

**Food Innovation Team
Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2021**

Today's meeting was held via WebEx due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members present included: Jane Knott, Jane Jewett, Lolly Occhino, Noelle Harden, Jodie Burke, and Blake Nordin

Visitors present included: Alida Sorenson, Kip Fondrick, Jeff Luedeman, Nicole Baysal, Shelley Erickson, Paul Wright, Todd Bram, and Natasha Hedin

Meeting started 9:00 a.m.

November meeting minutes were accepted

1. Upcoming Dates

The next Food Innovation Team (FIT) Meeting will be Tuesday, March 16th via WebEx.

2. Feather Stone Farms

Team members reviewed the prescreening intake form submitted by Todd Bram of Featherstone Farms. Featherstone Farms is a 250-acre, certified organic farm located in the bluff country in and around Rushford, MN. The farm produces around 70 varieties of fresh market fruits and vegetables for distribution to local co-ops, restaurants, grocers, wholesalers, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members throughout the region. This case was explored as an After-Action Review (AAR) – all issues had been resolved, including new staff in the Licensing Liaison position with training and background on licensing exemptions and an update to the MDA Website's Food Licensing Wizard to improve output.

3. Wright Farms

Team members reviewed the prescreening intake form submitted by Paul Wright of Wright Farms. Wright Farms currently grows Aronia berries and sells them frozen directly to consumers in small quantities (in harvest trays or cleaned and bagged). The farm harvests the berries and puts them in trays or cleans them by removing leaves and stems and bag, then freezes the cleaned berries. Wright Farms does sell some in fresh state during harvest time. Paul Wright, owner of Wright Farms, contacted AURI regarding questions about the licensing (and other requirements) needed to sell Aronia berry juice. Mr. Wright had contacted the MDA and received some correspondence but is having difficulty understanding the requirements for selling direct to consumer versus wholesale or under the Cottage Food Law. Mr. Wright was seeking an outline with specific steps needed to take to sell juice from the farm. Options were identified and will be documented in a recommendation report.

4. Admin Discussion

Governor's Task Force Recommendation Letter: Team members reviewed and discussed a draft recommendation letter proposing statutory change regarding compensation of members to seek more diverse representation. Currently most FIT members consist of mostly salaried individuals, however, there are smaller scale farmers/food makers that would benefit from sponsorship from other organizations. Potential sponsorship items mentioned included a stipend to cover the cost of childcare, gas mileage, or lost wages to attend meetings. The MDA legal counsel determined that current language in M.S. 28A.21 prevents the MDA from administering member compensation, directly or through an outside organization. The FIT was advised that statutory language change would be required for the agency to include compensation, directly or through an outside organization, in Task Force activities. The FIT voted in approval to send the draft recommendation

letter onto the FSDTF members for consideration. Jane Jewett will be providing an update for the FSDTF at their meeting this afternoon.

FIT Flyer Proposed Changes: Jane Jewett presented suggested language updates to the current FIT flyer/one-page document and the standard operating procedure. Time ran out and discussion was cut short during this meeting.

5. Potential agenda items for March 16th:

- None identified at this time