

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, January 25, 2022

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Burtenshaw, Vice Chairman Bayer, Senators Patrick, Den Hartog, Blair (Johnson), Zito, Ricks, Nelson, and Semmelroth

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Burtenshaw** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Burtenshaw passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Bayer.

DOCKET NO. 43-0101-2100F **Notice of Omnibus Rulemaking (Fee Rule) - Proposed Rule - Idaho Oilseed Commission (IOC)**, p. 339. **Benjamin Kelly**, Administrator, IOC introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Kelly** stated that the rule contains no changes from the previous two years.

MOTION: **Senator Blair** moved to approve **Docket No. 43-0101-2100F**. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

DOCKET NO. 02-0616-2100 **Notice of Omnibus Rulemaking - Proposed Rule - Idaho Honey Commission (IHC)**, p. 139. **Benjamin Kelly**, Administrator, IHC presented the docket. **Mr. Kelly** stated that the rule is the same as the previous two years.

MOTION: **Senator Nelson** moved to approve **Docket No. 02-0616-2100**. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

DOCKET NO. 29-0000-2100 **Notice of Omnibus Rulemaking - Proposed Rule - Idaho Potato Commission (IPC)**, p. 145. **Patrick Kole**, Vice President, Legal and Government Affairs, IPC, introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Kole** reported that the IPC's rules have not changed over the past two years. He observed that the IPC rules establish how taxes are collected and paid, IPC operations, quality standards for Idaho potatoes, and use of the IPC's intellectual property (see Attachment A). **Mr. Kole** remarked that the rules are important to help the IPC protect the industry's heavy financial investment in the Idaho brand.

MOTION: **Senator Blair** moved to approve **Docket No. 29-0000-2100**. **Chairman Burtenshaw** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Vice Chairman Bayer passed the gavel to Chairman Burtenshaw.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Potato Commission. Jamey Higham**, President/Chief Executive Officer, IPC, introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Higham** advised that he began in his position 14 days ago. He gave a brief overview of his background and professional experience. **Mr. Higham** presented the IPC's 2021 audited financial report. He noted that the IPC projects 2022 revenue to be lower than 2021 due to last year's hot weather and wildfire smoke (see Attachments B and B-1). **Mr. Higham** outlined issues negatively impacting the future of the potato industry (see Attachment C).

Senator Nelson asked about the reasons young people do not return to family farms. **Mr. Higham** responded that the pandemic has created a shift in the workforce. He remarked that young people gravitate to technology careers. High land prices and health insurance costs are a barrier to entry into the profession, he said.

Senator Patrick asked the number of potato growers in Idaho. **Mr. Higham** answered there are approximately 700.

Senator Blair asked for clarification on the cost to grow potatoes. **Mr. Higham** replied the cost is \$8.50 per 100 pounds. **Senator Blair** asked if smoke affects potato quality. **Mr. Higham** answered that smoke negatively impacts the photosynthesis process and keeps overnight temperatures high, stunting potato growth. **Senator Blair** inquired about the current state of shipping. **Mr. Higham** responded that there is a shortage of truck drivers and trucks. He added that Idaho is geographically farther away from most major markets than competing states.

Senator Semmelroth asked what can be done to address labor issues. **Mr. Higham** answered that steps should be taken to make Idaho the preferred place where agriculture workers want to live. **Senator Semmelroth** asked if affordable housing and education are examples of issues that impact the Idaho workforce. **Mr. Higham** answered yes.

Vice Chairman Bayer asked if the potato industry uses the river system for shipping. **Mr. Higham** replied no. **Vice Chairman Bayer** inquired if farmers are selling their farm property to conglomerates or housing developers. **Mr. Higham** answered that both things occur. He added that investment companies sometimes buy farms and lease them back to the growers.

Chairman Burtenshaw commented that the Idaho brand is important. He urged Mr. Higham to continue advertising to keep it in front of consumers. **Chairman Burtenshaw** expressed his opinion that the next generation must be smarter and more technology savvy to compete in today's world. He remarked that future farmers can contribute by gaining education to help make farming more efficient. **Mr. Higham** agreed that the public associates Idaho with potatoes.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Burtenshaw** adjourned the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

Senator Burtenshaw
Chair

Jeanne Jackson-Heim
Secretary