

# CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD BOARD MEETING

August 17, 2017  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

## MINUTES

**Welcome and Roll call** – Meeting was called to order at 8:00 am Central time by Chairperson, Jim Rockis. Rockis asked Charles Fowler to open the meeting with a prayer. Board members in attendance: Mark Arkills, Jim Heater, Rex Korson, Della Deal, Chris Maciborski, Jim Rockis, Mark Steelhammer, Beth Walterscheidt, Charles Fowler, Betty Malone, Bentley Curry and Paul Battaglia. 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 July 18, 2017 meeting minutes as presented. MOTION APPROVED.

### New Business

- a. **Request from Quebec CTGA to translate campaign videos** - Staff shared a request by the Quebec Christmas Tree Growers Association to allow them to translate campaign videos into French for local use. It was MOVED and SECONDED to accept the proposal by the Quebec CTGA and give permission to translate campaign items, pending approval by USDA, at their expense. Board discussed this request and the possibility of translations in other languages in the future. MOTION APPROVED. Vickie Carpenter will have USDA review the request for approval.
- b. **Management Team Evaluation Report**– It was MOVED and SECONDED to enter Executive Session. MOTION APPROVED. Board emerged from Executive Session.

### Committee Reports

**Promotion** - Mark Arkills reported that the working group that includes Concept Farm, Fleishmann Hillard, Tim, Marsha and Mark have regular conference calls. Both agencies are moving forward and provide regular updates. Primary activities for the campaign include:

- Grower videos – featuring five growers in different regions, pushed out through social media
- Influencers – bloggers who will attend and write about their experience at the filming of the grower videos, as well as follow up with personal Christmas tree experiences
- Tree Lighting Ceremonies – using high-visibility events in cities in 4-5 locations across the country as a backdrop for media outreach and message distribution
- Satellite Media Tour – A one day event where lifestyle spokesperson will team with grower and engage in pre-scheduled media interviews in many markets
- Opportunistic possibilities – team has reserved approximately \$100,000 for an additional activation(s). Four possibilities originally identified by the team will not be pursued due to either lack of budget or lack of interest by possible partners. More ideas currently being considered.

Arkills reported that the team is focused on key messaging points and all activations will be evaluated on ability to reach target consumers with key messages.

**Research** – Della Deal provided an update on the status of university approvals of a number of the CTPB approved research projects. Board was supplied a status tracker on the approved research projects. She also mentioned a small project presented to her that involved Leyland Cypress and would be important for southern growers.

Because contracts for a number of research projects were not approved by the universities prior to the end of the 2016-17 fiscal year, research funds for those projects will need to be moved from the 2016-17 budget to the 2017-18 budget. It was MOVED and SECONDED to add \$38,375 to the 2017-18 research budget from the cash balance. MOTION APPROVED.

Ellis Schmidt joined the meeting and reported on his work with fire education. CTPB funded a booth at the National Fire Prevention Association trade show in Boston and is scheduled to fund the booth next year.

**Finance** –Paul Battaglia reviewed the 2016-17 financial report and the 2017-18 budget. Battaglia explained that the assessment income budget for 2017-18 is a conservative \$1.65 million, based partially on the current tree shortage. He reminded the board that we were able to defer the start-up fees owed to USDA until spring of 2018, keeping cash available for the 2017 campaign. The budget includes a continued partnership with NCTA on the Voice of the Industry project and the NFPA conference. A guest at the meeting asked about the original discussion to provide funds back to individual states to promote sales of Christmas trees. Betty Malone explained that USDA did not allow this because this is such a small program and they felt it would dilute the success of the program.

**Industry Relations** – Betty Malone reported that Marsha Gray and various board members have been making presentations at many Christmas tree meetings across the country, in person or via Skype. Staff has also created a video of this presentation that any grower can access on the CTPB website. Committee executed a mailing to payers who have not provided emails to use to encourage them to sign up for the e-newsletter and use the campaign tools. All state associations have received two campaign banners to use at consumer and industry events. All payers also received the annual report. Annual report was out late and it is critical that it is sent earlier in 2018. Malone announced that she would like to have one more mailing before harvest.

**Governance** – Rex Korson had nothing to present from the Governance Committee.

### **Unfinished Business/Staff Updates**

**2016 Collections Report** – Staff distributed an updated 2016 collections report.

**Compliance Audit Discussion** – Rex Korson led a discussion on the need for grower audits. He outlined the downside of not engaging audits includes; under reporting by growers who may submit lower numbers than their actual sales thinking they won't get caught due to the tree shortage, alienating growers who are paying, running the risk of losing confidence of supporters and the direct cost of uncollected assessments. Board discussed possible considerations for audits, number of audits and costs. Jim Rockis appointed a committee to investigate an audit process and bring back recommendations to the full board. Committee includes Rex Korson, Mark Steelhammer, Charles Fowler and Della Deal.

**Review of WI Meeting Schedule and CTPB Involvement** – CTPB board will participate in the 5-7pm meet and greet event and then have an industry leadership dinner with the NCTA Board of Directors and the Christmas Spirit Foundation Trustees.

**USDA** – Vickie Carpenter cautioned that by allowing campaign materials to be used in Canada, it may create a perception that those uses were funded by the Promotion Board. Board members pointed out that campaign is all available on-line and intended to be shared. We have no control over how others share our electronic content. Carpenter also reminded the board that it is acceptable to compile and report assessment collection data using aggregate numbers, as long as it does not reveal individual grower production. Using production level tiers is acceptable.

**Next Call/Meeting -**

Board agreed to hold next in-person meeting in coordination with the Pacific Northwest CTA Short Course in late February. Staff and Chairperson Rockis will coordinate with the PNWCTA staff and committee.

**Adjourn**

It was MOVED and SECONDED to adjourn the meeting. MOTION APPROVED.

Respectfully Submitted

Beth Walterscheidt,  
Secretary