

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board

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DRAFT MINUTES **Executive Committee Conference Call** **Thursday, January 24, 2008, 12:00 Noon – 1:00 p.m., e.s.t.**

Executive Committee Members Present: Dr. Martin Massengale, Chair; Dr. Walter Armbruster, Vice Chair, Dr. Marianne Smith-Edge, Mrs. Carol Keiser-Long, Dr. Daryl Lund, Dr. David Thomassen and Dr. Edward Runge

Executive Committee Members Absent: Dr. Martin Apple, Dr. Mary Wagner and Dr. Gale Buchanan (Ex-officio),

USDA Staff Participation: Dr. Joseph Dunn, Executive Director, Mrs. Shirley Morgan Jordan, Program Support Coordinator, Mr. Rob Hedberg, Director, Legislative Affairs, REE.



I. WELCOME AND UPDATE

Joseph Dunn, Executive Director called roll of the Executive Committee members.

The Chair of the Advisory Board, Martin Massengale provided some introductory remarks and thanked those Executive Committee members for being on the call.

Martin then reviewed the agenda for this meeting and asked Joe Dunn if he knew if Under Secretary Buchanan would be able to be on the conference call. Joe stated that Dr. Buchanan was called away and wouldn't be able to participate in this meeting.

II. Update on Reports and Recommendations from the October Meeting

Martin asked Mary Wagner to report on the progress made in formulating recommendations from the Organic Farming focus Session from the October meeting. Mary stated that Daryl Lund had sent a two page draft of the Organic Farming report to the Board office requesting that it be forwarded to the Executive Committee for review and comments. She asked that Board staff follow up on that request and stated that the draft report contained the following recommendations for REE:

- 1) Fill the National Program Leader position for organic farming.
- 2) Develop a roadmap for change in organic agriculture.

- 3) Encourage CSREES to consider mechanisms to support postdoctoral fellowships in organic agriculture.
- 4) Establish the National Agricultural Library as the clearinghouse for organic agriculture information nationally.

After the draft report is read and critiqued by the Executive Committee, it will be sent to the whole Board for comments, and then forwarded by the Board Office to the Secretary and Members of Congress.

Walt Armbruster then told the Committee that the report on Entrepreneurship and Rural Development was still being formulated by the Working Group. Martin asked that both reports be finalized and ready for delivery to the Secretary by mid-February.

III. Update on the Farm Bill

Joe Dunn and Rob Hedberg reported on the status of the Farm Bill. Joe stated that the Senate version had passed with such a plurality that it may withstand a potential veto. Rob mentioned that the Farm Bill is ready to go to conference but he wasn't sure when. Martin asked Rob if he knew who the members of the House conference committee were, and Rob said that they had not been appointed yet. Joe stated that the members of the Senate Ag Conference Committee could be found on the Senate Ag Committee website (<http://agriculture.senate.gov>). Rob added that staffers for the Senate and House have been working on compromises for the less controversial issues, but more difficult ones will be discussed in conference. Rob stated that an example of a "big issue" was how much money will be available both to the Department overall and for each Title in the Farm Bill, and that these discussions are taking place at a very high level. He said they are also discussing how and why the House and Senate versions differ. Finally Rob stated that he predicted that the Bill will be passed late February or early March.

Martin then asked the Committee if they had any questions for Rob and Joe. Ed Runge asked if the President is holding any discussions on the subject of earmarks, and Rob answered that those discussions were currently underway. Martin asked why, if Congress controls earmarks. Rob commented that the Administration is not in favor of earmarks and may use the President's veto to affect the issue. Martin asked Rob if he felt the late February/early March timeline for passage was realistic, and Rob stated that although it looked hopeful, he would be surprised if passage came later and historically Farm Bills tend to pass in late April. Walt Armbruster then asked Rob if some form of permanent legislation might be enacted upon to ensure continuation of the old Farm Bill by the end of March. Rob commented that he felt this would depend on the type of extension, for example a short term extension might occur if it was felt the new Farm Bill had a chance to pass.

IV. Discussion on Dates and Times of Future Executive Committee Meetings

Martin Massengale asked if the 12 noon to 1 pm (eastern standard time) time slot was convenient for everyone to attend future tele-meetings of the Executive Committee for FY 08, and all present agreed to that time slot. A discussion ensued between the committee members regarding the best day of the week, and best week in the month to hold these meetings. It was concluded that the third Thursday of each month was now most suitable. Exceptions would be the month of February, when all agreed that Thursday, the 28th was the best day for a meeting, and March when it was planned to

hold a meeting of the Exec Committee, if needed, sometime during the General Board Meeting being held on the 18th to the 20th in Washington at the Double Tree Hotel on Rhode Island Ave.

V. Planning for the Spring Meeting

Shirley Morgan stated that she had booked an additional block of rooms at the Double Tree Hotel on Rhode Island Ave. for Monday night, March 17th for those members who decide to come in early for the meeting. Joe Dunn said that Dan Dooley, Vice President of the University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources will speak on the afternoon of the 18th, followed by Dr. Arden Bement, Director of the National Science Foundation. The evening speaker will be Dr. Gale Buchanan. Joe reminded the Committee that the subject of each of these presentations will be focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the board as advisors to the REE Mission Area. Joe also stated that the morning of the 19th will be used to develop pathways of improved Board/REE Agency interactions, and that this session which will include break out groups managed by staff from Cindy Zook Associates, an organization that acted as facilitators for other USDA planning sessions.

Martin Massengale told the Committee that Secretary Schafer has also agreed to attend the meeting and would most likely want to provide remarks when the meeting begins at 1:15 pm or so on the 18th.

Joe stated that he would re-work the draft agenda that he and Shirley was assembling to include the Secretary.

Finally, Marianne Smith Edge stated that the agenda for the only focus session of the meeting, "Educating the Future Work Force for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Areas" was well on its way to being developed by the work group.

VI. Planning for the Fall Meeting

Joe Dunn informed the Committee that several Washington DC hotels had availability for the fall meeting of the whole Board if held in early November. After lengthy discussion the Committee agreed that the meeting should be held on November 12 through 14, 2008 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel, 1201 K Street NW. Joe said that Shirley would ask for a contract to be drawn as soon as possible so we can ensure booking.

VIII. Other Issues

Jim Zuiches asked that the NAS NIOHS report on water

Hearing no other comments, Martin adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

MARTIN MASSENGALE
Chair

JOSEPH DUNN
Acting, Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD: _____

Date

Initials
Chair

Initials
Executive Director