



MINUTES

House Select Committee on Agricultural Regulations

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

1:30 PM

Room 1228 Legislative Building

I. Committee Members:

Co-Chairs: Representative Glen Bradley, 49th District
Representative Jimmy Dixon, 4th District

Members: *Representative Dewey L. Hill, 20th District (Absent)*
Representative James H. Langdon, Jr., 28th District
Representative Frank McGuirt, 69th district
Representative Tim Moore, 111th District (Absent)
Representative Shirley B. Randleman, 94th District
Representative Efton M. Sager, 11th District
Representative Edith D. Warren, 8th District

Staff: Barbara Riley (Research)
Jan Paul (Research)
Jeff Cherry (Research)
Lanier McRee (Research)

Speakers: Ray Starling, General Counsel / North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

Mitch Peele, Director of Public Policy / North Carolina Farm Bureau

Allison Fowler / Legislative Director / North Carolina State Grange

Marilyn Kille / SaveNCsFarms Coalition

Clerks: Dan McPhail Amanda Owens

Attending House Sergeant at Arms:

Young Bae Martha Parrish

II. Call To Order:

The House Select Committee on Agricultural Regulations (the committee) meeting was called to order by the presiding Chair, Representative Jimmy Dixon, at 1:35 PM.

III. Welcome and Introductions:

At that time he welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating in the committee. Representative Bradley then welcomed the members to the committee and explained that the presentations to follow would provide an overview of the regulatory picture for agriculture in the state of North Carolina today. He added that he would like to encourage full participation in the committee so that the farmers of North Carolina may have an easier time in providing safe and healthy food and agriculture.

Representative Dixon echoed Representative Bradley's remarks and stated that agriculture in North Carolina is bigger than farmers. He continued by saying that although farmers are a significant part, they have a tremendous partnership with many other entities that forms the agriculture community. He stated that he wishes for the work of the committee to be positive and that balance was needed for the people in North Carolina in the regulatory community. Representative Dixon then briefly introduced the speakers.

IV. Presentations:

- A. Mr. Ray Starling, General Counsel, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services thanked Representative Bradley and Representative Dixon for their work on the committee. He then explained that his presentation, prepared by himself and Steve Troxler, North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner, was not all-inclusive but would provide an overview of agriculture regulations in the state. He explained that when talking about regulation, included can be state and federal statutes, state and federal rules and regulations written by agencies or rule-making bodies, as well as local regulations and requirements that industries impose on farmers and growers as a result of their need to meet some other sort of regulation.

Mr. Starling then presented information provided in a PowerPoint Presentation. (See Attachment A). Mr. Starling closed by thanking the committee members for their time.

- B. Mitch Peele, Director of Public Policy, North Carolina Farm Bureau, opened by saying that farmers are not opposed to regulations or laws, even environmental laws. He stated that those laws are important but that the issue is keeping things in balance and perspective. He expressed the importance of not overburdening the state's number-one industry, agriculture.

He continued by relating the importance of keeping in mind the cost of regulations when looking at agriculture, explaining that the cost of compliance represents a large percentage of the cost of staying business, ranking close to that of labor and energy.

Mr. Peele then talked briefly about the passage of the regulatory reform bill, Senate Bill 781, explaining that the bill will address some of the issues faced by farmers and other businesses in North Carolina but there is still work to be done.

Mr. Peele went on to say that when looking at ways to keep farmers in business in North Carolina, there are two areas of focus, reducing cost and increasing profit. Mr. Peele explained that one of the ways to increase profits is through Value Added Business such as packing products on a farm to sell. He explained that this type of activity brings additional regulation and cost. Mr. Peele stated that Farm Bureau staff have spent time identifying what the regulations and cost associated with value added businesses are and made a request for an opportunity for his staff to address the committee on this particular issue.

Representative Dixon thanked Mr. Peele and stated that his request would be noted and an opportunity would be made for it to be honored.

C. Allison Fowler, Legislative Director, North Carolina State Grange introduced herself and thanked the committee for inviting her to speak. She commented that earlier in the day she attended a forum at the Rural Center focused on young farmers, how to keep them in rural areas, and how to keep them farming. Ms. Fowler explained that during the forum, the number-one concern expressed was that of regulation. She continued by saying that some of the real-life impact of regulation expressed included moving farm products, maneuvering through the permitting process, and jumping through hoops for things like debris removal. She relayed that the group was excited to hear that there would be movement on easing up regulation so that they can be profitable and productive. She continued by saying that the Grange's idea of moving forward includes identifying which regulations were problematic and which could be tweaked so that farmers could be more productive. She extended the willingness of The Grange to be part of the process of identifying problems.

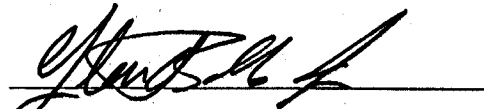
D. Representative Dixon introduced the last speaker, Marilyn Kille, and informed the committee that she would be speaking on the issue of helping to prevent farmland loss.

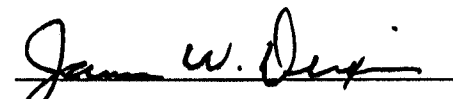
Marilyn Kille, representative for SaveNCsFarms, introduced herself and thanked the committee for the opportunity to present the concerns of the Save North Carolina Farms Coalition. She then read from prepared remarks. (See Attachment B).

V. Representative Dixon thanked the presenters and commented that the committee is a work in progress. He then asked if other committee members would like to speak.

Representative Sager, in response to Ms. Kille's presentation, stated that it was his understanding that people in ETJ municipalities are able to serve on boards of that municipality. Ms. Kille responded by saying that individuals can serve on a planning board or board of adjustments but that they are in effect disregarded. She stated that she was prepared to provide evidence to that effect.

- VI. Representative Dixon made closing remarks stating that progress would be made now that dialogue has started. He stated that a simple message for the regulatory community as he sees it: "Improve your bedside manner and treat the people you're regulating like customers and then everything will be good". He announced that the next meeting will be held December 7th. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 PM.


Representative Glen Bradley
Co-Chair


Representative Jimmy Dixon
Co-Chair