

Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council

MINUTES

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

1:00PM – 4:00PM

Virtual Meeting via Webex

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Caleb Frostman, DWD Secretary

2. Roll-Call and Self-Introductions

All

John Keckhaver called the roll and the following Council members were present: Secretary Caleb Frostman, Secretary-designee Randy Romanski, Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Representative Gary Tauchen, Monica Gahan, Miranda Leis, Sara Schoenborn, Kristin Olson, Nick Stadnyk, Tom Gillis, Jeff Edgar, Pete Kondrup, Shelly Mayer, Erik Huschitt, Larry Lee, Corey Kuchta, Paul Palmby, Pam Porter, Sharon Wendt, Gwendolyn Boettcher, Jill Runde, Bob Hagenow, Jeff Eide, Dale Gallenberg, Lynn Maki, Sam Rikkers, Betsy Leonard, Greg Cisewski, John Rosenow

Members introduced themselves and shared background information relevant to the work of the Council.

Public attendees: Britta Rottering

3. Conflicts of Interest and Ethics/Open Meetings/

Pam McGillivray, DWD Chief Legal

Counsel

Public Records

Pam McGillivray provided an overview of Open Meetings and Public Records law. Information shared was sourced from the Wisconsin Department of Justice-Office of Open Government.

- All meetings must be preceded by notice of the meeting; and
- Must be held in a public place that is open and reasonably accessible to all members of the public.
- Reviewed what constitutes a meeting, what is required of open meetings, and what is allowable for closed session.
- Public Records law – all records are presumed to be available for the public.
- If Council members receive requests for public records, members should forward those to DWD.

Presentation slides are available upon request.

4. Description of Statutory Charge of Council

John Keckhaver, DWD Legislative

Liaison

John Keckhaver provided an overview of the statutory requirements of the Council and the intent of the Council related to agriculture, food, and natural resources:

- Increase hiring and retention of well-qualified employees;
- Promote the coordination educational systems for current and future employees;
- Support employment in these fields; and

- Recommend policies and improvements to agricultural education across systems, including advising state agencies.
- Consist of statutorily required members from statutorily required agencies that can assist the Council in its functions and duties.

Meeting frequency – Statutes only require Council to meet at least once annually.

Executive committee – Must form an Executive Committee that includes the Secretaries (or designees) or DATCP

and DWD, and the DPI State Superintendent (or designee).

Terms of members – Members appointed by DATCP and DPI are subject to term limits.

Responsibilities/reports – Requires reviews to be conducted. This is likely already fulfilled by reviews and reports generated by represented agencies; however:

- The Council is to create an annual report in September of each year about the activities of the Council in the previous fiscal year. Report requirements included in statute.

5. Council Discussion of Administrative Matters All

John Keckhaver introduced the following discussion items:

- Election of chair – Likely needs to occur prior to introduction of bylaws.
- Committee options
- Bylaws – John Keckhaver noted that there are not existing bylaws for the Council. Suggested the creation of bylaws that could guide the work of the Council.
- Meeting schedule

Council members that served under or were familiar with the previous iteration of the Council shared perspectives on the Council's past focus on fundraising for the Executive Director's position, challenged by a lack of funds to keep that work going, and the oversight of a foundation, which held events that discussed agricultural workforce and economic development.

6. Discussion of Council's substantive focus All

The Council's discussion included

- Employers are challenged by the regulatory restrictions of many of the youth agricultural engagement and apprenticeship programs—outreach to understand these impacts or what changes are recommended could be an undertaking of the Council.
- Issues of rural broadband and the unbalanced impacts of virtual learning and broadband disparities.
- Agricultural industry has a lot of seasonal impacts with many portions of the industry being very seasonal in nature. It was suggested that the Council looks at changes that could be made to unemployment benefits and laws that would help this seasonal workforce be able to stay engaged in their industry.
- Challenges with attracting students into the food processing industry.
- Getting the educational systems to emphasize agricultural education and preparing students to understand the opportunities in agriculture to focus on a trade education.
- Broaden information to guidance counselors and parents about agricultural careers, even as early as 6th grade. Use new opportunities to share videos to spread this information and advancing outreach.
- There is a need to build a connection between the employers, youth programs, and the students/schools. Could look to healthcare industry as a model to placing youth in employer programs.
- Opportunity with virtual learning to pull in guest speakers from the field.

- Develop a roadmap to understand the systems and programs to identify the opportunities for students and employers.
- Find ways to bring natural resource management into agricultural education.
- Provide training to school districts about the opportunities in agricultural industry to pass on to students to know about the programs that will set them on that career path.
- Discuss the topic of immigration of workforce for the agricultural industry, and what is the interaction with the education systems. Perhaps engage the DWD Migrant Labor Council.
- Find ways to capture the attention and career paths of students as early as middle school.
- Address the challenges with attracting and retaining higher skilled, longer term, and non-traditional agricultural employees while keeping industry components in rural areas.
- Focus on growing agricultural educators.
- Expanding focus on labor management—cultivating good agricultural employers, especially for smaller operations.
- Looking at ways to reach schools and areas that may not have ag educators or classes that set students up for careers in agricultural and provide learning opportunities.

7. Review of Action Items

John Keckhaver, DWD

- Looking ahead to the elections of a chair and executive committee members and begin discussing development of bylaws. Nominees needed for Council leadership.
- Council would like to have a directory of members and a review of the reports and programs already provided by the agencies.

8. Adjournment