



MINUTES
Executive Committee Conference Call
Friday, August 2, 2019, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT

Executive Committee Members Present: Dr. David Baltensperger, Chair, Dr. Edmund Buckner, Vice Chair, Ms. Robin Beck, Dr. John Coupland, Mr. Richard De los Santos, Ms. Liz Hobart, and Dr. Mike Oltrogge

Executive Committee Members Absent: Dr. Sarah Francis and Dr. Jayson Lusk

NAREEE Board Staff: Ms. Michele Esch, Executive Director, and Ms. Shirley Morgan-Jordan, Program Support Coordinator

Ex-Officio(s): None

Others Present: Dr. Rich Derksen (OCS); Dr. Scott Angle (NIFA); Ms. Dana Peterson (REE), Mr. Brock Densel (REE), Ms. Courtney Knupp (REE), and Mr. Ephraim Leiptag (ERS)

I. Welcome and Roll Call of the Executive Committee Members and Other Attendees

Ms. Michele Esch welcomed everyone on the call and provided a couple of updates.

- Prior to the meeting, she had sent the Board clarification on how to handle public requests for documents. All requests need to go through the NAREEEAB Office for approval to ensure consistency and private information is protected.
- Public comments from the meeting will be posted to the NAREEEAB website and directed the members to view them there.
- Ms. Esch will also follow up with the entire board today with responses to some of the action items from the meeting.

She also thanked everyone for their assistance in finalizing the letter on the ERS/NIFA relocation. She stated that the ERS/NIFA relocation recommendations have been posted to the NAREEEAB website.

II. Comments from the Office of the REE Under Secretary

Ms. Courtney Knupp attended on behalf of Dr. Scott Hutchins, Deputy Under Secretary. She introduced herself and provided a few updates from Dr. Hutchins. She and Dr. Hutchins view the Board as the Board of Directors and thanked everyone for serving.

- REE is focused on the ERS/NIFA relocation and ensuring that it goes smoothly, is successful and that both agencies deliver programs seamlessly.

- REE is also focused on the implementation of the Farm Bill.
- She stated that the REE Office is anxiously waiting on the budget that will help drive priorities across the REE agencies.
- She stated that the National Bio- and Agro-defense Facility (NBAF) facility and a MOU has been signed between USDA and the Department of Homeland Security. ARS and APHIS are working daily on the build out and making sure they are on track.

A question was asked when they expected to be finish with the NBAF facility. NBAF will be commissioned in Fall 2020/2021 and personnel will be able to move in. NBAF will be fully functional in FY 2022. At full capacity, there will be approximately 400 employees from ARS and APHIS.

A question was about the timing of the move for ERS and NIFA at the temporary site and the permanent site. Courtney stated that they are working with GSA to finalize the procurement and lease process for the permanent location. The report date is Sept 30 and a robust relocation package is being offered to employees moving to KC. What is the latest number of percentages? The retention rate is at 35% at NIFA and 50% ERS. USDA is continuing to help employees that do not want to relocate.

Dr. Baltensperger asked Ms. Esch to send Courtney's contact to him.

III. Comments from the Chair

Dr. Baltensperger thanked everyone for being on the call and for expediting the recommendations on the ERS/NIFA relocation to USDA.

Dr. Baltensperger stated that he was happy the Board is serving in an advisory role. The face to face meeting was very successful and we were able to set several items in motion. He asked if any nominations have been made concerning the position of Deputy Secretary of REE. Ms. Knupp stated that USDA/REE is working on Dr. Hutchins' confirmation. She thanked the Board members for the work that was done at the meeting.

IV. USDA Science Plan

Dana Peterson, Policy Advisor to REE, provided the Board with details on the USDA Blueprint for Science and laid out a specific request to the Board to review the Blueprint. This Blueprint will lay out the science priorities for REE and USDA for the next two years. The previous version, last updated in 2014, was called the REE Action Plan. REE plans to provide the draft Blueprint to the Board by August 23 for a quick review and final publish date of October 1. Ms. Peterson also presented 4 overarching questions to help guide the Board's review of the Blueprint.

- Do the concepts presented encourage/facilitate healthy conversation around agriculture's toughest challenges and opportunities?

- Would USDA's external customers and taxpayers receive the best possible service through these actions?
- Do we capture expansive strategies that encourage collaborative science, particularly between public and private sectors?
- What measurement, metrics and data would best facilitate data-driven decision making on science investments towards the objectives outlined here?

The Executive Committee agreed to the following schedule for the review of the USDA Blueprint for Science:

- August 23 – Board receives draft USDA Science Blueprint
- September 3 – Board members send comments to Michele for compilation
- September 4 – Michele shares compilation with members for questions, concerns, concurrence (via email). If needed, we will have a conference call to review any outstanding issues and concerns.
- September 6 – NAREEE will provide draft recommendations to REE (final recommendations will have to be publicly deliberated upon before they can be final).

V. Next NAREEE Meeting

There was a discussion on when and where the next NAREEE Meeting will be concerning the date, time, and place. A doodle poll will be sent out from the NAREEEAB Office.

The Board discussed several options for locations. The priority location is Kansas City but the Executive Committee agreed that it would be best to visit there when both agencies are settled in the permanent location.

VI. Other Business

None

Meeting adjourned at 2:07 pm.

Next meeting will be Friday, September 6, 2019, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time

Dr. David Baltensperger
Chair

Dr. Edmund Bucker
Vice Chair

Michele Esch
Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD: _____
Date

Initials following Advisory Board Approval