

COPA Annual Meeting Minutes

February 19, 2009

Island Grove Park, Greeley

5:35 – 7:15 PM

President Claudia Ferrell called the meeting to order at 5:35. There were about 35 people in attendance.

Ferrell introduced Dennis Lamm, Board treasurer, who presented an award of appreciation to Jim Dyer, past executive director of COPA, to a standing ovation. Dyer expressed his hopes that COPA could continue on its path of revitalization.

Mitch Yergert of the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) then spoke. The highlights of his presentation were:

- CDA has regained the 100 or so operations that dropped their certification right after the NOP was implemented bringing CDA certified operations back to about 200
- CDA is working on getting its own re-accreditation approved by the NOP
- The Commissioner, in the face of a hiring freeze, is supporting a request for an additional FTE (full time equivalent) to assist in the certification program due to the growth in organic operations.
- The Organic Certification Advisory Group has decided that there is a need for more education and is putting together a brochure on the basics of organic food production
- The cost sharing for certification fees for '08 – '09 is up to 75% and is retroactive to the '07 - 08 fiscal year; the money is waiting approval by the new administration.
- The farm bill has money for organic practices and the NCRS, administrator of the monies, has asked CDA what organic certification is so that they will understand what to fund; Yergert is meeting with them soon to educate them.
- Appreciation was expressed during the Q&A for the work that Yergert has done to improve the administration of the certification program
- In response to a question Yergert informed the group that the new deadline for applications for certification is May 1 so it can be done in a timely manner. A Word fillable form is being developed to facilitate the application process and make possible the use of a previous year's application.
- As a requirement of their re-accreditation, CDA is developing more detailed questions on handling manure and compost, clarifying the process handler application, making minor changes to the livestock application and are adding NOP titles for easy reference
- Another question was about the training his staff receives and he informed us that the NOP does not provide such training and CDA continually searches for training opportunities. He suggested that collaboration with COPA would be possible since training for his staff would be useful training for COPA members.

Wendy White of CDA Markets Division then spoke of their work and covered the following:

- 61% of consumers recognize the Colorado Proud label and there are 1000 members
- The Marketing Your Food Product workshop will be held April 23 at the Community College of Aurora
- Applications are due Feb 28th for the Farm Fresh Directory
- In the next 2-3 weeks she will announce grants for marketing that will be available to COPA and others for which a 25% match, real or in-kind, is required.
- The Fruit and Vegetable Division is offering certification in GAP and GHP (Good Agriculture/Handling Processes)
- She discussed Market Maker, a partnership with CDA and CSU, for use of a web-based program developed by Illinois Extension. It's a one stop shopping place for producers, processors, chefs, schools, consumers, etc. All CDA publications will be rolled into it and it should be live in the next 2-3 months.
- In response to Q&A she said the Farm Fresh Directory will also remain in hard copy and that of the specialty crops monies, 50% will go to grants.

Ferrell conducted the business meeting in which both the previous year's minutes and the treasurer's report were approved. Various Board members reported on board activities including:

- The Board's search for a replacement Exec Dir (ED)
- The website upgrade
- Move toward an electronic newsletter
- A report of the farm tour from the day before
- A report on the plans for Extension to sponsor a CSA Conference in 2010 following the 4 regional conferences this year
- COPA's focus on helping producers transition to organics through a mentorship program

After a call for nominations from the floor, the following slate of board members for a 2 year term was approved with no dissenting votes after being moved by Tim Ferrell and seconded by Brad Wind:

Claudia Ferrell, Dennis Lamm, Arna Caplan, Matt Jones and Brad Wind; Dolores Tippett's resignation and service on the Board was acknowledged.

Elaine Granata led the membership in an exercise to provide input to the board on some of its major goals and objectives for 2009, including farm dinners, fundraising, COPA listserv, public farm tours, speakers bureau, website upgrade, and increasing membership. After about 20 minutes the following groups reported out their deliberations:

- Speakers Bureau group -- solicit audiences such as Lions Clubs, Kiwanis, statewide associations of public service organizations, 4-H, FFA, beginning farmers groups, water wise groups, rose society, FROG, nurseries, churches; Lew Grant and Jim Holland volunteered to be speakers; solicit venues and speakers on our website and newsletter

- Membership group -- develop a brochure to distribute to farmers' markets, master gardeners and composters, FROG (Front Range Organic Gardeners), csa shareholders, Denver Botanic Gardens; explore more joint memberships such as one with Slow Foods; solicit from large commercial organizations (Sunflower, Whole Foods, Celestial Seasonings, Vitamin Cottage, etc); explore advertising on other listservs like Denver Urban Gardens (DUG), DINR (Denver Independent Network of Restaurants), Colorado Proud; ask Wendy to put a star on those who are COPA members on the Colorado Proud list;
- Public tours and farm dinners group – Plan for mid-August and include outlying farms (Pueblo and Rocky Ford) and the western slope by having their products available/used at the dinner; announce it through PSAs, CSAs, and website; use Meadowlark operation to donate time and be the chef; price it so it's not so elite; farmers donate produce— meat, cheese, wines, veggies; Elaine Andrews, Lew Grant and John Ellis volunteered to help put it together
- Website: No one stood at this goal but Deb Schaffer volunteer a brief amount of time to discuss design.

People were thanked for their participation.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Granata
Secretary