

CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD

Board Meeting

June 24, 2022

Windjammer Conference Center

Burlington, VT

Welcome and Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. Eastern time by Chairman, Roger Beyer.

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

Board Members not in Attendance: Derek Ahl

USDA Representative(s) in Attendance: George Webster

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

Agenda:

Roger Beyer requested that the Governance Committee be included in a closed session - Moving Compliance Committee to item C and Governance Committee to item D. At 2:00 p.m., reconvening for another closed session.

Larry Downey requested the addition of the next in-person Board meeting under Meeting Schedule and under New Business to have a representative from the Board at the upcoming Quebec in-person meeting.

It was **MOVED** by Chuck Berry and **SECONDED** by Gary Westlake to approve the agenda as corrected. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Meeting Minutes:

It was **MOVED** by Bob Schaefer and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to approve the May 19, 2022, and May 31, 2022 Board meeting minutes as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Chairman's Report

- a. Nominations for 2023 Board Seat Appointments – Roger Beyer shared that nominations have closed. The Candidates are the following - Western Region: Michael Jones, Mark Rohlf, Central Region: Derek Ahl, Tom Dull, and Eastern Region: Charles Fowler, Gary Thomas. Ballots are due back by July 15th, and the packet submitted to USDA by August 1st.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee – Bob Schaefer reported

- a. May 2022 Financials – Schaefer provided a brief overview of the May 2022 financials. On May 31st, several budget amendments were made; they will be reflected in the budget section of the June financial statement.
- Marsha Gray shared that Industry Relations and Board Meeting expenses will likely come in over budget. However, line items like Compliance and Compliance Audits will likely come in under budget.

It was **MOVED** by Mark Schmidlin and **SECONDED** by Bill Brawley to accept the May 2022 Financials as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Research Committee – Mark Schmidlin and Cyndi Knudson reported

- a. International Christmas Tree Research Conference – Mark Schmidlin and Cyndi Knudson attended the International Christmas Tree Research Conference in South Lake Tahoe, California, at the beginning of June. Schmidlin was excited to see projects presented that the CTPB funded.
- b. Research Video Project – Beth Bossio and Cyndi Knudson have been working to create three to five-minute video snippets with Researchers who have worked on funded CTPB research projects.
- c. RFP Process – The deadline to submit a request for proposal was June 22nd. Knudson stated that the

deadline has been extended to Friday, June 24th. Currently, 15 submissions have been received, and Knudson expects several more to be submitted before the deadline. Once everything has been received, the committee will review the proposals and present them to the Board at the next Board meeting.

- d. Seedling Survey – has been released. Knudson stated she made one modification to the survey, defining the word seedling versus transplant. Knudson mentioned they received a great response to the survey - making an excellent baseline for tracking trends.
 - The Board discussed the seedling survey and the value of tracking the planted seedlings and plugs.
 - Marsha Gray thanked Cyndi Knudson for her hard work and dedication to the Christmas Tree Promotion Board.
 - Board discussed researchers in the Pacific Northwest. Cyndi Knudson stated that Chal Landgren's contract had been renewed until June 2023 on a 25% time basis.

Compliance Committee – Marsha Gray reported for Derek Ahl

- Gray shared that auditor, Jim Lantz has followed up with a grower that had concerns regarding the audit. Lantz had a productive meeting with the grower, and the grower provided comments to Lantz for board consideration. Currently, Jim Lantz has two audits remaining to complete.
- Gray shared that the hours that Jason Hanselman has been able to commit to the CTPB are fewer than hoped, the work has been helpful. Hanselman has been working to make follow-up phone calls to growers that missed their 2021 assessment payment, along with contacting newly identified growers.
- Bob Schaefer stated on behalf of the major growers they would like to see compliance audits require four years of data versus five years. Board discussed.
- Roger Beyer requested that the staff show the breakdown or a trend of years collected by the audits. Showing the breakdown of how much was a fifth-year, fourth-year, third-year, etc.
- Bill Brawley recommended increased participation on the part of Jason Hanselman for audit selection and notifications.
- Roger Beyer asked George Webster about the FOIA request that was rejected by the Farm Service Agency, asking if there is another route the Board could pursue to get names of individuals in the industry that are not in our database. Webster stated that if there are any other routes that the Board suggests, USDA would be happy to consider. The first attempt was rejected due to confidentiality.

The Board recessed at 10:18 a.m. and reconvened at 10:34 a.m.

Chairman, Roger Beyer, called the Board into an Executive Session at 10:34 a.m. Eastern time.

Governance Committee – Charles Fowler reported

Promotion Committee Continued – Bill Brawley reported

Industry Relations Committee – Gary Westlake reported

- b. Industry Communication

Chairman, Roger Beyer, adjourned the Executive Session at 11:52 a.m. Eastern time. No decisions were made during the session only updates on sensitive information were provided to the Board.

Industry Relations Committee Continued – Gary Westlake reported

- a. Summer Meeting Schedule - Marsha Gray will be attending ten different State Association meetings this year. There are four State meetings in need of a Board representative to attend.

Management Staff Update – Marsha Gray reported

- a. Assessment Collection – A brief overview of the assessment collection report was provided. As of June 23, 2022, a total of \$1,691,187 has been received.

Old Business: No new items to report.

The Board recessed for lunch at 11:59 a.m. and reconvened at 1:36 p.m.

New Business:

- Larry Downey would like to have a representative from the Board attend the Quebec Association meeting on September 24th. Downey offered that anyone attending is welcome to stop by his farm and get a tour.
- Tree Sold Survey – Marsha Gray commented on the repeated request by industry members and others to find a tool to determine the number of real Christmas trees sold annually. John Armato of Fleishman Hillard had responded to her request and confirmed that a survey of 2,000 consumers about what they purchased was not an effective way to get accurate sales data according to FH’s survey and intelligence division. He was interested to discuss other possible options and the Board expressed a desire for more information.
- Roger Beyer appointed a committee to look at the methodology of a tree sold survey. Jane Neubauer, Renee Beutell, and Chuck Berry were tasked with reaching out to Fleishman Hillard to brainstorm different ideas.

USDA – George Webster reported

- a. Update on US Customs – Marsha Gray provided USDA with detailed information on why it’s crucial to get the CTPB up and running in the US Customs system. USDA is looking to set up a meeting between representatives from Customs and multiple Boards to help answer questions and provide information on their process.
Webster shared that the current US collections system is somewhat antiquated, and US Customs is working on updating the system.

For the Good of the Order /Announcements:

- Bob Schaefer shared that at the last West Coast major growers meeting, it was discussed they would like to create a Christmas tree story - a positive, feel-good story that could be shared with the industry.

Chairman, Roger Beyer, called the Board back into an Executive Session at 2:00 p.m. Eastern time to make strategic marketing decisions.

Promotion Committee Continued – Bill Brawley reported

- a. 2022 Campaign Update

Chairman, Roger Beyer, adjourned the Executive Session at 3:43 p.m. Eastern time. During the closed session, the Committee passed two motions that will remain confidential until released to the industry.

New Business Continued:

- Renee Beutell recommended that the assessment form should include a spot for growers to identify who they purchased trees from. Board discussed. Roger Beyer suggested presenting the idea to the Compliance Committee.

Meeting Schedule:

- a. The next Board meeting will be held on August 8th at 11:00 a.m. Eastern time.
- b. Discussion on the next in-person meeting, possibly the Pacific Northwest.

Adjourn:

It was **MOVED** by Chuck Berry and **SECONDED** by Jane Neubauer to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Chairman Roger Beyer adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m. Eastern time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Westlake
Secretary