

**LOUISIANA INDUSTRIAL HEMP PROMOTION AND RESEARCH
ADVISORY BOARD**
Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF) Building
LDAF Veterans Memorial Auditorium 5825 Florida Boulevard Baton Rouge, LA 70806
March 14, 2023
9:30 AM

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman Representative C. Travis Johnson.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. Erica Morse.

The following board members were present:

Mr. Blaine Jennings representing LA Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.; Dr. Reeve Legendre representing Louisiana State University Agricultural Center; Dr. Janana Snowden representing Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center; Representative C. Travis Johnson representing the Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture and Rural Development; Dr. James Smith representing the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture and Rural Development; Ms. Laura Kelley Shivers representing a licensed grower of industrial hemp; Mr. Paige Christopher Melancon representing a licensed processor of industrial hemp; Mr. Arthur Walker representing a consumer of industrial hemp; Mr. Chris Fontenot representing the Louisiana industrial hemp industry; Mr. John Ford representing Louisiana Black Farmers Cannabis and Hemp Association; Mr. Matthew Moreau representing the Louisiana Cannabis Association; and Dr. Ansel T. Rankins, Sr. representing the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner. A quorum was declared.

The following board members were absent:

Mr. Timmy Thompson representing the Speaker of the LA House of Representatives; Senator Katrina Jackson representing the President of the LA Senate; and Mr. Willis Nelson representing Morehouse Parish Black Farmers and Landowners Association.

Others Present:

Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, DVM; Lester Cannon, Director of LDAF Seed Programs Division; David Johnston, LDAF Seed Programs Coordinator; Brent Cutrer, LDAF Industrial Hemp Program Coordinator; Tina Ficklin, LDAF Seed Program Specialist; Paeton Burkett, LDAF Attorney; Erica Morse, Industrial Hemp Administrative Coordinator.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from members of the public made at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 15, 2022 meeting were distributed to the board members. Mr. Matthew Moreau made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Blaine Jennings. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

MANDATORY SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ETHICS TRAINING

Ms. Paeton Burkett reminded the board members of the mandatory annual Ethics and Sexual Harassment training that should be completed before the end of 2023.

INDUSTRIAL HEMP PROGRAM UPDATE

LDAF Administrative Program Coordinator Brent Cutrer provided an update on the Louisiana Industrial Hemp Program.

OLD BUSINESS

The board members were provided a copy of the statutorily required annual legislative report. LDAF staff informed the board that the report was submitted to the legislature prior to the January 31 deadline.

NEW BUSINESS

Procedural Note:

Chairman Representative Travis Johnson left the meeting at 10:15 a.m. A quorum remained with more than eight members of the Board still present.

Board member Laura Shivers left the meeting at 11:15 a.m. A quorum remained with more than eight members of the Board still present.

a. Industrial Hemp Seed Discussion

LDAF Seed Programs Director Lester Cannon provided an informational update on hemp seed quality and seed certification standards.

b. Fiber Plot Research Discussion

Mr. Brian Bolyer, hemp seed producer and founder of Okhish Mounds Farms provided an update on his fiber research plans and ideas.

c. Discussion on Vidalia Mills blending hemp and cotton for textiles

Mr. James Davis, Jr., hemp seed producer, provided information on Vidalia Mills Company expressing interest for ‘cottonized’ hemp to be used for blending with cotton for fabric instead of using synthetic polyester fibers.

d. Industrial Hemp Building Material Discussion

Tom Pires, a hemp grower from California and representing Western Fiber, provided information on his experience with California’s Hemp Advisory Board and his hemp cultivation struggles and triumphs.

Mr. John Ford informed the board that he used hemp frames and flooring from Kentucky in his business located in Mississippi. He also reminded the board that hemp can be used for concrete, plywood, insulation, and biofuel.

e. Discussion on grant opportunities from USDA

Mr. Arthur Walker stated he found about 6-8 hemp grant opportunities from the USDA that the board needs to look at and pursue.

f. Discussion on increasing LSU, SU, and ULM hemp educational information to the general public

It was discussed by the board that by law, only three universities are permitted to work with industrial hemp: LSU, SU, and ULM. Dr. Reeve Legendre stated one of LSU’s goals is extension work and research. He mentioned that Louisiana has a state mandated hemp industry central website. The website can be found at www.lahemp.net.

Lester Cannon stated that LDAF has a public relations team and there is a Boards and Commission’s page on LDAF’s website. He suggested the board send the information to LDAF and LDAF will add it to the page and other resources in attempts to share the information.

g. Discussion of development of a hemp promotion and education plan and solicitation of funding for the plan

The board discussed the issue. Dr. Janana Snowden further explained that SU meets regularly to discuss hemp education, curriculum, and research. She hopes they can secure additional funding to continue their research.

h. Discussion of state laws across Louisiana affecting the hemp industry

The board discussed the issue. Mr. John Ford further stated that our Louisiana legislators also need further clarification and education to help them in distinguishing between hemp and marijuana.

i. Discussion of broadcasting board meetings and sub-committee meetings

The board discussed the issue. Attorney Paeton Burkett informed the board that Zoom meetings are currently not permitted under state law. Under Open Meetings Law, the meetings can be held via Zoom only if there is a declared emergency in addition to meeting certain guidelines. She clarified that board meetings are in-person and open to the public.

j. Discussion of tracking and informing board members of any legislation proposed to change the hemp industry or needs for legislative changes

Mr. Arthur Walker stated that our state should track what surrounding states are doing in relation to industrial hemp and ensure that our laws are not hindering the production of industrial hemp in Louisiana.

Mr. Walker made a motion to add an agenda item k. “formation of a subcommittee for legislative education and public relations.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Matthew Moreau. The board voted unanimously to add item k. to the agenda.

k. Formation of a subcommittee for legislative education and public relations

Mr. Matthew Moreau made a motion to create a Legislative Education and Public Relations Subcommittee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Christopher Fontenot. The board voted unanimously to approve the formation of the subcommittee. It was decided by the board that the subcommittee should meet before the next statutorily required full board meeting. The subcommittee consists of the seven board members from the following groups: Louisiana Black Farmers Cannabis & Hemp Association, Morehouse Parish Black Farmers and Landowners Association, Louisiana Cannabis Association, LA Hemp Association, Louisiana Hemp Alliance, LSU AgCenter, and SU AgCenter.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Pires-Representing Western Fiber. Topic: Hemp stalk processing

Chareese “Queen” Haile, Esq., Representing Belle Terre Law Firm. Topic: Legal issues

James E. Davis, Jr. Representing Delta Ag Innovation Center. Topic: Herbicides in Industrial Hemp

Frank Johnson representing Courtesy Grows. Topic: Hemp education

Jacob Irving, Representing Brian Bolyer. Topic: Industrial Hemp

Blake Andriessen - Topic: Responsibilities of the Board

DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING

To be announced depending on availability of the venue and board members. The board plans to meet in the summer of 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Janana Snowden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. James Smith. The board voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 12:37 p.m.