



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

450 Columbus Blvd, Suite 701 | Hartford, Connecticut 06103 | 860.713.2500

Office of the Commissioner

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Connecticut Department of Agriculture Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group Access to Secure Land Tenure

Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 18, 2022

11:00AM-12:00PM

Was held virtually

Meeting Recording Here: [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Dropbox](#)

Members Present: Chelsea Gazillo, Zania Johnson, Dominick Grant, Latha Swamy, Richard Myers, Ashley Stallworth

Members Absent: Anwar Ahmad, Shawn Sims

Public Present: Ellie Angerame (Green Village Initiative – GVI)

DoAg Staff: Holly Lalime

1. **Welcome and Call to Order-** Meeting was called to order by Dominick Grant at 11:05AM
2. **New Business**
 - a. **Continue discussing and framing recommendations using the DEI Recommendation Mapping spreadsheet.**
 - Dominick reviewed the current recommendations on the spreadsheet with the group and discussed strategies for addressing each recommendation and when to discuss them. Discussed whether some recommendations can be combined.
 - Other DEI groups are addressing recommendation #1 (modifying/updating DoAg grant programs and opportunities to support the direct access of land for BIPOC) but it's important to keep it on the list.
 - Specific interest in foreclosed land that is Town or State owned (recommendation #6). For these dormant properties, how do farmers, especially farmers of color, learn more about these properties/gain access to them. The USDA has a site that lists these properties.
 - i. Connecticut doesn't typically own foreclosed property, it is either town or agency owned.



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- ii. Do the farmers or farming organizations need to own the land or can long term leases or ground leases be used.
 - iii. We need a database with all farmland owned by state agencies, municipalities, land trusts etc. Will need a GIS analyst for this. Maybe connect with the State GIS analyst.
- The groups discussed whether changes to grant programs would require new/amended legislation. Cyrena stated that there are changes that can be made to grant program without new legislations. Chelsea reminded the group that administrations do change, so it's important to put things in legislation to ensure that they're not undone. Dominick asks how we can best walk that line between immediate change (without legislation) and greater more substantial changes (through legislation).
 - Dominick discussed with the group his thoughts about land access and how land access is just one component. Thought/strategy also needs to be given to resources/mentorship/education so that growers can succeed.
 - Ashley shared a land access story from Washington where an old police station was converted into a marijuana facility.
 - Zania expressed interest in learning how abandoned buildings could be used for indoor growing opportunities – i.e. old school buildings, malls, etc. Richard also expressed interest in this idea. Dominick talked about how non-agricultural funds (cleanup/brownfield funding) could be used to help accomplish this goal.
 - Latha discussed the importance of framing when putting together these recommendations. We need to make sure that we're helping people understand the issues and the ask.
 - Ashley discussed the need not only for land but land and structures.
 - Dominick discussed alternative land tenure models (individual owners, group ownership, ground leases, long term leases). He also discussed the need for multi-sector participation to make these recommendations stick.
 - Dominick asked about FarmLink – who is managing that? Holly explained that it's managed by CT DOAG and Connecticut Farmland Trust. Dominick commented that the site/process isn't particularly open in his opinion. How can we understand/learn what's out there and open up access? Ashley discussed how access to information is critically important for equitable land access.
 - Latha reminded the group that making information more accessible to one of our focus areas and should be an umbrella for all of the recommendations. This is a root barrier – lack of information and assistance to process the information.
 - Ashley discussed the need for a roadmap and milestones for each recommendation. This is a way to hold people accountable.



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3. **Public Comment-** No public comment.
4. **Next Steps-**
 - a. Modifying/Updating DoAg grant programs/land access programs and opportunities to support the direct access of land for BIPOC
5. **Adjourn-** Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM by Dominick Grant. Respectfully submitted, Holly Lalime, Env. Analyst, April 26, 2021.