Meeting Minutes: Governor's Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers
DATE: 07/23/2026
MINUTES PREPARED BY: CINTHIA MARTINEZ

Committee Members

Present

Alyssa Wetzel, APRN-CNP, Kettering Health
Elise Sporre, Project Manager and Outreach Coordinator, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services
Erik Zabel, Epidemiologist Principal, Minnesota Department of Health
Mike Lang, Director of Workforce Strategies and Innovation, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Noemi Trevino, Migrant Education Specialist, Student Access and Opportunity, Minnesota Department of Education
Patrice Bailey, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Rodolfo Gutierrez, Executive Director, Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment Through Research

Guests

Jon Grebner, Legislative and Community Relations Director, UFCW Local 663
Emmanuel Martinez-Cruz, Labor Investigator Senior**,** Department of Labor & Industry

Staff Present: **Cinthia Martinez,** CareerForce Office Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Agenda

- Welcome/Introductions
- Approve Minutes
- Updates
- AWWC Executive Summary/Feedback
- Next steps
- Public Comments
- Adjourn

Welcome /Introductions

Mike Lang will be taking the place of Deputy Commissioner Marc Majors on the committee.

Approve Minutes

Approved.

Updates

Patrice Bailey

- Patrice shared that the committee has been going through a period of transition over the past several months.
- Patrice has been in contact with the Governor's Office to discuss which activities will continue and which committees will carry forward with the next administration.
- Patrice mentioned a legislative portal that will allow individuals to submit ideas beginning August 8, 2026.
- An RFP is also being sent out in coordination with the communications team.
- Suggestions submitted in previous years will carry over and be considered alongside new submissions.

Noemi Trevino

- Noemi provided an update on the significant decline in school attendance.
- Low attendance has contributed to additional concerns, including access to meals for students and a lack of credits for middle and high school students.
- These issues could create additional economic challenges for this population in the future.
- There is also significant fear and uncertainty in rural Minnesota.

Alyssa

- Alyssa shared that the situation is not as intense as it was previously; however, people are still reporting impacts.
- Homeowners remain concerned about losing their homes, while renters are also experiencing fear and uncertainty.

Elise

- Elise shared that SMRLS serves all of Minnesota and South Dakota.
- Workers, particularly dairy and livestock workers, continue to have significant skepticism and concerns.
- SMRLS is focusing on working with trusted residents and community members to make connections and conduct outreach.

Jon

- Jon shared that people are afraid to gather in person.
- The organization is therefore exploring additional online resources and alternative meeting locations, such as conference rooms.

Rodolfo

- Rodolfo shared that HACER has been receiving calls from people seeking assistance with rent, food, and other supplies.
- In southern Minnesota, many people are afraid to go to work.
- HACER has been connecting with various consulates, which are also receiving calls from individuals seeking assistance with returning to their home countries.

Mike Lang

- Mike shared that the Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker team has reported reluctance among workers to return to work.
- There is also reluctance among individuals to apply for available services.

AWWC Executive Summary (Document will be in meeting materials)

The summary document will be included in the meeting materials.

- The executive summary reviews developments and activities that occurred before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elise

- Elise expressed frustration and discouragement about the committee's decline in activity.
- She noted that previous committee members invested significant time and effort in developing the recommendations.
- Elise expressed concern that the committee has not received sufficient follow-up and that members feel "ghosted."
- She emphasized that committee members bring different areas of expertise and that the meetings should involve more substantive work rather than primarily providing updates.
- Elise recommended establishing workgroups, meeting more frequently, and increasing representation on the committee.

Noemi

- Noemi suggested that meeting minutes be distributed sooner following each meeting.

Erik

- Erik noted that the committee already has a significant number of recommendations and suggested reviewing them at the next meeting.

Mike Lang

- Mike asked members to submit any agenda items or ideas they would like to discuss at the next meeting.

Next Steps

- Review existing recommendations at the next meeting.
- Consider establishing workgroups and increasing the frequency of meetings.
- Members should submit proposed agenda items and discussion topics for the next meeting.

Public Comments

Adjourn