

CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD TELECONFERENCE BOARD MEETING

May 31, 2018

AGENDA

Welcome and Roll call – Meeting was called to order at 11:05 am Eastern by Chairperson, Jim Rockis. Board members in attendance: Roger Beyer, Rex Korson, Della Deal, Jim Rockis, Mark Steelhammer, Paul Battaglia, Beth Walterscheidt, Bentley Curry and Betty Malone. Unavailable: Jim Heater, Jim Corliss and Chris Maciborski. USDA Representative in attendance: Vickie Carpenter. 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 February 22, 2018 board meeting minutes. MOTION APPROVED.

New Business

- a) Referendum update – Tim O’Connor reviewed the procedure being followed by USDA to execute the referendum. Ballots due in office to USDA by May 31 at 4:30 pm eastern. Board members directed a number of procedural questions to Vickie Carpenter.
- b) Board Nominations – Tim O’Connor reported that Jim Heater, Betty Malone and Bentley Curry have each chosen not to seek re-appointment to their board positions that expire on 12/31/18. Staff has been reaching out to industry to secure nominees. All nominations are due to the CTPB office on June 1. To date, CTPB has received the following nominations: Eastern: Suzanne Stokoe, Tony Stier and Gary Westlake. Western: Tom Cook, Bob Schaefer, Mark Schmidlin and Carie Anderson Cook.

Committee Reports

Promotion – Rex Korson reported that he has had two calls with his committee to review the effectiveness of the 2017 campaign and to outline the committee’s role with the 2018 campaign. The campaign management team, including Fleishman Hillard, Concept Farm, Tim O’Connor, Marsha Gray and Rex Korson have had several calls and an in-person meeting to being planning for the 2018 campaign. Team recommends focusing on “Millennial Moms” as the “bullseye target” for this year’s campaign. A consumer survey is expected to be executed in the next few weeks to test consumer preferences, understanding and reaction to potential messaging. Many campaign ideas were discussed and team is working on a final plan to bring to the board for approval.

Finance – Paul Battaglia provided a financial update and the board has received the April financial statements. Paul Battaglia indicated that we likely have some work to do to follow up with growers who paid on 2016 harvest but not 2017 harvest. Staff will undertake this work after the referendum vote. Discussion was held on how to get growers into compliance. Result of the six random compliance audits provided no concerns. All audited businesses were in order.

Tim O’Connor explained that our bank has now established a sweep account system, keeping enough funds in the checking and escrow accounts to conduct business and maintain FDIC insurance coverage while moving larger sums into the sweep account daily.

Research – Della Deal provided an update on research projects funded by the CTPB. Staff has been working diligently to secure the contracts with researchers and universities for the balance of the current fiscal year research budget. Deal reported that there seems to be quite a bit of interest by researchers to apply for funding next year if referendum passes.

Industry Relations – Betty Malone reported that Marsha Gray and Jim Rockis participated in approximately 20 state meetings this past winter and early spring. Gray is currently planning to participate in a number of summer meetings. Malone reported that the annual report was sent to all payers and the CTPB board will continue its one-on-one outreach at the Michigan/Mid America meeting in late July.

Governance – No report

Unfinished Business/Staff Updates – Marsha Gray reported on her conversations with Canadian producers and leadership. In general, they are very supportive of the CTPB. They are hoping that CTPB would consider funding some of the research projects that they have been involved with. They also would like to make sure that Canadian producers who qualify as importers be eligible to serve on the board. They have one primary concern about having to pay on all trees that they export to the US, where US growers pay on trees “harvested and sold.” This could create a competitive disadvantage for Canadian producers who sell to box stores using the “pay by scan” system.

USDA – Vickie Carpenter again reviewed the referendum balloting process. Carpenter commented on the question of Canadians serving on the CTPB and confirmed that other programs have or have had Canadians serving as importer board members.

Next Call/meeting - The next call for the CTPB will take place after the referendum outcome announcement. The Board is also scheduled for in-person meeting in the Lansing, Michigan area on July 26 prior to the Michigan/Mid America meeting.

Adjourn – It was MOVED and SECONDED to adjourn. Motion approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth Walterscheidt
Secretary