

# INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2020 Interim

August 27, 2020

### Call to Order and Roll Call

The 3rd meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture was held on Thursday, August 27, 2020, at 10:30 AM, in SWC 201-203, State Fair and Exposition Center, Louisville, Kentucky. Senator Paul Hornback, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Paul Hornback, Co-Chair; Representative Richard Heath, Co-Chair; David P. Givens, Robby Mills, Dennis Parrett, Damon Thayer, Robin L. Webb, Stephen West, and Whitney Westerfield; Representatives George Brown Jr, Myron Dossett, Kelly Flood, Joe Graviss, Mark Hart, Kim King, Matthew Koch, Phillip Pratt, Rick Rand, Brandon Reed, Rachel Roberts, Steven Rudy, Dean Schamore, John Sims Jr, Wilson Stone, Walker Thomas, James Tipton, and Susan Westrom.

Guests: David Beck, President and CEO, Kentucky Venues, and Mayor Greg Fischer, Louisville and Jefferson County, Ryan Quarles, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

LRC Staff: Kelly Ludwig, Nathan Smith, Susan Spoonamore, Committee Assistant.

The July 9, 2020 minutes were approved by voice vote, without objection, upon motion made by Representative Tipton and seconded by Senator Parrett.

Warren Beeler, said that through the programs of the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy, over \$636 million has been spent on agriculture, and agriculture has grown by \$2 billion in a market that has been terrible. He encouraged people to get involved in agriculture in order to continue making strides in technology in order to produce more food for the people. Mr. Beeler stated that the Ag Finance Program has approximately \$94 million, of which \$90 million has been loaned out. He said that the Ag Finance Program was getting back almost \$1 million a month in interest.

Ryan Quarles, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, stated that the youth shows at the Kentucky State Fair had great participation. Commissioner Quarles said that one item of concern is the proposed increase in food processing fees by the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH). He said that the proposal would affect

approximately 330 Kentucky Proud processors. The current fee for food processing inspections is as low as \$120, but under the new fee structure, some processors could see increases of 1,000 to 2,000 percent. The comment period ends August 31<sup>st</sup>.

In response to Representative Schamore, Commissioner Quarles stated that he did not know why the KDPH was proposing the fee increase.

Representative Graviss stated that he also attended the same meeting as Commissioner Quarles. He said it was pointed out to KDPH that the proposed fee increase was against the law according to HB 129 that was passed in 2019.

### **Welcome and Update on Louisville Metro/Jefferson County Programs**

Mayor Greg Fischer stated the Louisville/Jefferson County was beginning to see a plateau in Covid-19 cases. He said that CARES funding was being used to help businesses and to help stop evictions. He said that funding Louisville area restaurants was important to Kentucky Proud producers. He said Louisville was still considered a great foodie city. He noted that Louisville was in the spotlight and everything is being done to work towards racial equity.

In response to Senator Thayer, Mayor Fischer said that Churchill Downs made the decision to not have spectators at the Kentucky Derby. The city is having challenges and some issues are hard to address overnight. Louisville is seeing gaps in education, housing, healthcare, COVID, and widespread use of social media has led to everything boiling over into the streets. The Louisville Metro Police Department is allocating resources to where the challenges are in the community. Investments will have to be made in areas that have not seen improvements or investments, in the past.

In response to Representative Tipton, Mayor Fischer said that police had been operating under very difficult circumstances and the police want to have a safer city by continuing to work with the community.

### **Report on the Kentucky State Fair Board**

Mr. David Beck, CEO, Kentucky Venues, explained that Kentucky Venues is the marketing name related to two properties: The Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) and the Kentucky International Convention Center (KICC) that is located downtown Louisville. He said that normally, the KEC would host over 200 shows a year and the KICC would have 135 shows. The KICC had its grand reopening in 2018 and improvements are still being made. The KEC property has been making significant improvements by tearing down the old Cardinal Stadium and installing a new front gate along with additional traffic lanes in order to expedite traffic. The property has been cleared of older buildings and been cleaned up, providing an additional 8 acres of useable property. He said improvements were being made throughout the fairgrounds. He said that the facilities are unique and listed in the top 10 for acreage and attendance. The goal has always been the safety of guests,

visitors, sponsors, and exhibitors. He stated that the State Fair Board worked hard to make the State Fair happen this year. Mr. Beck said that due to COVID, the two convention centers had lost approximately \$11 million in business. The youth livestock shows over the last couple of weeks have gone very well. Normally, there would be 11,000 entries, but for this year the number will be closer to 3,800.

In response to Senator Hornback, Mr. Beck said that the committee recommended to the Board, on the original plan submitted, to have the State Fair. When COVID numbers started to rise, the administration asked the Board to take another look at the recommendation. Meetings were held with leadership of the board and Frankfort officials and it was decided to change the original plan. There was no vote taken by the Board on approving the revised plan.

In response to Senator Hornback, Mr. Beck said that Kentucky Kingdom had been open during the week, but their schedule had changed. They are not open every day now, but they can operate on the weekends. As to the convention center located downtown, Mr. Beck said that meetings had been postponed and some re-booked. There was some broken glass, from protests, but those windows had been boarded up and would be replaced at a later time. The graffiti had been removed, but as a safety precaution, a fence was installed around the premises. He said the main questions from clients related to security in the downtown convention center and the fairgrounds.

Meeting adjourned.