

# CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD TELECONFERENCE BOARD MEETING

March 22, 2016

## MINUTES

**Welcome and Roll call** – Meeting was called to order at 11:04 am Eastern time by Chairperson, Betty Malone. Board members participating: Cubby Steinhart, Mark Steelhammer, Paul Battaglia, Rex Korson, Beth Walterscheidt, Della Deal, Mark Arkills, Bentley Curry, Chris Maciborski, Jim Heater, Betty Malone and Jim Rockis. USDA Representative participating: Kelly Robertson. Staff in attendance: Tim O'Connor and Marsha Gray.

**Additional Agenda Items** – There were no items added to the agenda.

**Meeting Minutes** – It was MOVED and SECONDED to approve the March 9-11, 2016 meeting minutes as presented. MOTION PASSED.

### Unfinished Business

- A. **Phone staffing** – Tim O'Connor presented a telephone staffing recommendation for the board's consideration. In the short term the board would contract with two individuals who have experience handling Christmas tree shipping issues. These two women would staff our new 800 number 12 hours per day for the first 30-45 days following the approval of the penalty and interest provision. High call volume during that time is anticipated as the provision approval triggers a letter being sent to all non-responsive Christmas tree producers in the database. They will be trained by CTPB staff to answer a variety of questions and to encourage growers to submit their sales/importer reporting forms and payment or exemption forms during the 30-day grace period. They would not have access to the CTPB database or financial records. The long term plan includes the addition of a permanent part time (30 hr per week) staff member who would eventually take over telephone duties as well as work on database, assessment, collection and importer issues as she becomes more familiar with the program. This staff member would have access to the CTPB database and would be able to provide more personalized assistance to growers and importers. The cost for the short term call staffing would be approximately \$6,000, paying the individuals by the hour for the time they work, and the permanent staff member would cost \$27,000 annually. These costs are additions to the Tim O'Connor and Associates management contract. It was MOVED and SECONDED to approve the proposal for short-term telephone staffing and the addition of a permanent staff position and associated expenditures as presented. Motion approved.
- B. **USDA Issues**
  1. Penalties and fees final rule – Kelly Robertson reported that the final rule is in the review process. There were no comments during the comment period.
  2. Cost of rulemaking estimate on increasing limit on reserve fund – Kelly Robertson reported that Vickie Carpenter has begun working on the time frame of approximately 9 months to one year, but does not have any cost information at this time.
- C. **Committee Reports**
  1. **Promotion** – Jim Heater thanked the board for their consideration and excellent input on the selection of Concept Farm as our advertising agency. He discussed the option of

providing Concept Farm a budget that is below what we may be able to afford once all assessments are collected. At a later date that budget could be increased. He will discuss this with the Finance committee and staff and bring a recommendation for the full board. Jim will be asking promotion committee members to share farm videos with Concept Farm as a way to introduce them to the industry. Board members can also provide video links or dvd's for their review.

2. **Finance Committee** – Cubby Steinhart reported that it appears we have nearly hit our first level goal of \$1.5 million in assessments and thinks we can collect up to \$2 million as we proceed. Budgeting needs to begin and he asked all committee chairs to start working on what their needs will be in the next budget year. Tim O'Connor has begun work with the bank to pay down our line of credit and establish collateral with approved investment options for CTPB funds held above the FDIC limits.
  3. **Governance** – Rex Korson presented the updated board member election procedure as discussed at the last meeting. Kelly Robertson asked if all deadlines could be moved up by 30 days giving USDA more time to execute the board appointments. Rex Korson and staff agreed that it could be adjusted. It was MOVED and SECONDED to approve the board member election procedure with the 30-day deadline adjustment. MOTION APPROVED.
  4. **Research** – Jim Rockis announced that he has had conversations with Ellis Schmidt regarding the fire industry show. They are working to determine what materials NCTA has and what will be needed in the way of redesigned print materials to distribute.
- D. **May meeting** – After discussion, board determined that having a longer meeting in July in Pennsylvania may be more beneficial than to have an additional meeting in May when many of the issues that will need to be discussed won't be fully developed in May. Board suggested considering inviting Concept Farm to the Pennsylvania meeting and consider inviting the members of the promotion committee that would be interested in attending.

**New Business** – There was no additional business to come before the board.

**Next meeting** – The next conference call of the board will be April 19, 2016 at 11 am Eastern.

**Announcements** – Betty Malone thanked Kelly Robertson for joining the call for USDA.

**Adjourn** –It was MOVED and SECONDED to adjourn. MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully Submitted

Beth Walterscheidt  
Secretary