

Minutes
Nevada Organic Advisory Council
2 March 2007
Fallon, Nevada

Minutes Approved 5/31/2007

1. Call to order @10:00 a.m.
2. Roll Call of Council Members

Present: Virginia Johnson, Jim Smith, Marcia Litsinger

Absent: Sharon Davidson, Dave Hall, Bruce Quinlan

Note: A quorum was not present at the beginning of the meeting. At the request of the chairman, agenda items requiring action were held until the end of the meeting in the event that a quorum arrived at which time action items would be considered..

Introductions.

- 3) Review of Minutes of December 8, 2006.
Minutes were reviewed. There were no comments. Action was not taken on this item.

4. Correspondences and Announcements:

a.) Virginia Johnson read a letter from Senator Harry Reid in which he restates his commitment to supporting legislation that strengthens organic guidelines. He also assured the Council that he will keep the interests of the Council in mind during the coming congressional session.

4a.) Virginia Johnson reported that the funding for ATTRA was again being threatened. In February the Senate passed the "Continuing Resolution," which makes permanent funding decisions for the fiscal year already underway (Fiscal Year 2007), which wasn't completed before the last Congress ended. Distressingly, this resolution would immediately eliminate funding for ATTRA. She requested that Council members voice their support for ATTRA by contacting their representatives and by visiting various websites where sample support letters could be found.

b) Virginia reported that on behalf of the Council she sent a letter of support to UNR for their CREES Grant application to develop a demonstration sustainable/organic farm on university property.

5. Public Comment: None

6. Organic program reports

a) Peggy McKie from NDOA reported that the Department has received four applications to fill the organic program position formerly held by Gary Cross. Interviews will commence in the next month. Interview will be held in March. Virginia Johnson requested that the Council be notified when there are position vacancies in the Department. Peggy said that she would check with Administrative staff and see if there is a mailing list that the Council can be added to.

b) Council Reimbursement for Meetings. Due to absent Council members, action on this item was deferred until the next meeting.

7. BDR 253. Virginia Johnson reported that Senator McGinnis explained to her he will present this bill as a "stand alone" bill, confined to the Nevada Organic Council's request for funding. A letter

has been sent to all legislators explaining the bill draft contents. McGinnis will notify the Council when the draft BDR has evolved into a bill. Rick Lattin suggested focusing support efforts on committee members who serve on the committees that will be hearing the bill. Senate (Finance Committee) will hear the bill first, Assembly second (Ways and Means).

8. “*Nevada Supporting Marketing Initiative*” a chef survey sponsored by Kynda Curtis. Rick Lattin commented the report is of benefit to farmers as a starting point to understanding what chefs are looking for in terms of local produce, their budget restraints, etc.
9. Rick Lattin reported on activities of the Churchill County Economic Development Authority’s focusing on agricultural diversification in Churchill County. CEDA is working with USDA to obtain a Rural Business Enterprise Grant to assist small sustainable and/or organic farmers by purchase specialized equipment that will be located in a centralized location and shared by participating small farmers. The focus of the grant would be to purchase and share equipment that is ordinarily too expensive for small farmers to purchase on their own and that, though helpful, is only used occasionally. The proposal is developing at this time with the goal being to identify challenges involved with administering rental, maintenance, storage, trailers, etc. Types of equipment being discussed are such things as spaders, precision seeders, etc. Jim Smith said it thought it would be important to study the feasibility of having to transport equipment from one location to the other and comparing the cost of transportation to the value of the equipment to the program.
10. Marcia Litsinger reported on her research into locating a mentoring program for new organic farmers that could be used in Nevada. She focused on a program co-sponsored by CCOF and the San Francisco Estuary Institute. She contacted specialists in transitioning to organic, cover crops, etc. who are willing to come to Nevada to do workshops here. Marcia requested guidance from the Council in what direction to go from here. Virginia Johnson commented that with the Council’s limited resources there isn’t much to offer in the way of financial support for such programs, but encouraged Marcia to pursue more information and bring it back to the Council. She asked Marcia to let the rest of the Council know if she needs more help in collecting information. Virginia Johnson commented that some of the funds that may be received from the state legislature might also be utilized for transitional trainings around the state.
11. Guest speaker Dan Johnson from USDA Rural Development state office discussed USDA Rural Development Value Added Producer Grants, which focus on new enterprises and are meant to support initial efforts to study the feasibility of building a new business. Applications are done on line. The second type of grant he discussed is offered through the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Improvement Program Section 9006. More information is available by calling 775-423-7541 X 4.

12:00 p.m. Break for lunch.

1:30 p.m. Council Reconvened to finish agenda and participate in Organic Program Workshop.

Council Meeting (continued):

Approval of Minutes. Council member Sharon Davidson arrived and so a quorum was present. Action items not previously acted on were considered at this time.

- ✓ A motion was made to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2006 Council meeting. The motion was seconded and the minutes approved.

Schedule next Advisory Council Meeting.

- ✓ A motion was made to set the schedule the next Council meeting for May 31, 2007 at the Reno office of the Nevada Department of Agriculture.

Organic Program Workshop 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Peggy McKie from the Nevada Department of Agriculture's organic certification program presented information about the National Organic Program requirements. Topics included:

1. The use of compost tea in organic farming systems and the restrictions that are currently being applied to that use. The restrictions are currently under review by National Organic Standards Board and the National Organic Program staff.
2. Things to consider when selecting a pest control material, soil amendment, or fertilizer for use on an organic farm.
3. Changes to National Program Standards CFR 205.606 (A section of the "National List") and the impact for organic processors of those changes.

(More details about workshop topics, including power point slides from each, can be obtained by calling Peggy McKie, NDOA, 775.688.1182 x 243)

As there was no further business the meeting was adjourned 3:30 p.m.