

CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD

Board Meeting

June 17, 2021

Via Video Conference

Welcome and Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 11:02 a.m. Eastern Daylight time by Chairman, Roger Beyer.

Board Members in Attendance: Mark Schmidlin, Derek Ahl, Gary Westlake, Charles Fowler, Renee Campbell, Chuck Berry, Bob Schaefer, Roger Beyer, Bill Brawley, Mike Cocco, and Larry Downey

Board Members not in Attendance: Jane Neubauer

USDA Representative(s) in Attendance: Sue Coleman

Staff in Attendance: Marsha Gray, Cyndi Knudson, and Jenny Tomaszewski

Guest(s) in Attendance: Frans Kok and Ryan Tandler

Agenda:

Roger Beyer requested Bob Schaefer provide the Board an update on behalf of the NCTA Board under “For the Good of the Order.”

It was **MOVED** by Charles Fowler and **SECONDED** by Bob Schaefer to approve the Agenda as corrected.

MOTION APPROVED.

Meeting Minutes:

Roger Beyer requested the correction under “meeting schedule” to include Raleigh, NC, as another airport option.

Gary Westlake asked Sue Coleman if the request for collections at the border came from the Pecan Board to USDA or from USDA to the Pecan Board? Sue Coleman stated the request came from the Pecan Industry, as they wanted their collection at the border to start October 1st.

It was **MOVED** by Chuck Berry and **SECONDED** by Derek Ahl to approve May 20, 2021, Board meeting minutes as corrected. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Special Report

Marsha Gray introduced Ryan Tandler with True Global Intelligence, a division of Fleishman Hillard. Tandler provided a review of the topline results of the recent consumer survey.

- The Board asked Tandler questions regarding the findings of his presentation.
- Tandler shared about the online discussion board involving 30 people who are converts (new real Christmas tree purchasers in 2020 who intend to purchase again in 2021). The discussion board works much like a focus group, although online, and allows us to probe more deeply on what makes it more or less likely for a consumer to select a real Christmas tree and determine how they react to potential messaging. The discussion board has received 715 comments and will wrap up at the end of the week.
- Tandler left the meeting following his report.

Committee Reports

Finance – Bob Schaefer reported

- A brief overview of the May 2021 financial statement was provided.

It was **MOVED** by Derek Ahl and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to accept the May 2021 Financials as presented.

MOTION APPROVED.

Research – Mark Schmidlin and Cyndi Knudson reported

- The RFP process is currently open for research grant proposals. All Proposals are due by June 18th.
- Knudson is currently working on contract extensions for currently funded research projects that will

not be completed by July 31, 2020.

- The Research Library is in the final stages of development. Knudson is working with Firefall to finalize design and test functionality. There are currently nine research project reports within the library; seven more reports will be added in the near future.
- Gary Westlake asked of the Research Committee if there is a spot in the Research Portal for Consumer Research? Knudson stated that there is a category available for use.

Industry Relations – Gary Westlake reported

- Industry Relations Committee will hold a meeting on June 22nd.
- The Committee is discussing how they can encourage growers to sign-up for the Retail Locator at State Association meetings this summer.

Governance – Charles Fowler reported

- The Governance Committee will hold a meeting on June 30th.
- The Committee met last week. They are continuing to work on the proposed wording for the Order. The goal is for the Committee to bring a presentation to the Board at the North Carolina meeting.
- CTPB Board Representation Option – Marsha Gray provided the Board a brief presentation regarding the geographic breakdown of production and board representation. A possible new model would award seats to the top producing states and make 2 seats available to be shared among lower production states, with the assurance that they would not be competing directly with high production states for a board seat.
- Board discussion regarding the representation of the Board and different options.
- Gray is requesting the Board's feedback on the geographic breakdown as well as their input on whether she can present this for discussion at state and regional meetings. Feedback is requested by the end of June.
- Roger Beyer requested that Jenny Tomaszewski send a revised Assessment Collection report to the Board, showing all states in production.

Promotion – Bill Brawley reported

- 2021 Campaign Update – Brawley, Jane Neubauer, and Marsha Gray participated in the “big idea” meeting with the two agencies, Concept Farm and Fleishman Hillard; they provided an array of promotional ideas, built on some existing ideas, and presented some new ideas. They are working to determine the final direction for the 2021 season.
- Wholesaler/Retailer Outreach – Marsha Gray shared that an email to all wholesalers was sent. The email included an easy cut and paste option or PDF attachment that can be easily shared with their retailers. The Canadian producers will be the next outreach group.
- This email campaign will be followed up by a USPS mailing that includes promotional statement stuffers that growers can send to their retailer customers.
- 2022 RFP Process – Gray shared the RFP process began at the beginning of June and was submitted to 20 agencies. Our current agencies, Fleishman Hillard and Concept Farm, will be in the process, along with other agencies that will be submitting proposals. Proposals are due back no later than August 1st. The RFP process will be shared in the e-newsletter in case someone in the industry may have a recommendation.
- A question was raised as to how information is reviewed before it is placed on the Retail Locator. Marsha Gray stated everything showing on the map currently is last year's 2020 registrations. All new applications are reviewed and will begin populating in the coming weeks. All registrants are notified via email when their listing goes “live” with an opportunity to review and provide corrections if needed.

Compliance Committee – Derek Ahl reported

- Assessment Collection Update – Ahl stated that Jason Hanselman has collected just \$17,628.00, made 350 phone calls along with follow-up letters and emails.
- Audit Update – Marsha Gray shared that Jim Lantz is halfway done with his assigned audits for this fiscal year.

Management Staff Updates – Marsha Gray reported

- Board Nomination and Balloting – Gray shared the candidates for the two regions with open seats, Western candidates: Terry Muilenburg, Jim Puffer, Bob Schaefer, and Mark Schmidlin. Eastern, Travis Drexler, Joncie Underwood, and Gary Westlake. Ballots have been sent to the printer and plan to be mailed by the end of the week.
- Electronic Reporting and Payment System – Gray shared this has not moved forward. Three firms of interest will be submitting proposals and recommendations.

Old Business – No new items to report.

New Business – No new items to report.

USDA Report – Sue Coleman Reported

- Every three years, the OMB goes through a formal process to review the CTPB forms. Due to delays with COVID, the forms were delayed in the approval processes and were officially approved on June 16th. Marsha Gray shared that the sales reporting form has always been on one form for both domestic production and imports. To help with the confusion, there are now two separate forms.

For the Good of the Order /Announcements:

- Bob Schaefer shared that NCTA executive committee and CTPB executive committees met on June 14th to discuss the Voice of the Industry. Arrangements are being made for both Boards to meet at the North Carolina meeting in August. Roger Beyer shared that they are trying to keep communication between the two Boards open and moving forward on good terms. Gary Westlake suggested from a relationship-building standpoint, there should be an official statement from the CTPB, allowing the NCTA to make a similar statement.
- Frans Kok asked the Research Committee about the question he raised at the May meeting (is there any research being conducted on the effect of Global Warming on conifers?) Cyndi Knudson shared research involving insects, pests, and diseases that are present in new geographical regions or with greater intensity due to climate change. Also, one project at the University of New Brunswick is specifically looking at genetic variation in bud break and needle loss in Balsam Fir and the impact of climate change. Climate change has been listed as one of the Research Committee's priorities in the RFP process.
- Frans Kok voiced his concern regarding the electronic reporting and payment system and the concern in regulating growers who harvest and sell under 500 trees.

Meeting Schedule

- No July meeting unless something pressing should arise.
- Plans for the August 5, 2021, in-person Board meeting in West Jefferson, North Carolina:
 - Arrive in time for dinner on Wednesday, August 4th.
 - Thursday, August 5th - all-day CTPB Board meeting with an evening dinner with the NCTA Board.
 - Friday, August 6th, and Saturday, August 7th, is the North Carolina meeting.

Adjourn:

It was **MOVED** by Bob Schaefer and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Chairman Roger Beyer adjourned the meeting at 1:12 p.m. Eastern time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Westlake
Secretary