

--DRAFT PENDING SUB-COMMITTEE APPROVAL--

**WISCONSIN DAIRY TASK FORCE 2.0
SUB-COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
MINUTES**

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January 24, 2019

The Education and Workforce sub-committee of the Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0 met on Thursday, January 24, 2019 beginning at 12:30 p.m. at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, 2811 Agriculture Drive, Madison, WI 53708.

Call to Order

Chair Mark Stephenson called the meeting to order at 12:53 p.m.

Members Present

Members present included: Paul Scharfman, Amy Penterman, John Schmidt, and Rene Johnson. Ex-officio members Secretary Brad Pfaff and Representative Don Vruwink attended as well as Dr. Bob Milligan, the sub-committee's Resource Person. Chair Mark Stephenson and DATCP staff Ashley Andre also attended.

Chair Lori Weyers and Dave Buholzer were not able to attend.

Minutes

Approve minutes of last meeting

Chair Stephenson asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Penterman made a motion. Mr. Scharfman seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Resume work on tasks identified in charging document

Chair Stephenson asked members to remind themselves of four issues identified in the previous meeting: recruitment, image, agricultural programs, and educational resources. Dr. Milligan reviewed his list of ideas to enhance the Wisconsin Farm Workforce. They included: enhance the image of agriculture as a career opportunity, expand and improve the supply and skills of the agricultural workforce, and enable farm businesses to be better employers.

Chair Stephenson asked if the historic low unemployment may be misleading? Are people not counted who desire to be employed? Chair Stephenson added that workforce issues are not only on the farm, but across industries. Secretary Pfaff agreed that rural businesses statewide are struggling with workforce issues such as access to day care.

Representative Vruwink shared a proposal for day cares to be in schools. High school students could learn job skills working in the day care, and young children would transition easier to school. Secretary Pfaff shared his own experience of utilizing before and after-school care at the YMCA. Mr. Schmidt added that high school students could get credits for working at the day cares.

Representative Vruwink added that with school enrollments declining in some communities, day care could be an opportunity for that space. Ms. Penterman shared an example of a school in Elmwood providing child care. It could provide income for the school and be a win/win for families. Secretary Pfaff mentioned how child care in rural areas is very difficult, and this is a topic that could be discussed with local chambers of commerce, rotary groups, etc. to build the conversation.

Mr. Scharfman explained how he offers transportation to his employees and providing child care is an important next step. Ms. Johnson noted that some businesses, such as a local builder, partner to provide day care. It allows the day care providers to get benefits and a step-up in pay.

Mr. Scharfman added that it is difficult to define poverty. There are people that are barely getting by, that many live at “asset limited, income constrained, employed,” or ALICE criteria. Mr. Scharfman spoke about a survey he did in Dodge County to identify barriers to work including mental health, other health issues, transportation, and child care. He mentioned how important training in ‘soft skills’ are. Chair Stephenson wondered if we could expand this survey model across the state to discover the potential undiscovered workforce.

Secretary Pfaff added how important it is to work together across agencies, including the Department of Children and Families, Department of Health Services, Department of Workforce Development, and the Department of Public Instruction, on the issue of day care access as a barrier to work.

Ms. Penterman noted that whatever model would be developed would need to be sustainable and not have unintended consequences. Work should be rewarded.

Representative Vruwink brought up the idea of how to improve the image of agriculture and take advantage of something like *Discover Wisconsin* so people can see what is happening in agriculture. Could we use YouTube videos to market the industry? Secretary Pfaff agreed that he has been considering how we can utilize technology and messaging to share agriculture’s story.

Representative Vruwink emphasized how important the perception of agriculture is. If people see how we are doing good things in agriculture, they’ll more likely want to be a part of it. Mr. Schmidt added that Channel 5 in Green Bay has programming early Saturday mornings that highlights farms. Ms. Penterman shared how even by meeting her husband and being a part of a different farm opened her eyes to another side of agriculture. Ms. Johnson mentioned that the host of *Discover Wisconsin* has an agricultural background.

Representative Vruwink asked how to get videos like this to FFAs and agricultural programs. Chair Stephenson mentioned that we want to get this programming to those outside of

agriculture. Agriculture is part of the school curriculum in some grades. Teachers appreciate pre-packaged, well-done curriculum.

Mr. Scharfman added that Wisconsin dairy industry doesn't promote itself enough, how we need to share more often that we are the best of the world. Mr. Milligan added that we cannot have fighting amongst those in agriculture. We need to be united.

Ms. Penterman agreed that farmers cannot point fingers at one another. Mr. Scharfman noted that we need to understand we have common goals and a shared purpose. We are very passionate. As a processor, I am here because of the liquid gold you make. Ms. Penterman noted the importance of sharing appreciation for their good work, between processors and farmers. Ms. Johnson added that many farmers do not feel that appreciation right now.

Mr. Schmidt shared a PowerPoint slide from the Dairy Strong Conference: "What are people saying? What do we want them to say? What are we doing to get them to say it?"

Mr. Milligan made a point that some don't perceive those who work in agriculture as part of the industry if they 'don't own part of the rock.' Often people believe dairy farmer implies ownership. Ms. Penterman added that they often hold regular employee meetings and share how important they are.

Mr. Scharfman added that we need to share the benefits of production agriculture, working with mammals, working with people, and making a good product. It makes a compelling story.

Chair Stephenson noted the importance of understanding and training our workforce and the different vulnerabilities that exist. Mr. Scharfman noted how he works with his team to create an environment of kindness. It is very important to have a strong employee/employer relationship. Mr. Schmidt added, that when people know their role, how they fit in, and are appreciated, they are more productive.

Ms. Johnson asked Mr. Scharfman what made the change in his business. He noted that the most productive thing a person can do is be kind. A building lasts a limited time; relationships last forever. Mr. Milligan added that we need to think of businesses differently. Successful businesses have to be smart and healthy.

Mr. Scharfman noted how the state needs processing and light manufacturing, and that the state has competitive advantages for these types of industries. Rural Wisconsin has a hidden asset for industry: an under-utilized employment opportunity. A barrier for rural Wisconsin culture is that we don't talk about feelings. We can overcome it. Mr. Milligan noted how rural Michigan had rural auto part plants, and example of rural development.

Mr. Scharfman shared an idea for specialty cheese condominiums. He noted how Wisconsin's dairy industry is suited for the development of specialty cheeses, but the cost of entry is huge. What if we shared physical assets, make cheese in small attached condos, bring them to a central distribution point, centralized marketing, and sold online? The Secretary noted the similarity to

community kitchens. Ms. Penterman added that people do want to know where their food comes from.

Ms. Andre shared a short list of topics so far: barrier of day care access, possible development of promotional materials or school curriculum to promote the image of ag employment, need for processors and farmers to recognize each others' contributions, need for employee/employer soft skill development, and possibility of developing specialty cheese condominiums.

Ms. Penterman shared an idea that came up in another sub-committee of connecting agriculture with offenders. She explained that some offenders receive an agricultural certificate while in Waupun, but to be able to work in another county after release, they need to get approval to transfer to another county for parole. Mr. Milligan noted how many people are incarcerated in Wisconsin for parole violations.

Mr. Scharfman noted the importance of confronting mental health. Ms. Penterman added that leaders need to adapt and change, and then others will emulate. She noted the next generation seems less resistant to change.

Ms. Penterman and Mr. Scharfman will draft a recommendation identifying the unidentified workforce, including past offenders, and barriers they face, including day care, transportation, insurance, and training. They will include the need for a healthy workplace.

Mr. Scharfman will take the specialty cheese condominium concept to the Research and Innovation sub-committee.

Ms. Johnson asked if we are missing those people just outside of high school. How can we get them interested in agriculture? Ms. Penterman agreed that we need to get education into schools.

Mr. Milligan noted that most young people leaving high school don't know what they want to do. Mentorships and internships can help. Chair Stephenson noted the Executive Director of the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship attended a previous sub-committee meeting. Ms. Johnson noted that some of the best farm managers are those who never would have thought that's what they would do. Ms. Andre shared an idea from the Access to Capital sub-committee about the possibility of a financial management mentorship.

Ms. Penterman shared her experience with interns, many from overseas. Mr. Schmidt noted the value of interns to Landmark. Mr. Milligan added how many people are hired through the network. Mr. Scharfman noted how many employees recruit for us. Mr. Schmidt asked how the Wisconsin Technical College System could help ag farms and businesses set-up internships. Ms. Johnson gave an example of a custom operator connecting with Black Hawk Tech.

Mr. Schmidt and Ms. Johnson will draft a recommendation promoting the importance of internships in agriculture and how to help employers to set up internship programs. They will include how we can utilize partners such as the Wisconsin Technical College System.

Ms. Andre gave an overview of topics that were shared from other sub-committees, which many were already touched on: need for leadership development and encouraging young people to pursue agricultural careers.

Ms. Andre shared an issue that had been brought up an issue with a DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's current policy that is impacting farmers with disabilities. Basically, to receive services from DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, people had to show profit for three years and that they earned at least a minimum wage. This is very difficult for many farmers to do. Chair Stephenson will seek more information about the barriers for farmers to take advantage of services from the DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and possibly draft a recommendation.

Ms. Andre shared a thought from Dave Buholzer, Klondike Cheese Co., who was unable to attend. "Could there be a possibility of some of the ag-related organizations, Farm Bureau, DBA, PDPW, etc. to sponsor a program offering health insurance or other benefit packages for the small farm businesses that cannot offer them on their own?"

Ms. Penterman noted that it is difficult to attract people without insurance. Mr. Schmidt noted that some customers can get insurance through cooperatives. Ms. Penterman notes that she receives health care through a cooperative, but it is expensive and has a high deductible. If there was more competition, could the cost go down so they could offer it to more employees? Mr. Scharfman noted that healthcare is a mega issue. Chair Stephenson noted that many do not have access or do not do preventative healthcare. Mr. Schmidt and Ms. Johnson will provide background information on insurance to Mr. Scharfman and Ms. Penterman.

Set a conference call

The sub-committee chose to have their conference call on February 20 at 2:00 p.m. Materials should be sent to Ms. Andre by February 13.

Identify next steps

Chair Stephenson asked Ms. Andre to review the topics for the upcoming teleconference:

- Ms. Penterman and Mr. Scharfman will draft a recommendation identifying the unidentified workforce, including past offenders, and barriers they face, including day care, transportation, insurance, and training. They will include the need for a healthy workplace.
 - Mr. Schmidt and Ms. Johnson will provide background information on insurance.
- Mr. Schmidt and Ms. Johnson will draft a recommendation promoting the importance of internships in agriculture and how to help employers to set up internship programs. They will include how we can utilize partners such as the Wisconsin Technical College System.
- Chair Stephenson will seek more information about the barriers for farmers to take advantage of services from the DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and possibly draft a recommendation.

Adjournment

The sub-committee adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

Minutes drafted by Ashley Andre.

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