



North Carolina Food Safety and Defense Task Force

Established 2003

NC Food Safety & Defense Task Force Executive Committee Agenda – Wednesday August 12, 2020 – 9:30 am

Attendees: Candace Christian, Steve Tracey, Chip Simmons, Shane Smith, Anita McMullen, Nicole Lee, Karen Beck, Sandy Bridges

Meeting started ~9:30am

Roll Call

Approval of previous minutes – Steve motioned, Chip second – minutes approved

- **COVID-19 Response Update**

Anita McMullen (NC Dept of Agriculture) – Program areas back in routine operations. **Protocols established for ??**. Working with 2 recalls: 1 - Red onions (large recall with NC distribution) and 2 - listeria positive sample of coleslaw with small operation. It has been an educational process for them and there was a little local media around this.

Chip Simmons (NC State University) - On farm readiness reviews continue which gives growers a better understanding of produce safety rules. Packing line and mobile unit being created at Salisbury (Piedmont Research Station) that will be a test line for research and education regarding equipment design and cleaning and sanitation. Will have a number of produce items. Annual produce safety conference coming up in September which will be virtual format this year to discuss how COVID impacts workers on farms, cleaning and sanitizing common use equipment (e.g. blueberry and green bean harvesters), etc. Conference open to anyone. Save the date is out. Agenda and speakers being finalized.

Steve Tracey (Food Lion) – They have been impacted by onion recall. They also had a recall on some lines (*Listeria monocytogenes*). Continue social distancing and mask requirements. Distribution centers working to keep groceries on the shelf. Toilet paper isle looking better now. Difficult to have distribution centers working at full capacity given the community transmission of COVID.

Karen Beck (NCDA – Meat and Poultry) - Two months on the job now. Working with plants and shared one-pagers for management at facilities they inspect to share guidance. Working with public health to connect plants with available PPE.

Shane Smith (Environmental Health Section) – 12 shelter assessments performed from local county level during last week's storm/hurricane (Isaias). Updated field inspection. No FDA standardizations right now. "Count on Me NC" has over 56,000 registrants and over 13,000 certificates to over 12,000 businesses. RNC on the 24th-27th has been scaled down to a Mecklenburg response, but state EH is still are participating and having this on their radar.

Veronica Bryant (Environmental Health Section) – Working on projects with leadership to enhance Executive Order compliance to prepare for school opening next week. Webinar for LHDs in the morning in response to info provided about digital learning environments for childcare and non-profits. Could become a food safety issue if they have to provide food to food insecure people. FYI, produce boxes distributed by 2 counties could have contained recalled red onions, but counties doing all they can to traceback.

Sandy Bryant (NC Emergency Management) – Update provided via email as she had to roll off the call - Continue with COVID response and plan for hurricane season.

Nicole Lee (NC Communicable Disease) – All COVID activity other than the red onion recall where NC currently has 5 cases. A new foodborne epi, Neeti Karmacharya, was hired before we all went virtual to investigate NC cases identified as being part of these type clusters/outbreaks.

Candice Christian (NC State University) – Making virtual food safety programming and figuring out what topics are appropriate for virtual learning; consumer education side with social media – being better about accessibility, diversity, and equity. They're using a readability tool now. Consumer messaging for hurricanes and COVID 19. Mass food distribution information sheets being used. Increasing face covering communication.

COMMENT from Veronica - Safe plate supports our efforts. Getting TFE (Temporary Food Establishment) permits for vendors working with migrant farms – Candace and that group came up with something at our request. Within a day they had a handout for distribution for shelters. They also helped with boil water advisories. They complete these requests quickly and thoroughly.

- September Meeting (September 9)
 - Will occur before the next phase announcement occurs.
 - Via Zoom. Last Zoom meeting went well with good attendance.
 - Speaker – normally produce update. Chip or Alaina will set up Zoom. **Chris Gunter or ??** is expecting to present

- Annual Conference
 - Difficult to sign contracts, obtain vendors, determine a location by Sept/Oct in preparation for a May meeting.
 - We will discuss with full membership in Sept to determine their needs and how we can support. We need to be responsible with our time, money, and membership.
 - Per Anita, we have money to pay for this. The biggest part of the grant goes towards doing the annual conference.
 - Per Shane, we may be able to apply for virtual continuing education hours

- Annual Report
 - Required as part of the Executive Order that created this Task Force.
 - Due in December. Usually goes through someone in DHHS office (i.e. Mark Benton) and then gets submitted via that route to the governor.
 - Veronica has the old one that worked better for getting it through the communications folks
 - Need to have it done by October meeting to start the process of getting it approved and submitted.

- Produce part needs to be submitted by first of November so that it can be attached with the annual report.
- Last year it didn't get to the governor until January although it was submitted by November.
- ***This process should get written down so we will know the expectations as leadership changes.***
- Historically Steve would submit to Larry and he spoke with councils office to get final edits. DHHS has changed how they would like to get things to the governor. The agenda was usually the centerpiece of that report. Although it was canceled the agenda was substantial and could be a good addition to this year's report.

- Officer Elections
 - Lynette Johnston was nominated and willing to serve as Chair Elect. She represents NC State. This helps keep the leadership team balanced among the partners.
 - No other nominations were brought.
 - Veronica will roll to Past Chair. Nicole will bump up to Chair. Lynette will become Chair Elect.
 - Nominations were closed. Lynette Johnston was voted as Chair Elect.
 - Effective September 1. September meeting will be with the new leadership.
 - The account and food payments will need to be managed by a food industry representative. Steve plans to continue to perform this task.

- Next Meeting
 - September 9 (Full Task Force)
 - October 14 (Executive Committee)
 - Suggested Teams or Zoom
 - Teams best for a smaller group. Zoom best for larger group.
 - Nicole will send an email to the EC to ensure everyone can participate in Teams before sending the official invite.

- Adjournment
 - Meeting ended ~10:30am