

URBAN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (UAIPAC) MEETING MINUTES

**MARCH 23 - 24, 2022
TIME: 11:00 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING**



UAIPAC Members Present

Allison Paap
Angela Mason
Bobby Wilson
Dr. Carl P. Wallace
Jerry Ann Hebron
John Erwin
John Lebeaux
Kaben Smallwood
Sally Brown
Tara Chadwick
Viraj Puri
Zachari Curtis

Speakers

Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Terry Cosby Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Senator Debbie Stabenow
Brad Rein, National Science Liaison, NIFA
Robert Bonnie Under Secretary, FPAC
Leslie Glover, Program Manager, OUAIP
Tammy Willis, UAIP Advisory Committee Coordinator
Havala Schumacher, Management Analyst, OUAIP
Suzanne Pender, Strategic Communications, FPAC
Zach Ducheneaux, FSA Administrator
Jenna Segal, Acting Urban Agriculture FSA
Arthur Hawkins, OUAIP
Jeffery Davis, Facilitator AMS

Other Guest

Attachment A & B

Designated Federal Officer

Leslie Deavers Interim Director, OUAIP

March 23, 2022

- **Interim Director and Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Leslie Deavers, Office of Urban Agriculture, and Innovative Production (OUAIP)** called the meeting to order.
- **Chief Terry Cosby, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** introduced Secretary Tom Vilsack, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- **Secretary Tom Vilsack, USDA**, gave welcoming remarks and reviewed the importance of the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee (UAIPAC) and member roles in advising the Department. He discussed the significance of agriculture in people’s daily lives and the role food systems play in the country, noting the opportunity for the UAIPAC to create a better link between agriculture and food systems. He emphasized to the UAIPAC and members of the public that there is keen interest in urban agriculture at the highest level of the Department, and he is excited about all there is to learn and accomplish.
- **Chief Terry Cosby, NRCS**, introduced the OUAIP and the role the Committee has in advising the office. He explained that the UAIPAC recommendations will be shared and reviewed by the highest levels of the USDA administration. He concluded by thanking the UAIPAC members for their voluntary service and he looked forward to learning and engaging with the Committee throughout the meeting.
- **Acting Committee Chair Angela Mason, UAIPAC**, introduced herself as the Senior Director of Windy City Harvest and Acting UAIPAC Committee Chair. She asked each Committee Member to introduce themselves. The following were in attendance:
 - o Allison Paap, Vice President, American AgCredit
 - o Bobby Wilson, Owner/Operator, Metro Atlanta Urban Farm
 - o Dr. Carl P. Wallace, COO, Abundant Life Farm

- Jerry Ann Hebron Executive Director, Northend Christian CDC
- John Erwin, Professor and Chair, Dept. of Plan Science and Landscape Architecture, University of Maryland
- John Lebeaux, Commissioner, Massachusetts Dept. of Agricultural Resources
- Kaben Smallwood, President and CEO, Symbiotic Aquaponic
- Sally Brown, Research Professor, University of Washington
- Tara Chadwick, Urban Farmer/Producer, Home Beautiful Park Civic Association
- Viraj Puri, CEO & Co-Founder, Gotham Greens
- Zachari Curtis, Operations Director, Dreaming Out Loud, Washington, DC
- **Senator Debbie Stabenow, United States Senate**, thanked the USDA leadership and Committee Members for volunteering. She shared that she is Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and provided an overview of the urban agricultural section of the 2018 Farm Bill. Senator Stabenow commended USDA for integrating urban agriculture in all USDA programs and the creation of the UAIPAC. She concluded by stating that she looked forward to working with the Committee and partners to expand and create benefits for urban agriculture.
- **Deputy Under Secretary Gloria Montaño Greene, Farm Production & Conservation (FPAC)**, moderated questions that the Committee Members had for Senator Stabenow.
 - **Committee Member Erwin** asked if the USDA Secretary and Senator Stabenow have looked at urban forestry as part of urban agriculture. **Senator Stabenow** discussed the urban tree program in the 2018 Farm Bill and its place in sustainable and regenerative agriculture and climate change mitigation.
 - **Committee Member Smallwood** asked about the role indoor agriculture plays in providing a sustainable year-round source of produce in areas that may not have an ideal climate. **Senator Stabenow** responded that indoor agriculture is very important and an area to focus on and expand.
 - **Committee Member Wilson** asked Senator Stabenow to share with the listening audience ways that they can have an impact. **Senator Stabenow** urged the listeners to reach-out to their Senators who will be starting to review the next Farm Bill soon. She discussed hearing locations that will be scheduled across the country and in Washington D.C. to learn about what is working and what is not working. Senator Stabenow stated that it is important to educate people about urban agriculture conservation in order to receive more funding.
- **Deputy Under Secretary Greene, FPAC**, thanked everyone and concluded the questions session.
- **Lunch Break from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. EST.**
- **Senior Advisor Margaret Campbell (Meg), OUAIP**, opened the floor for the Committee Members to make comments before the next presentation.
- **Committee Member Wallace** reiterated the importance of the UAIPAC work, the urban agriculture component of the 2023 Farm Bill, and the need for urban agriculture offices to be funded.
- **Committee Member Wilson** commented on the importance of the Committee to establish a strategy and listen to the people they are representing.

- **Committee Member Brown** stated it is critical to work on the broader perspective of urban agriculture and involve cities where urban agriculture is taking place. She highlighted the need to work with community food programs, urban forests, gleaning programs, donation programs and outreach and education.
- **Program Manager Leslie Glover, OUAIP**, provided a presentation on the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.
- **UAIPAC Coordinator Tammy Willis, OUAIP**, gave a presentation on the UAIPAC Overview, Roles and Responsibilities.
- **Management Analyst Havala Schumacher, OUAIP, and Strategic Communications Suzanne Pender, FPAC**, presented the Urban Agriculture Toolkit and facilitated a question-and-answer session with the Committee Members.
 - o **Committee Member Brown** commented on the need to provide tools to university extension agents by region and topic. She also recommended providing soil testing information by region so that information is consistent, especially as it relates to resources for soil contamination. **Havala** provided a response on the organization of the website and use of links.
 - o **Committee Member Wilson** remarked on the use of his company picture on the website but that his request for grant funding was denied. He also recommended more training for university extension agents.
 - o **Committee Member Chadwick** requested confirmation that the Toolkit presentation was not the version on the farmers.gov website. **Suzanne** confirmed that was correct. The website was being updated.
 - o **Management Analyst Havala Schumacher, OUAIP**, requested feedback on the potential barrier of getting people started with USDA assistance.
 - o **Committee Member Wallace** complimented the Committee Members' comments and encouraged other Committee Members to voice their opinion.
 - o **Committee Member Ewing** recommended additional language on food safety success stories be added to the website.
 - o **Committee Member Lebeaux** stated that the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture disseminates information from USDA. He encouraged the Committee to take advantage of communication tools that exist.
 - o **Committee Member Puri** commented on the need for skilled individuals with expertise in urban agriculture and food safety. He recommended a database of programs and topics, and a database of local government regulation resources.
 - o **Committee Member Paap** recommended that a glossary of acronyms be developed, particularly for NRCS and FSA resources.
 - o **Committee Member Curtis** recommended education of extension agents. She emphasized that civil rights and equal opportunity information should be front and center. She emphasized the positive impact of technical assistance that can be provided, beyond webinars and workshops.
- **Break from 2:25 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EST.**

- **National Science Liaison Brad Rein, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**, gave a presentation on the NIFA Urban, Indoor and Emerging Agriculture Grant program followed by the following Committee questions:
 - o **Committee Member Chadwick** commented on the difficulties with collaboration with large institutions and commended NIFA on the eligibility section of the grant program. She asked if, as part of this grant, she would have to use the USDA atlas as an indicator for food insecurity to show food desert areas. **Brad Rein** responded NIFA has not announced applications at this time and NRCS can help you address such maps if required.
 - o **Committee Member Brown** commented that outreach for this grant should be geared towards researchers or extension agents as they are familiar with this funding type. For urban producers, other programs such as EQIP may be a better source of funding.
 - o **Committee Member Wilson** inquired about funding for grassroots organizations and the percentage set aside under this grant. **Brad Rein** stated he could not comment on the specific percentage.
 - o **Committee Member Chadwick** inquired about the program release date. **Brad Rein** responded he does not have an exact date and that the policy will need to be reviewed by the agency and the Office of General Counsel before posting.
- **Under Secretary, Robert Bonnie, FPAC**, closed the first day by expressing the importance of the work surrounding urban agriculture, access to local and healthy produce, and that he is interested in how these activities relate to conservation. He thanked the Committee members' engagement and insight.
- **Interim Director and DFO Deavers, OUAIP**, reminded participants that the meeting recording would be posted on farmers.gov/urban and she stated that over 140 people requested to provide public comment on March 24 but not everyone would be able to address the Committee. She discussed the follow-up meeting planned for public comment. She offered Acting Committee Chair Mason the floor to provide closing remarks.
- **Acting Committee Chair Mason** thanked Interim Director and DFO Deavers and Committee Members for a great discussion and she looked forward to hearing the Committee Members' priorities and the continued discussion.
- **Interim Director and DFO Deavers** stated the meeting tomorrow would start at 11:00 a.m. EST.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 EST.

March 24, 2022

- **Interim Director and Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Leslie Deavers, OUAIP**, called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda at 11:00 EST.
- **Acting Committee Chair Mason** thanked participants and expressed excitement for the day's events.
- **Incoming Director Brian Guse, OUAIP**, introduced himself and addressed meeting attendees.
- **Administrator Zach Ducheneaux, Farm Service Agency (FSA)**, provided remarks via a pre-recorded video.
- **Acting Urban Agriculture Lead Jenna Segal, FSA, and Arthur Hawkins, OUAIP**, provided a presentation on Urban Agriculture County Committees and Offices.
- **Acting Committee Chair Mason** invited Committee Members to discuss their three priorities for the UAIPAC.
 - o **Member Allison Paap**, long term urban agriculture viability for farmers and their businesses, and other organizations working within urban agriculture.
 - o **Member Bobby Wilson**, ensure minorities and underserved communities have access to available NRCS and FSA programs.
 - o **Member Dr. Carl P. Wallace**, eliminate food deserts, identifying obstacles and barriers to successful sustainable urban farming in historically underserved communities and finally advance climate smart agriculture and urban farming.
 - o **Member John Erwin**, expand food growth opportunities in non-traditional places, expose kids to gardening and lastly challenge the building paradigms.
 - o **Member John Lebeaux**, land access, support urban practices and help farmers.
 - o **Member Kaben Smallwood**, urban farm sustainability, utilizing water efficiently, and organic certification.
 - o **Member Sally Brown**, non-commercial agriculture in an urban environment, aquaponics, and clean soil.
 - o **Member Tara Chadwick**, food access, food production, and climate resilience.
 - o **Member Viraj Puri**, dismantle regulatory hurdles, workforce development, and expand and support sales channels.
 - o **Member Zachari Curtis**, focus on quantifying equity measures in marginalized communities and the economics of farming.
- **Acting Committee Chair Mason** stated that her three priorities pillars are food, health, and jobs. Upon conclusion of the discussion, Chair Mason identified three topics to address through the lens of large, medium, and small-scale impacts: equity being at the forefront, access, economic opportunities, and safe food.
- **Lunch Break from 12:10 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. EST.**
- **Interim Director and DFO Deavers** welcomed participants back from lunch.
- **Moderator Jeff Davis, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)**, provided an overview of the procedure for public comment.

- **Public comment commenced with the following people addressing the UAIPAC:**

Sara Bernal	Haroun Hallack	Anthony D. Jones Sr.
Justin Nickelson	Bruce Carman	John Manirakiza
Scheril Strong	Kirsten Buckstaff	Marguerite Green
Joe James	Otho Farrow	B. Adam Baptiste
Kent Bey	Aunie Henry	Lauren Stone
Suzanne Slavens	Dash Pettaway	Brick Wenzel
Jacqueleen Bido	Marsha Allen	Derrick Bedward
Christina Chanes	Kesha Cobb	Joy Promise
Mama Lynne Tillman	Jerry Robinson	Cidalia Cornelio
Wil Hemker		Bob Campbell

- **Moderator Davis, AMS**, concluded the public comment segment and turned the meeting over to Interim Director and DFO Deavers.
- **Interim Director and DFO Deavers** provided closing remarks. She discussed additional opportunities for the public to provide comment and stated more information could be found on farmers.gov/urban.
- **Acting Committee Chair Mason and Committee Member Wallace** expressed gratitude for public comments and excitement for the work of the Committee.
- **Interim Director and DFO Deavers** Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. EST.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

/s/

Leslie Deavers

Interim Director and DFO, Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

/s/

Angela Mason

Acting Committee Chair, Urban Agriculture, and Innovative Production Advisory Committee

These minutes will be formally considered by the Committee at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.