



VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 83, Westford VT 05494

Phone: 802-777-2667

www.VermontMaple.org

Draft

VMSMA BOD MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Conference Online

May 16, 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: Cory Ayotte

Guest: Winton Pitcoff

Motions:

1) A motion was made by Dave Mance to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Jason Gagne. The motion was approved by all.

2) A motion was made by Ed Smith to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Dave Mance. The motion was approved by all.

3) A motion was made to accept the nominations as presented by Ed Smith. The motion was seconded by Mark Isselhardt. The motion was approved by all.

4) A motion was made by Dave Mance that VMSMA rejoins NAMSC as a member. The motion was seconded by Sam Cutting. Mark Isselhardt abstained from the vote on his job's work with NAMSC research fund. Arnie Piper amended the motion that VMSMA would only pay for voting members. The motion was approved by all.

5) A motion was made by Ed Smith to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Jason Gagne. The motion was approved by all.

Call to Order: Emma Marvin called the meeting to order at 8:02am. She began the meeting by stating that VMSMA has an Executive Director again. Allison Hope has decided to step back into the role and will begin June 1.

December 13, 2021 Minutes: A motion was made by Dave Mance to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Jason Gagne. The motion was approved by all.

Treasurer's Report: Jason Gagne reported that fixed assets were \$227,912.71. In comparison, VMSMA is up a few thousand dollars from last year, which is quite the accomplishment. Payroll played a role in that with Allison Hope leaving the Executive Director position in February.

A motion was made by Ed Smith to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Dave Mance. The motion was approved by all.



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Election of Officers: Ted Young and Ellie Palmer reported that the slate of offices to vote from is the current officers. There were no other nominations.

A motion was made to accept the nominations as presented by Ed Smith. The motion was seconded by Mark Isselhardt. The motion was approved by all.

IMSI Dues and NAMSAC Membership (Action required): Emma Marvin reported that IMSI recently went through a process of evaluation of what income they need to fund their projects. They want to be equitable and have a reasonable structure for different maple associations. Their dues structure will be based on the volume of syrup made. This means that VMSMA dues will increase. Donna Young said that Vermont makes a lot of syrup, but VMSMA doesn't have a lot of voting members. The ones we do have are generally on the small side. With IMSI membership being based on \$10/member and a majority of members falling into the \$30 tier, VMSMA would be giving away a third of its income from those members. Mark Isselhardt wonders if there could be a sliding scale. IMSI has been very effective the last couple of years in his opinion. Emma noted that New Brunswick is going to see an increase in fees too. They have similar issues with syrup made vs. members in their association. Dave Mance said our small members will be subsidizing our large producers. He questions if it is fair. The Board thinks that it is worth putting out a counter proposal to IMSI.

Emma reported that it has been a number of years since VMSMA has been a member of NAMSC. Although, VMSMA has continued to contribute to the research fund through container royalties. Donna asked what the dues would be. Winton Pitcoff of NAMSC said it would be \$4/member per year with the process of collecting dues and Maple Digest subscription in June, right after NASS numbers are released. VMSMA would have a delegate and alternate delegate. Winton also noted that this year's NAMSC meeting will be held in Lacrosse, WI from Oct 26 – 29.

A motion was made by Dave Mance that VMSMA rejoins NAMSC as a member. The motion was seconded by Sam Cutting. Mark Isselhardt abstained from the vote on his job's work with NAMSC research fund. Arnie Piper amended the motion that VMSMA would only pay for voting members. The motion was approved by all.

Next steps: VMSMA needs to identify a delegate and an alternate delegate.

Staff and Committee Updates

Communications Report: Cory Ayotte reported that the spring printed newsletter is with the printer and will be in mailboxes shortly. It was delayed so that we could include the news about VMSMA success with federal funding to support the Sugarhouse Certification Program.

Big E: Mike Christian said he met with Emma and expressed that his biggest concern is getting a couple of managers as he cannot go down to the Big E for any length of time. It is likely that candy and cream making will be set up for demonstration with 99% of candy and cream being made off site. Andy Aldrich noted that Chittenden County recently moved to producing candy and cream off site for their sugarhouse at the Champlain Valley Expo.

James Buck asked how many staff/volunteers we could save by having candy and cream made off site. Mike said about six. Mike thinks with this and eliminating cotton candy making (the state offered another business



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the opportunity to make cotton candy in the building this season), you could get by with four people in the booth. Mike said we could even hire locally. Ted Young said he believes there is a loss of PR without sugar makers down there. Ted and Dave Mance agreed that there should be some cooking for demonstration as it does so much for the atmosphere. Jason Gagne said that VMSMA shouldn't use the church group. He thinks people want to buy Vermont maple from Vermont people. Jason thinks we should break out the schedule by county. One county does two days and another county does two days, etc.

Jason noted that producers used to sell their syrup to the association to send to Big E. That is a buy in for some folks. Mike said VMSMA started using the church group when people didn't want to come down to package candy. Mike said that VMSMA will be using Peter Purinton's syrup to sell in containers, but he will be looking for someone to make candy/cream. Arnie Piper said he has someone in mind that is interested in managing. Arnie will connect them with Mike. James asked about issues with containers. Do we want to consolidate container sizes? Right now, we have pints through gallon plastic containers. James wants to make sure we have plans to get containers in place to pack for Big E. Mike said Peter Purinton doesn't package syrup until August. Mike said that we now have space where cotton candy machines were and could have a TV or some sort of educational setup. Mark Isselhardt said he'd be happy to help with videos. Jeff Disorda said the cotton candy area could be a sample/education area on the different grades.

Certification Program and Grant Award: Emma said we are incredibly lucky to have received funds from Senator Leahy's office. With the funds, we have a duty to steward them well. This helps just start the program. Arnie said that VMSMA will receive \$637,000 over 5 years. The funding request included rehiring a Certification Manager. The money will also help subsidize the cost of Certification for smaller sugar makers, for which we currently charge less than the actual cost of Certification. Funds will also help replace equipment that needs to be replaced in the sugarhouse at a 50/50 cost share. The Education Committee needs to update the checklist to include sections for value added products and for sap buying. In terms of marketing the program, Donna thinks we need to start top down. Get the biggest producers signed up as members and get them certified as that helps get a large portion of the crop certified. Starting with smaller producers is a lot of overhead and only is a small percentage of the syrup made in the state. Emma asked all Board members to send names of businesses that aren't members or ones that they think would be good influencers. Andy Aldrich said that members who have gone through the process could be ambassadors for people thinking about setting up. Ed Smith asked if there is an info packet that he can hand out to people who don't use computers. Arnie said he would assist him with that.

Other Business: Emma brought up that the By-Laws allow the Board to add that 3 members at their discretion. These are seats that are filled every year and are meant for non-members – e.g., legal expert, financial advisor, etc. The Board could also choose to leave these seats open.

June Board Meeting:

Next Meeting: Friday, June 24 from 3-5pm on Zoom.

A motion was made by Ed Smith to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Jason Gagne. The motion was approved by all.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:51am



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