

North Carolina Industrial Hemp Commission

MINUTES

July 21, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Telephone / Internet Conference Call

Commissioners in attendance:	Other official attendees:
Dr. Tom Melton, Chair	Tien Cheng, Department of Justice
Mr. Guy Carpenter	Scott McCollum, EIT, NCSU
Chief Daniel House	Beth Farrell, General Administration, NCDA&CS
Dr. Shirley Hymon-Parker	Phil Wilson, Plant Industry Division, NCDA&CS
Mr. Billy McLawhorn	Jon Lanier, Asst. General Counsel, NCDA&CS
Sheriff Tim Manning	
Mr. Pat Short	

Call to Order – *Dr. Tom Melton, Chairman*

Roll Call of Attendees – *Dr. Tom Melton, Chairman*

Chairman **Melton** initiated a roll call to determine if a quorum of Commissioners were present. Seven Commissioners as listed above were in attendance, meeting the requirement of a quorum.

Chairman **Melton** thanked Dr. Guochen Yang for his service to the NC Industrial Hemp Commission and being a voice for small farmers.

Chairman **Melton** welcomed Dr. Shirley Hymon-Parker to the Commission as the NC A&T State University representative. A native of Warrenton, Dr. Hymon-Parker serves as the Associate Dean for the Agricultural Research Program at NC A&T State University.

Statement Concerning Conflicts of Interest – *Dr. Tom Melton, Chairman*

Chairman **Melton** read the statement concerning conflicts of interest and asked members to identify any potential conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were identified.

Recognition of Conference Call – *Dr. Tom Melton, Chairman*

Chairman **Melton** noted that the purpose of this meeting is to approve applications to cultivate industrial hemp in North Carolina. Under state and federal laws, individuals must be issued a license to participate in the North Carolina Industrial Hemp Pilot Program. Growers in the state who wish to cultivate industrial hemp must submit an application for a license to the Industrial Hemp Commission. Applications that have been vetted seriously by N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services staff will be reviewed at this meeting. There is no public comment period for this meeting.

Recognition of Special Guests – *Dr. Tom Melton, Chairman*

Chairman **Melton** noted there were no special guests at this meeting.

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Industrial Hemp Program Update – Mr. Phil Wilson, Director, Plant Industry Division, NCDA&CS

Chairman **Melton** called on Mr. Phil Wilson to provide a program update.

- Mr. **Wilson** reported that as of July 21, 2020, North Carolina has 1,501 licensed industrial hemp growers, representing 15,462.88 licensed acres and 7,231,799.59 square feet of licensed greenhouse production. There are currently 1,100 registered processors in the state.

New Business

- Approval of Minutes from the June 12, 2020 meeting – Dr. Tom Melton, Chairman
 - Chairman **Melton** called for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 12, 2020, meeting. Motion to approve these minutes was made by Commissioner **Short** and seconded by Commissioner **Carpenter**. Motion passed on a voice vote.
- Review and Approval of Research Pilot Program Applications – Dr. Tom Melton, Chairman
 - Chairman **Melton** read the names of the applications under consideration at this time: James Joseph Foutty, Chloe Shane Corrigan, Steven A. Coleman, Josh Bunn, Russell Maner William, Kiaro Eugene Holts, Jonathan Richard Bender, Ronnie Winston, Sr., Alex Young Bruce, Jeremy Alan Stegall, Michael Pittman, Siyonka Braswell, Wallace O. Green, Andrew Darrin Ledford, Richard Cecil Whitesell, Jr., Charles Franklin Connor, and Beatrice Nuck Dingha.
 - Chairman **Melton** asked if there was a motion to approve the applications presented. Commissioner **Manning** made a motion to approve the applications. Commissioner **House** seconded the motion to approve.
 - After roll call vote, all applications were approved.
- Warning about the grey areas of existing law – Commission Members
 - Chairman **Melton** noted that currently license are only valid through October 30, 2020 unless there is a federal extension of hemp pilot program–s. Mr. Jon Lanier, Asst. General Counsel, NCDA&CS, shared that a Congressional committee has advanced an extension of pilot programs through September 30, 2021, but will still need to go through legislative process. Chairman **Melton** asked if there could be a gap where you couldn't legally grow hemp in NC; Mr. Lanier responded that in a scenario with no state plan license would be under prevue of USDA and it is unknown how USDA would handle the existing program. Chairman **Melton** asked if NC license holders should apply for USDA license in September 2020; Mr. Lanier responded that if he were a hemp grower, he would seek information from USDA.

Chairman **Melton** noted that we do not know what the law will be in a few months and this is a risky time for growers. In addition to legal grey areas, market conditions are soft for hemp and that several larger processors have pulled back for this growing season. Demand for hemp flower has also decreased. If you do find a market for your hemp, it can take a long time to be paid and you may receive lower prices than expected. There are further legal questions to be answered for the industry including FDA determination on food and supplements in addition to smokable hemp.

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Commissioner **Manning** asked if continuing to issue licenses is sitting farmers up for failure and noted that some farmers are currently holding the crop for a year or more due to lack of market and overproduction. Chairman **Melton** responded that there was discussion on this topic at a past meeting; it was determined that it is a legal program and to continue to issue license. NCD&CS Plant Industry staff are including a letter related to risks of growing industrial hemp to license holders. Mr. **Wilson** noted that a letter is being sent and risks communicated to hemp farmers; this is a personal decision for farmers to make regarding what to grow.

Chairman **Melton** answered a question from the Zoom chat regarding why a ban on smokable hemp was considered. He responded that law enforcement cannot distinguish smokable hemp from marijuana and it causes legal questions.

Adjourn: Being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner **Short** and seconded by Commissioner **Carpenter**. Motion passed on a voice vote.

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