

Minutes
Nevada Organic Advisory Council Meeting
6 March 2009

Nevada Department of Agriculture
350 Capitol Hill Avenue
Reno, NV 89502

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order 1:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present: Marcia Litsinger, Sharon Davidson, Bruce Quinlan (via telephone)

Members of the Public: Ray Johnson, Steve Litsinger, Mark O'Farrell

NDOA staff: Steve Marty, Ed Foster

3. Introductions

4. Approval of Agenda

The agenda for the March 6, 2009 OAC meeting was approved as offered.

5. Minutes from Previous Meeting

Sharon Davidson made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 20, 2008 OAC meeting. Bruce Quinlan seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 3-0.

6. Public Participation

None

7. Old Business

A) Correspondence and Announcements

Marcia Litsinger stated that Jim Smith and Clifford Shirk had contacted her and stated that they wished to resign their positions on the Organic Advisory Council due to off-farm obligations. Both Jim and Clifford stated that they would turn in their letters of resignation immediately.

The group briefly discussed the USDA press release regarding prohibited fertilizer products, which was sent to all NDOA certified entities. Steve Marty stated that at this time, no mention of enforcement action or product recalls against farms using the products in question had been issued. Additionally, Steve stated that it would be crucial for NDOA certified farms to list all inputs to be used in 2009 on the organic system plan update form.

Ed Foster provided an update from the March 5th Legislative budget hearing, stating that the Agriculturist IV position that manages the organic and seed programs would be funded by 'trading' two part-time secretarial positions. Steve Litsinger asked for confirmation that the program and the position were safe and would continue to be funded, and Ed Foster confirmed that they would be.

The group briefly discussed funding options for the council. USDA specialty crop grants, NRCS organic grants, and OREI grants were discussed as possible funding sources for future outreach/education functions.

B) Update and possible action regarding the Western Nevada College organic farming conference to be held March 13-14, 2009 **(Action)**

Bruce Quinlan stated that the Whole Foods forager who was scheduled to speak at the WNC conference would not be available due to a commitment at a new store opening. However, Bruce stated that he would take care of the Whole Foods presentation. No action was taken.

C) Update, discussion, and action regarding the creation of an organic livestock program with possible collaboration with UNR CABNR **(Action)**

Steve Marty stated that Dr. David Thain of the University of Nevada Reno had suggested that a collaborative effort between UNR and the Department to create a pilot organic livestock certification program could potentially be funded through OREI (Organic Research and Extension Initiative) grant funds. The goal of the pilot program would be to overcome obstacles in organic livestock production such as the need for certified slaughter/processing facilities. Steve Marty noted that although this idea had tremendous potential, the deadline for grant proposals was approaching too quickly for UNR staff to create and submit a proposal. The council suggested that Steve be aware of similar grant opportunities in the future. No action was taken.

8. New Business

A) Discussion and action regarding the current and future fee structure for the Nevada Organic Certification Program **(Action)**

The group discussed the current fee structure for the certification program. Steve Marty stated that fees generated by the organic certification and seed certification programs currently cover all operating expenses, but that the position salary is drawn entirely from the State general fund. Steve also stated that fee increases to cover the position salary would strengthen both programs, but the relevant increases in fees would likely be an unjust burden on the industries. Ray Johnson stated that in the interest of determining the proper fee increase the best solution would be for each program to have its own budget line item. Mr. Johnson also stated that he had repeatedly asked for a budget report depicting hard costs and revenue for the organic program. Steve Marty stated that he had been provided with such a report. However, the annual position cost was not known at the time of the meeting, thus the council asked that Steve Marty provide this figure prior to the next council meeting. Sharon Davidson suggested that the Department compare fee structures of other private and State certifiers, and to determine the total revenue that would be generated from NDOA certified producers and handlers under those schedules. No action was taken, pending additional information to be provided by the Department.

B) Discussion and action regarding the possibility of the Nevada Organic Advisory Council hosting a booth at the Idlewild Park Earth Day event **(Action)**

A motion was put forth by Bruce Quinlan to collaborate with NCFMA (Nevada Certified Farmer's Market Association) regarding a booth for the Earth Day event. No costs are to be associated with hosting the booth. The motion was seconded by Marcia Litsinger, and passed by a vote of 3-0.

C) Discussion and action regarding member participation and suitability for the Nevada Organic Advisory Council **(Action)**

Marcia Litsinger reiterated that Jim Smith and Clifford Shirk had sought to resign from the council, and were to submit letters of resignation. Marcia also stated that Rick Lattin had expressed willingness to serve on the council. Mark O'Farrell stated that he would be willing to serve on the council. Ray Johnson suggested that the council hold a telephone meeting to accept the written resignations of Jim Smith and Clifford Shirk, and to nominate two replacement candidates. A motion was put forth by Bruce Quinlan to call a meeting in order to accept the resignations of Jim Smith and Clifford Shirk, and to nominate two replacement council members. The date of the meeting was to be contingent upon receiving letters of resignation. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

D) Organic Advisory Council chair and vice-chair position elections **(Action)**

This item was tabled pending the nomination and approval of new council members.

9. Schedule Next Meeting

The next OAC council meeting was scheduled for Thursday April 2, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. at the Nevada Department of Agriculture, 350 Capitol Hill Ave Reno NV 89502.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

DRAFT