

IASCOE Convention—Thursday, March 22, 2018

President, Jennifer Comer, called the General Session meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

CED, Steve Abbas, gave the Invocation.

The Beaverdale VFW Club #9127 led the Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem.

Jennifer Comer welcomed all the IASCOE Convention.

Iowa FSA SED, Amanda De Jong gave opening remarks:

- Amanda welcomed all attendees to Des Moines and expressed her appreciation for making her feel welcome.
- Amanda thanked all for their patience and grace, as well as AO, Bob Wegand, for helping while she was on maternity leave and every day.
- Amanda also thanked Jennifer Comer, Jesse Wegner and IASCOE leadership for reaching out immediately with employment concerns.
- Amanda stated that she did not hesitate to accept this position as FSA is second to none in reputation. It is a good place to work, grow and be challenged. She has worked on the hill for USDA. FSA is looked at as an example and is known for its good service. With that comes a standard. Amanda witnessed dedication and loyalty of USDA during Hurricane Katrina. Now are looked to for sparing volunteers to Puerto Rico and other places of need. FSA is short staffed; but, we still rise to the call of duty. It demonstrates our selflessness, and Amanda thanks all employees for that.
- Amanda has been working on opening up lines of communication since she came on board in November. She relies on staff input to make decisions, what she calls consensus management. She asks for input from all levels. It then ends on her shoulders to make the best decision for the state.
- Amanda hopes to visit all CO's. She is visiting Manager's Meetings now.
- FPAC has forced dialogue/exchange of ideas. This also true for the National Office. Amanda seems to get themes and package those up. This is an opportunity to give feedback in a way we haven't been able to in the past.
- FPAC vehicle sharing MOU is now in place. Scheduling, etc... now just needs to be planned. Policy on this will be out by summer.
- No farm programs or customer work groups are involved with FPAC, at least yet. Amanda thinks there should be—let's hear from the customer what he/she wants.
- Most FPAC effects aren't seen in Iowa yet. Some states have 1 out of every 3 offices not co-located, or even in the same town. In Iowa, all offices are co-located.
- FPAC realignment is very important to the Secretary, and the Undersecretary being from Iowa will make it such that Iowa is held to a high standard. We're ready to take on the challenge.
- Staffing is the number one issue. The Continuing Resolution ends tomorrow; we may have another one. We have TO's coming on, most likely. Amanda is having conversations with leadership tomorrow about that. We also need to constantly reassess critical hire needs. Amanda and Bob are sympathetic to CO's and making the case for more hires. It's difficult for DAFO to make those decisions as well, not knowing where we stand with budget.

- The Secretary has repeatedly said “Do right and feed everyone”, as well as “One USDA”. These two concepts tie hand in hand. Our doing right reflects on Iowa and all of Iowa FSA. It’s important to do that.
- Amanda finished her remarks by thanking everyone again and opening the floor up for questions. There were no questions.
- Amanda then introduced the State Committee. Jim Stillman was unable to attend. Laura Cunningham is very active with the Farm Bureau. Pat Swanson served on the Iowa Corn Board and the Iowa Soybean Assoc. Two more STC members will hopefully be coming on board in April.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendi Muir Denham
IASCOE Secretary