



RESILIENT LOUISIANA COMMISSION

CO-CHAIR DON PIERSON

CO-CHAIR TERRIE STERLING

Food and Agriculture Task Force

May 12, 2020

Meeting called to order at: 2:00 p.m.

Task Force Members Present:

- Commissioner Mike Strain
- Rocky Weigand
- Richard Fontenot
- Bobby Skeen
- Jim Simon
- Scott Poole
- Marty Woodridge
- Dale Cambre
- Dr. Orlando McMeans
- Dr. Bill Richardson
- Reggy McDaniel
- Dr. Susan Hassig
- Randy Bracy
- Buck Vandersteen
- Warren Harang
- Toni McAllister

- Agenda and Roll Call
 - Approval of Minutes from May 5, 2020 meeting. Jim Simon made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Bobby Skeen seconded the motion. The motion passed with 13 in favor, and 1 against.
- Opening Remarks – Co-Chairs: Commissioner Mike Strain and Wayne Baquet.
 - Commissioner Strain opened by reading the Resilient Louisiana Commission’s recommendations made on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Task Force.
 - Packing plants should be reopened within the next 7 – 10 days with the majority of employees returning.
 - The seafood industry has been greatly impacted with the closure of restaurants causing a surplus of many different seafood products.
 - Eggs have had a market decrease over the past month.
 - Wayne Baquet stressed the importance of how agriculture returning greatly impacts many other industries and their successful return.
- Discussion on Charge 1 (Crisis Response) Immediate Recommendations
 - Buck Vandersteen stressed the importance of increased testing in rural areas and developing industry specific guidelines.
- Discussion on Charge 2 (Long-Term Resilience)
 - Scott Poole and Toni McAllister – tort reform and passage of SB 471.
 - Warren Harang – racetracks are opening on Saturday, May 16. Allowing electronic betting would be highly beneficial to the industry.
 - Scott Poole and Jim Simon– get unemployed individuals back in the workforce. Allocate funding to trade and technical schools to allow for employees to be retrained and repurposed in new areas of expertise. Jim Simon requested that at our next meeting, if possible, have someone from the Louisiana Workforce Commission present to the Task Force regarding funding for retraining employees.
 - Dr. Bill Richardson – the access of broadband internet access in the rural communities.
 - Dr. Orlando McMeans – assisting with food deserts in Louisiana. Also, educating individuals on what agricultural is in 2020.
 - Warren Harang and Dr. Susan Hassig– put individuals back to work to complete the commerce chain. Allow for employees to be honest about not feeling well. Employees currently worry about coming forward if they are unwell and not being able to provide for their family.
 - Richard Fontenot – employers are reluctant to return to work until a limitation of liability is in place. He also highlighted the importance of shoring up the previous tax opportunities for the agriculture community.
- Commissioner Strain asked if there were any public comments. There were none, so he continued to the next item on the agenda.

- Next Steps
 - The Task Force will reconvene on Tuesday, May 19, 2020, at 2 PM. Commissioner Strain requested that if any of the members have any ideas, both short or long-term, to email all suggestions to him before the next meeting at mikestrain@ldaf.la.gov.

Acknowledgement and adjournment at 2:56 p.m.