



## Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association

P.O. Box 854, Richford VT 05476  
Phone: 802-777-2667  
[www.VermontMaple.org](http://www.VermontMaple.org)

**Draft**  
**VMSMA BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**Langevin House, VT Technical College, Randolph Campus**  
**November 4, 2022**

**Board Members present:** Emma Marvin; Dave Mance; Jenna Baird; Mark Isselhardt; Sam Cutting; Ed Smith; Donna Young; Andy Aldrich; Jason Gagne; Ellie Palmer; Ted Young; Jeff Disorda; Arnie Piper; James Buck; Mike Christian

**Staff present:** Allison Hope and Heather Winner

**Motions:**

- 1) Ed Smith made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Arnie Piper. Motion was accepted by all.
- 2) Dave Mance made a motion to approve the six Fidelity resolutions on page three of the Board packet, seconded by Ed Smith. The motion was approved by all.
- 3) Roger Palmer made a motion to leave the Board mileage reimbursement policy as is, seconded by Dave Mance. Motion approved by all.
- 4) Ed Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dave Mance. Motion approved by all. Meeting adjourned at 1:45pm

**Call to Order:** Emma Marvin called the meeting to order at 12:33pm. She began the meeting by asking Allison to give a treasurer's report.

**Treasurer's Report:** Allison shared highlights of the year-to-date financials. A one sheet will be available on the Big E later this month. We are at about \$45,000 net at Big E. This was our second largest Big E in sales despite not making cotton candy. Ed Smith made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Arnie Piper. Motion was accepted by all.

**Review of 2023 Draft Budget:** Emma asked for feedback from the group to help the Executive Committee finalize the budget for next year. Allison presented out on items.

We will end the fiscal year with approximately 10k in profit. Next year will likely be similar, with containers being a big question. Containers are excluded from the budget because of this uncertainty. Most other items remain similar to last year. Big E is anticipated to be similar to current year in terms of net profit.

A question arose about selling maple creemees at the Big E. Allison remarked that we are up for an established creemee producer to go down for a weekend or specific day with a trailer by the Vermont Building. Given booth space, it's not likely we can support the logistics of creemee production in our booth.

Income from membership dues budgeted to increase by 12%. Our congressional earmark funding allocated at \$645K for a grant program and Certification operational support have been approved. Allison shared the

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process timeline with the SBA leading to the award. This money will be a special line item because it's distributed over multiple years.

Product revenue will remain the same from 2022. We will change our online store and warehouse platforms for 2023. This process will be streamlined by utilizing a single sales platform and a new, more accessible warehouse in Montpelier.

Advanced web listings will be sunsetted in 2023. Allison shared this came about because of the need for an easy to utilize consumer interface on our Find a Sugarmaker page. Removing advanced allows us to offer full profiles for all members and eliminates any consumer confusion between the labels "basic" and "advanced" listing (all paid members will receive an advanced listing with upgrades this year).

New expenses this year include employee benefits for paid staff to have Simple IRA, employer-sponsored HSA and contributions toward health insurance premiums. A slight increase for in person travel for staff and board is also included.

FY2023 net income is budgeted at about \$2,000. Emma added a kudos to Allison and the Board that the Association is in the black after the last 28 months of pandemic impacts. This positive financial position speaks well to the management of the Association. It's worth noting that our investment in benefits supports our capacity as an organization to be fully staffed and committed to our employees. Special thanks to the container committee for the amount of complex work completed to serve our producers and create a longer-term solution.

**Board Resolution to fund an IRA (action required):** This is to fund an employee contribution and 3% match for retirement with full vesting immediately. Allison asks that you refer to the 6 Fidelity resolutions in the printed Board packet for more information.

Dave Mance made a motion to approve the six Fidelity resolutions on page three of the Board packet, seconded by Ed Smith. The motion was approved by all.

**Staff Update and Overview:** Allison offered highlights from the printed report in the Board packet. She was just in Wisconsin at the NAMSC conference and also attended the two day grading school (the first one offered since prior to the pandemic). We look forward to seeing options to offer this class to members in the future. There was some conversation with the Board about the ongoing Specialty Crop Block Grant that markets maple as a pantry staple (and as a sweetener for coffee and other beverages). Additional questions were asked about temporary grading kits and sales to members and non-members.

Roger asked about the status of containers. James gave an update about the dealer ordering process through Hillside and working with the Purinton's on labeling. We are working toward moving this process to another location receiving orders and labeling. The Packaging Committee is currently trying to maintain what the Association currently offers and make it easier for members to get containers. Goal is to get containers to members in 2 months or less. Next goal of the committee is to consider container types and packaging needs, as well as consumer perceptions. Allison reminded the group that the NY Acer grant has consumer profile information that they will present at the Winter Conference.

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Containers are non XL coated currently through Hillside. Mary McCuaig commented about Hillside being sold again. Allison shared that we were told Hillside is not taking new orders for labeled containers until summer 2023. There is no talk of when the XL coating will return as an option. Syrup packed in uncoated containers darken more quickly than syrup in XL coated containers. Dave Mance asked if container manufacturers are doing alternative package research. Mark I. was unaware of anything specific. The group discussed alternatives they've seen including "bag in a box" (of which there is one product available for sale on the market). There is a tremendous amount of interest in new packaging. This is a potential research project for viability. Emma asked members to send us their thoughts.

Paul asked if there is an opportunity for the Association to buy jugs for self-labeling? Could the packaging committee communicate how to buy non-labeled jugs for members? We will return to this discussion at the committee level.

**Board Meeting Schedule:** Emma asked the group for feedback on in-person vs online meetings for 2023. Also asked for cadence of meetings input. James suggested frequent online meetings offer flexibility and value. And, in person meetings are important for relationship building. Emma suggested three days in person (2 board plus annual meeting) and at least one online meeting. Arnie suggested a longer meeting with both a business meeting and committee work accomplished. Mike and James supported this idea to get work done. Ed Smith suggested sometimes we need a quick online meeting and need to be able to gather for those. Allison let us know it's helpful to have a year long schedule so we can invite crucial partners and hold the time with advance notice. We will alternate in person with virtual. Group agreed this was appropriate.

**Mileage reimbursement:** Emma shared the draft policy book regarding mileage reimbursement for directors and asked group to ratify. Allison shared the financial impact of this could be approximately \$4k a year to reimburse. Roger Palmer made a motion to leave the Board mileage reimbursement policy as is, seconded by Dave Mance. Motion approved by all. Emma asked Allison to build this expense into FY23 budget.

Ed Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dave Mance. Motion approved by all. Meeting adjourned at 1:45pm