

# **INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

## **Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the 2024 Interim**

**June 6, 2024**

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The 2nd meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture was held on June 6, 2024, at 9:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Richard Heath, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

### **Present were:**

Members: Representative Richard Heath Co-Chair; Senators Matthew Deneen, Robin L. Webb, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Chad Aull, Mike Clines, Daniel Fister, Derrick Graham, David Hale, Mark Hart, Kim King, Matthew Koch, Shawn McPherson, Amy Neighbors, Michael Sarge Pollock, Phillip Pratt, Felicia Rabourn, Sarah Stalker, Cherynn Stevenson, and Walker Thomas.

Guests: Tod Griffin, Kentucky Agricultural Council, Treasurer; Michele Payn, Cause Matters Corp., Strategic Roadmap Consultant, and Jennifer Elwell, KAC Executive Secretary.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Hillary Abbott, Kelly Ludwig, and Rachel Hartley, Committee Assistant.

### **Update on the Kentucky Agricultural Council**

Jennifer Elwell, executive secretary, stated that the mission of the Kentucky Agricultural Council, was to plan programs for its members and to serve as a liaison between private and public agricultural organizations, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Governor, and the legislature to develop and effectively utilize agriculture resources. Michele Payn of Cause Matters Corp, and members of KAC recommended the following strategies: help protect farm transitions and sustain Kentucky farmlands; engage agriculture in Kentucky's economic development discussions; prioritize workforce development; foster supply chain coordination to improve market access; continue diversification and innovation across farm, food, fuel and fiber; create more value-added markets across the Commonwealth; develop agriculture's partnerships in the food and health space; build understanding around farm and food amongst all Kentuckians, and grow collaboration, coordination, and communications within Kentucky agriculture.

In response to Representative King, Ms. Payn said that the goal of carbon markets was to take advantage of markets in the future in order to leverage Kentucky's conservation districts without additional costs to the producer. Representative King asked that KAC look

into whether or not a restriction should be included in a deed if a farmer or landowner signed an agreement related to carbon sequestration. Mr. Griffin said KAC would look into that inquiry.

In response to Representative Aull, Ms. Elwell said she did not know if other states were requiring school districts to buy locally food sourced products. Kentucky has a Farm to School program that includes educators, farm groups, and school food service directors who meet on a bi-monthly basis to discuss purchasing local food products. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture is interested in ways to encourage schools systems to purchase local food products.

In response to Senator Wilson, Ms. Payn said KAC is working with Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development regarding farmland being purchased for industrial use. KAC is seeing more farmers become involved with the local Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Payn agreed that it is very hard for a young person, who was not raised on a farm, to begin a farming operation. There are financial and workforce issues. Even a young farmer who owns their own farm struggles to stay profitable which is a national concern. Ms. Elwell said that there is a farm in Marion County that works with high school students providing internships. Mr. Griffin said that the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) program and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) in Lexington has been successful at preserving farmland.

In response to Representative Stevenson, Ms. Payn said that farmers in Kentucky and nationwide are facing food insecurity. Kentucky was lucky in being able to raise different crops. Representative Stevenson said that according to a recent Feeding America Report, Kentucky ranks 7th nationally for food insecurities and 10 counties in Kentucky ranked the highest in food insecurities in the nation.

In response to Representative Hale, Ms. Payn agreed that farmers are under stress and are suffering from mental health issues. They lose their identity and often lose their independence. Representative Hale noted that the majority of farmers are losing money. According to a recent United States Department of Agriculture Report (USDA), farmers lost approximately \$42 billion in 2023, and it could go higher in 2024.

**Informational Item: No Action Needed**

**Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations - No Action Needed**

**302 KAR 016:150 *Current* - Qualification and registration of persons designated to perform amusement safety inspections.**

**302 KAR 002:010 *Current* - Access to public records of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.**

**Adjournment**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.