

Minutes for the USDA Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers November 3, 2021

Members in Attendance: Harvey Reed, William Miller, Dr. Claude Evans, Carolyn Jones, Kimberly Ratcliff, Arnetta Cotton, Antonio Harris, Delmer Stamps, Michelle Cruz, Lois Kim, Dr. Elsa Sanchez, Cary M. Junior, Dr. Duncan M. Chembezi, Greg McGregor

Welcome was given by the Designated Federal Office, Eston Williams.

Eston introduced Dr. Lisa Ramirez, Director for Partnerships and Public Engagement. Dr. Ramirez stated the importance of the ACMF committee. She also spoke to how Secretary Vilsack has made the work of the committee a priority. Some of the priorities were mentioned such as Climate Change, Racial Justice opportunities, Create more and better market opportunities, and Food Nutrition and Insecurity. She went on to mention collectively we can change the way USDA operates to better serve our customers.

Kenya Nicholas was next up to speak, but she was out due to illness.

Chair Harvey Reed was introduced. He welcomes all and provided a roll call of all committee members to establish a quorum for the meeting. Members were presents from many areas of the US.

Eston introduced Rafael Guerrero with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Rafael spoke to the group about working to support Agriculture across the country. This includes things like creating jobs and beautification of neighborhoods. He supports Secretary Vilsack efforts to benefit all landowners and farmers as it relates to provide a partnership for people of color. All producers need to be reached and aided. The urban office of Agriculture looks forward to work with all as they move forward. This include providing technical assistance to all.

Joseph Heller was introduced by Rafael to speak more in depth about Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee. This committee will advice the Secretary on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production practices. The committee will be made of 12 members. He went on to talk about two funding opportunities. Urban Agriculture and innovative Production Competitive Grants, and Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreements. In addition, he shared a pilot project in Gainesville Florida. This project will implement a residential curbside food waste collection program. He mentioned the work with NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This program consists of Conservation contracts and land easements and enhanced alternative funding arrangement provision.

Dr. Dwayne Goldman was introduced as the USDA Senior Advisor for Racial and Equity. Goldman started by saying he has served 3 terms with the ACMF and he solicits the support of the ACMF committee in his current role. He later provided a quote from Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jewel Bronaugh "the Equity Commission is an important step in dismantling barriers historically underserved communities have faced in accessing USDA programs and services, especially with regard to access and inclusion in USDA agricultural programs and services. The Equity Commission will be an invaluable advisor and USDA 's

continuing march towards justice and equity; we look forward to receiving a wide-ranging and diverse set of nominations from the public to serve in this transformation commission." Bronaugh will Co-lead the Commission and will make it a transparent process.

Goldman talked about there has been some conversation around the Equity Commission and ACMF having overlaps. He asked that the ACMF to continue to carry out their role.

The Equity Commission came into existing prior to the American Rescue Plan with multiple different efforts. The Equity Commission will consist of 15 members. There will be a sub committee of 15 members as well. To date there has been 250 applications received for the committee. The deadline for the application has been extended until November 30<sup>th</sup>. Questions and Answer were allowed from the public after Goldman presentation. Chair Reed came on and spoke to the important of the coordination effort between ACMF and the Equity Commission.

Eston introduced Latrice Hill with USDA Farm Service Agency to speak about Heirs Property. Latrice stated that Sarah Campbell was named the National Program Coordinator. Each state is provided with a coordinator.

She went on to speak about the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program. She mentioned they have seen an increase in minority participation by 4 times. They have used partners organizations to help with the outreach efforts. They are also looking at more programs to come available during the pandemic. She talked about the layering of programs including Technical Assistance, Risk, Disaster, Conservation, Market Changes, and Working Capital. Latrice shared updates as relates to COC Elections. Ballots have been mailed out with a post mark deadline to get them back in by December 6, 2021. She also spoke to the Emergency Relief (Disaster Assistance) rolling out in phased approach and Pandemic (Organic Transition, Spot Market Small Hog Program).

Latrice touched on Heirs' Property. She talked about land inherited without a will or legal documentation and land inherited with a will that divides real estate equally among all heirs. The conservation led to her speaking to Heirs' Property Relending Program. This included eligible entities will provide loans to assist heirs to resolve ownership issues on farmland with multiple owners and resolve succession issues on farmland with multiple owners.

The agenda called for a break, but due to running behind schedule we proceeded with the agenda.

Eston Introduce Jamal Habbi with USDA Rural Development. Jamal begins by saying USDA's Rural Housing Service offers a variety of programs to build or improve housing and essential community facilities in rural areas. RHS includes three primary program areas: Single Family Housing, Multi-Family Housing, and Communities Facilities. These programs areas offer loans, grants, and loan guarantees for single-and multi-family housing, childcare centers, fire and police stations, hospitals, libraries and much more. RHS also provides technical assistance loans and grants in partnership with non-profit organizations, Indian tribes, state and federal government agencies, and local communities. RHS received 46 billion dollars for renter's assistance with the American Rescue Plan. These funds are used to help with increase of lost jobs and individuals got behind on rent during the pandemic.

Eston introduced Torey Powell USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. Torey begins by talking about the Farm and Food Worker Relief Grant Program. This program provided \$655 million in grants to state agencies, tribal entities, and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations with experience in providing support or relief services to farmworkers or meatpacking workers. Awards will generally range from \$5,000,000 to \$50,000,000.

Torey went on to speak about the available funding /timeline. He also talked about the pandemic response and safety grant program. Approximately \$650 million in funding to assist small business in certain commodity areas, including specialty crop producers, shellfish farming, finish farming, aquaculture, and apiculture; specialty crop, meat, and other processors; distributors; and farmers markets.

Small businesses and nonprofits in these industries can apply for a grant to cover COVID-related expenses. The minimum funding request is \$1,500 and the maximum funding request is \$20,000. Application must be submitted electronically through the grant portal by 11:59 p.m. on November 22, 2021.

Eston open the floor for Public Comments. Several comments were mentioned from the public.

Eston announced the ACMF will begin their meeting amongst the committee members. Chair Reed led the meeting. Committee member William Miller expressed concerns. Committee member Duncan Chembezi made some comments. Committee member Arnetta Cotton made comments. Committee member Cary Junior made comments. Committee member Delmar Stamps made the last comments.

The meeting adjourns at 4:03 P.M. CST.

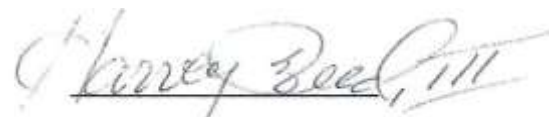


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Eston Williams

Designated Federal Officers

Date: November 29, 2021



Harvey Reed, III

MFAC Chairman

Date: November 21, 2021