

CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD

Board Meeting

January 20, 2022

Via Video Conference

Welcome and Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. Eastern Daylight time by USDA representative Sue Coleman.

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

USDA Representative(s) in Attendance: Sue Coleman

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

Guest(s) in Attendance: Frans Kok, John Armato, Liz Conant, Chuck Contompasis, and Griffin Stenger

Nominations Committee Report and Election of Officers: USDA representative Sue Coleman stated that the Nominating Committee made up of Charles Fowler, Derek Ahl, Roger Beyer, and Mark Schmidlin met in December 2021 and is recommending the following slate of officers for 2022: Chairman – Roger Beyer, Vice Chairman – Derek Ahl, Treasurer – Bob Schaefer, Secretary – Gary Westlake:

Chairman: The Nomination Committee recommended Roger Beyer, and Sue Coleman asked three times for any additional nominations. There were none.

It was **MOVED** by Charles Fowler and **SECONDED** by Mark Schmidlin to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Roger Beyer for the Chairman position. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Vice-Chair: The Nomination Committee recommended Derek Ahl, and Sue Coleman asked three times for any additional nominations. There were none.

It was **MOVED** by Bob Schaefer and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to close nominations cast a unanimous ballot for Derek Ahl for the Vice-Chairman position. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Treasurer: The Nomination Committee recommended Bob Schaefer, and Sue Coleman asked three times for any additional nominations. There were none.

It was **MOVED** by Gary Westlake and **SECONDED** by Roger Beyer to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Bob Schaefer for the Treasurer position. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Secretary: The Nomination Committee recommended Gary Westlake, and Sue Coleman asked three times for any additional nominations. There were none.

It was **MOVED** by Derek Ahl and **SECONDED** by Bill Brawley to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Gary Westlake for the Secretary position. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Coleman concluded nomination procedures and turned the Board meeting over to Chairman Roger Beyer.

Agenda:

It was **MOVED** by Bob Schaefer and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to approve the agenda as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Meeting Minutes:

It was **MOVED** by Derek Ahl and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to approve October 14, 2021, Board meeting minutes as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

It was **MOVED** by Bob Schaefer and **SECONDED** by Derek Ahl to approve November 18, 2021, Executive Committee meeting minutes as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Committee Reports

Finance – Bob Schaefer

- Schaefer provided a brief overview of the September 2021, October 2021, November 2021, and December 2021 financials.
- Marsha Gray pointed out on the December 2021 financials that the Promotion Committee will be coming in under budget. All other areas are tracking as expected.

It was **MOVED** by Charles Fowler and **SECONDED** by Gary Westlake to approve the September 2021, October 2021, November 2021, and December 2021 financials as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

- Schaefer shared that the accrued expense account is tracking well.

Promotion:

Bill Brawley welcomed and introduced the two agencies for the 2021 Campaign:

- Presentation from Fleishman Hillard: John Armato and Liz Conant provided a detailed PowerPoint overview of their agency's work for the 2021 campaign season.

The Board recessed at 12:42 p.m. and reconvened at 12:50 p.m.

- Presentation from Barn Side (formerly Concept Farm): Chuck Contompasis and Griffin Stenger provided a detailed PowerPoint overview of their agency's work on the 2021 campaign season.
- Open Q&A session with the Board, Fleishman Hillard, and Barn Side regarding the 2021 campaign results.

Chuck Contompasis, Griffin Stenger, John Armato, and Liz Conant left the meeting following the Q&A session.

Research – Mark Schmidlin and Cyndi Knudson reported

- Knudson stated that all contracts are in place, and they are working with researchers to get updates on ongoing projects.
- Seedling Survey received a little less response than last year. Knudson mentioned possibly shifting the timeline to January instead of July. Knudson is still working is to obtain more completed surveys.

Industry Relations – Gary Westlake had nothing new to report.

Governance:

- Charles Fowler stated that the Governance Committee would be meeting before the in-person meeting in February.

Compliance – Derek Ahl reported

- Ahl commented on the timing of the assessment collection letter mentioned he would like to see if the timing could be adjusted – suggested mailing it earlier in December or after the first of the year. Board will discuss this further at the February meeting.
- Marsha Gray provided an update on Jason Hanselman. Hanselman continues to compliance outreach. Work in the fall was light, as he was busy with his contract for the Watermelon Board.
- Gray shared the contract with auditor Jim Lantz has been secured and approved. Gray will be determining several audits for him to execute within the next several months.

Management Staff Update

- Assessment Collection update – Marsha Gray provided a brief overview of the assessment collection report. As of January 19, 2022, a total of \$338,835.11 has been received.
- Gray commented that each year, Roger Beyer, as chairman, has the opportunity to appoint new committee chairs. If Board members are interested in the same position or a different position,

please let Roger Beyer know.

New Business - No new items to report.

USDA

- Management Review – Sue Coleman shared USDA conducts an audit of their programs every three years. The review period of the CTPB was August 1, 2018, to September 30, 2021. In the report, it details all the items that are reviewed during the review process. There was just one finding under the promotion marketing/communications. Included in the report was a response that Marsha Gray provided to Heather Pichelman.
- Coleman stated that usually, the reviews are conducted on-site. However, due to the pandemic, this review was conducted via Zoom.
- Question was raised regarding the insurance section of the management review. Sue Coleman stated the fidelity bond is currently set at \$50,000. USDA wants to make sure the Board has enough coverage in place if something bad were to happen. Coleman suggested reaching out to the Board's insurance agent and requesting a fidelity bond in the amount equal to the Board's highest bank balance.
- Specialty Crops Program Deputy Administrator Sonia Jimenez has retired. Also, Patty Petrella retired at the end of the year as well. Ken Petersen, Associate Deputy Administrator, is acting Deputy Administrator. Heather Pichelman is serving as the acting Director of Marketing Development Programs.

For the Good of the Order /Announcements:

- Frans Kok asked about the draft proposal of the Order - Marsha Gray shared that the Committee has done some work on the Order and has since submitted the Order to the CTPB's attorneys for review. The Governance Committee will be meeting to review the attorney's recommendations. There is currently no date for the Order to be submitted to the USDA.
- Frans Kok shared this year, he became aware of the Voice of America, a U.S. Government-run Institute, which has a special program for Immigrants to help them adjust to U.S culture, U.S. habits, etc. Kok feels this would be an interesting approach for the CTPB to have Voice of America work with our agencies to help create material for those Immigrants.

Meeting Schedule:

- An in-person meeting will be held February 9-10, 2022, in Phoenix, AZ. Marsha Gray shared that staff has worked with the Hotel to gain a larger meeting room with an outside door for fresh air. Gray shared Wednesday, February 9th, will be a closed session as the Board will be interviewing the four agency candidates. Thursday, February 10th, will be the traditional Board meeting. However, there will be a time within the meeting that the Board will enter into a closed session to review and discuss the four candidates. There will be no audio or video feed for the meeting on February 10th.
- Summer Meeting in Nova Scotia – Nova Scotia has asked the CTPB to attend their summer meeting. The Board discussed the idea at length - concerns about the number of individuals attending and COVID protocols of leaving and entering the country were discussed. Larry Downey shared some insight on the two provinces, the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia and the New Atlantic Association. The Board decided to continue the discussion at the in-person meeting in February. A request was made for additional U.S. options for hosting the Summer Board meeting.

Adjourn:

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

Chairman Roger Beyer adjourned the meeting at 2:34 p.m. Eastern time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Westlake
Secretary