policy solutions that address these specific workplace safety issues?**

**Question 3: What other information do you need to make good policy recommendations for these workplace safety issues?**

### **Discussion on workplace safety included:**

Concerns with reporting process including:

- Regulations
- Inspections and Pre-inspections
- Monitoring
- Communication with employees
- Lack of incident reporting
- Lack of organization – not comprehensive

Are there more penalties to put in place to get to higher reporting numbers from agriculture employers? On the other hand, what tools and incentives to make an agriculture employer more likely to report consistently workplace injuries?

How do we make sure employers understand standards that protect workers, and ensure that they meet those standards?

Having comprehensive data on fatalities and injuries report is important – need to be able to see it and compare it. Data on workers compensation for example - how many instances of agricultural workers using workers compensation are there?

Language and cultural differences prevent people from reporting and understanding importance of communicating and no penalties.

Information that would be helpful: examples from unions, community groups, safety managers, groups representing workers, farms, of some of the best management practices. Solutions developed by farms and farms/workers and by safety agents to solve issues.

## Housing Workgroup updates (Colin Laffey)

- Committee includes Colin Laffey, Nicole Blissenbach, Sarah Berry.
- First meeting held on September 10<sup>th</sup>
- Workgroup set a goal to report to AWWC on September 27<sup>th</sup>

## Public Comments

No one from the public made comments

## Final Thoughts & Next Steps

The committee formed a Workplace safety work group that included Nicole Blissenbach, Jerry Gleb, Rodolfo Gutierrez, Kiza Olson, Ben Wood, Rena Wong.

## Adjourn