

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2024 Interim

October 17, 2024

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fifth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture was held on October 17, 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; Senator Jason Howell, Co-Chair; Senators Gary Boswell, Matthew Deneen, David P. Givens, Damon Thayer, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Mike Clines, Daniel Fister, Derrick Graham, Mark Hart, Kim King, Matthew Koch, Shawn McPherson, Amy Neighbors, Michael Sarge Pollock, Phillip Pratt, Sarah Stalker, Cherlynn Stevenson, Nancy Tate, and Walker Thomas.

Guests: Dave Maples, Executive Vice President, Kentucky Cattlemen's Association; Nikki Whitaker, Director of Operations and Policy, Kentucky Cattlemen's Association; Dr. Brian Parr, Dean, Hutson School of Agriculture, Murray State University; and Jordan Smith, Assistant Vice President of Public Affairs, Murray State University.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Hillary Abbott, Kelly Ludwig, and Susan Spoonamore.

Approval of September 19, 2024 minutes

The September 19, 2024, minutes were approved, without objection, upon motion made by Representative Fister and seconded by Representative McPherson.

Update on the Kentucky Livestock Innovation Center

Dave Maples, Executive Vice President, Kentucky Cattlemen's Association, and Nikki Whitaker, Director of Operations and Policy, Kentucky Cattlemen's Association, said the mission and purpose of the Kentucky Livestock Innovation Center is to create a central coordinating location to advance the socioeconomic benefits of agriculture. Ms. Whitaker said it would open doors to health professionals, student enrichment programs, and economic development. She said the agricultural industry is facing challenges because the number of farmers and farm animals are decreasing. The industry faces rising input costs, aging farmers, and a shift in business models. Farmers only receive eight percent of food dollars spent at retail. The Kentucky Cattlemen's Foundation is soliciting proposals from a construction manager and architect/design team, as well as input from the oversight committee and partners. The completion date is scheduled for Fall 2027.

In response to Representative Thomas, Mr. Maples said if Murray State gets a veterinarian school, the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association would work with them to get veterinarian care to rural communities.

Update from Murray State University's Hutson School of Agriculture

Dr. Brian Parr, Dean, Hutson School of Agriculture, Murray State University, and Jordan Smith, Assistant Vice President of Public Affairs, Murray State University, discussed the updates that Murray State has made to classroom facilities, new faculty, and programs. Dr. Parr stated Murray State's recruiting efforts include visiting high schools, state and national Future Farmers of America (FFA) Conventions, and hosting over 2,500 high school students on campus. He said Fall enrollment for the Hutson School of Agriculture is approximately 1,300 students. In conjunction with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, a new economic development program was created for Graduate Fellows. Dr. Parr said 463 students had enrolled in the Pre-Vet/Vet Tech Program and the Breathitt Veterinary Center is the only Biological Safety Level 3 lab dedicated to veterinary diagnostics in Kentucky.

Dr. Parr said architectural bids have been received for the new School of Veterinary Medicine. Staff made site visits to Long Island University, Lincoln Memorial University, and Texas Tech University to tour facilities. He said Murray State is working closely with Deloitte, Council on Postsecondary Education, and members of the General Assembly on the additional feasibility study for the School of Veterinary Medicine. For graduating veterinarians to stay in Kentucky and practice in rural areas, Dr. Parr stated admission criteria needs to be clearly defined and transparent and the debt burden reduced.

In response to Representative Heath, Dr. Parr said the Breathitt Veterinary Center has world-class veterinarians in the diagnostic center, including the world's leading toxicologist.

In response to Senator Howell, Dr. Parr said Deloitte has not given any indication that it would not meet the December 1, 2024, deadline for the feasibility study.

Informational Items (No Action Needed):

Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Authority - Biennial Report for State Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024.

From the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture: Kentucky Tobacco Research and Development Center 4th Quarter Report.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.