

Montana Organic Commodity Advisory Council (MOCAC)

MINUTES OF CONFERENCE CALL HELD MARCH 18, 2005

PRESENT WERE:

MOCAC MEMBERS:

1. Nancy Peterson
2. Bob Boettcher
3. Judy Osowitz
4. David Oien
5. Randy Hinebauch
6. Nancy Matheson
7. John Hoffland

DEPARTMENT STAFF:

1. Donna Rise
2. Doug Crabtree
3. Kim Cobos
4. Angella Barngrover

ABSENT:

Mikel Lund who was traveling.

The meeting started promptly at 2:30 p.m. with warm greetings from Director, Nancy Peterson, who also gave us a brief overview of the happenings of the Legislature, while we waited for Judy Osowitz to join us.

The Director then wholeheartedly thanked the outgoing Administrative Support, Kim Cobos, for her outstanding service to the Department, and welcomed the incoming Admin Support, Angella Barngrover. She then turned the meeting over to the Program Manager, Doug Crabtree.

Doug proceeded to give a brief review of the minutes of the last two meetings. Those minutes were quickly moved and seconded for approval by David Oien & Bob Boettcher in the first instance, and Rob and David in the second instance. Both motions were approved unanimously.

Doug then proceeded to emphasize the fact that the Program Review was needed no later than April 1st so that it can be incorporated into the Department's Annual Report to the USDA-NOP, as was the custom. The Report becomes due on April 29th, and Doug emphasized the fact that the Council's review has always been an integral part of the report.

Unfortunately, because of commitments at the Legislature, the Director had to leave early, but she wanted to know the effect of the report on ISO65. Doug said that there was none. A lively and energetic discussion ensued, wherein members all expressed their recognition of the importance of the review, but raised several issues.

David questioned the scope and timing of the review, and reemphasized the fact that while it is very important for us to complete this review, he was personally committed otherwise for the next two weeks and could not participate. He wondered whether a scaled down version of the report could be done.

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Doug read the Administrative rules, which do not contain any Statutory requirement that would bind the Council to perform this review at a specific time, but does require 'annual reviews of certification program activities...(including) a yearly review of a sampling of certification decisions,' at the Council's discretion.

Judy Osowitz had now joined the meeting. Her feeling was that she feels strongly that the Council should be committed to doing the review whatever it takes. However, she also had very serious time constraints, and wondered whether the review could be done by copying and sending files to Council members. Doug said that it is Department policy that files not leave the Department, so the review had to take place on site. Bob wanted to know whether a smaller percentage of files could be looked at. Doug said that last year 10% was done, which would be 11-15 for this year, but that no set number or percentage was required. David suggested that we do a scaled down version, in whatever form, without him, and include a note inside the Annual Report to that effect, stating a reason for the change. Doug also emphasized the fact that a review done at another time would lose its significance to the Department since it would not be included in the annual report. He also stated that it would necessitate a change in the Quality Manual. Randy felt that that would be violating our own rules to delay the completion of the review and submission of the report.

The point was raised by Randy that any trip to Helena would cost \$300 at a minimum, not to mention the time involved. He wondered whether the Department could pay Jonda Crosby & Steve Baril to conduct the review. John said that he gets paid at the store to do this and he was not available to do it for a third time.

The discussion then centered around what the scaled down version would look like and how it would be accomplished. Donna disagreed with Doug about the time of year that the review could be done. She felt that it could be done anytime. Doug's thought was that, preferably, certifications should be complete with producers' and handlers' work for the past year, and doing it in April would accomplish this. Nancy mentioned that March was typical for reviews. Judy asked whether March was demanding. Randy felt that because many on the Council was involved with planting, that limits the time that members have to commit to this.

The discussion went back and forth along those lines without any resolution. Nancy Matheson suggested that other options be put on the table. She suggested that a minimized report could be that only 6 applications be looked at, each person reading two. Judy felt that it was not necessary for everyone to read each of them. John felt that the reviews could move quicker since we have two years of documented reviews which could be used as a template for future reviews. Randy asked if the review could be done in one day this year, and he felt the need to be consistent. He insisted that we get it done by the date. Judy agreed wholeheartedly, and encouraged that we should aim to get all the blanks filled in when doing this process. For example, making sure incomplete applications are non-existent, other non-compliances are identified and rules enforced.

David felt that since the Council can make its own rules, then just completing one application would meet the minimum requirement. Again, the idea of files leaving the Department was brought up. Donna said that she was advised by the Department's Attorney, Tim Meloy, that they could not be taken off property. Randy thought that odd, his point being that since the members have to sign confidentiality agreements, he did not see why this could not be done.

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This led to the other option being offered by Nancy of bringing 3 outsiders in to conduct the review.

This idea was well received by all. Three suggestions were, Jim Barngrover, Jonda Crosby and Steve Baril. There was some concern about using Jim Barngrover, since Angella Barngrover, his wife, now works for the Department. After careful consideration it was decided that there was no conflict and so Nancy Matheson would approach these individuals.

The question of compensation for these individuals was raised. Doug said that no compensation could be given for non-council members. David recommended some sort of fee for service be paid. Donna said that it could only be authorized via a contract, and it would have to be passed through an Attorney. Nancy said that we only have authority to compensate for expenses only.

The time had moved along and it became time for some kind of motion to be made. John could only do one if absolutely necessary, Nancy only wanted to be used as a back-up, David had a time crunch, and Bob, Randy & Judy were all out of town, and it was thought that the cost factor just for them to come to Helena was not worth the trip.

A motion was made to enlist the 3 outsiders who would review applications for this year using last year as a template. Nancy & John could do one each as a backup plan (if the volunteers were not available). Judy felt that 2-3 was too few, and that would convey the idea of shirking the responsibility. David asked that consideration be given to the person writing the report. It was decided that the reviewers would do a draft report. Doug's response was that he needs at least one Council member to be responsible for bringing the report before the Council. Judy volunteered by default to do the final report. Nancy said that she would be willing to clean up the report. It was suggested to ask Mikel Lund to assist with drafting the report. Judy asked that the report's due date be postponed to April 8th. Randy moved and Bob seconded these motions. All were in favor. The discussion then moved to the Wheat & Barley Committee.

WHEAT & BARLEY DISCUSSION

Doug mentioned that Nancy & Nancy signed proposal for wheat and barley committee, and that there is a need for a presentation. The presentation of proposals to the Wheat & Barley committee will be in Great Falls on April 6th & 7th, 2005, in the Mt Grain Growers' Assn ("Wheat") building. Doug committed to provide information re ISO 65. David felt that Randy was the best person to make the proposal since he was a grain producer. The amount of the proposed grant is \$10,000 (annual costs for USDA accreditation to ISO65 standards).

Randy agreed to do this but mentioned that he needed to be back in Havre by 6:00 that day. He asked that the presentation be scheduled for Thursday, April 7th. Doug agreed to contact the Wheat & Barley Committee office to request an April 7th presentation. All agreed to work with Randy on that and so there was no need for a motion to support that.

Doug suggested that if anyone from the Council knows anyone on the committee they could go ahead and give a courtesy call. Nancy said that she would work with Doug to schedule the next meeting. Randy then moved that the meeting be adjourned and John seconded it.