

REAL CHRISTMAS TREE BOARD

Board Meeting

September 7, 2022

Via Video Conference

Welcome and Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 11:02 a.m. Eastern time by Chairman, Roger Beyer.

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

Board Members Not in Attendance: Larry Downey

USDA Representative(s) in Attendance: Greg Breasher

Staff in Attendance: Marsha Gray and Jenny Tomaszewski

Guests in Attendance: Mark Rohlfs

Agenda:

Marsha Gray requested that the Promotion Committee report be moved to the top of Committee Reports. It was **MOVED** by Mark Schmidlin and **SECONDED** by Bob Schaefer to approve the agenda as corrected.

MOTION APPROVED.

Meeting Minutes:

It was **MOVED** by Charles Fowler and **SECONDED** by Chuck Berry to approve the August 8, 2022, Board meeting minutes as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Chairman's Report:

- a. **Nomination Committee** – Roger Beyer appointed a three-person nominating committee for officer selection. Those appointed: Charles Fowler, Jane Neubauer, and current chairman, Roger Beyer.

Committee Reports

Promotion Committee – Bill Brawley reported

- a. **2022 Campaign Update:**
 - Later this month, FleishmanHillard will release a video training series on campaign messaging.
 - Working on the final updates to the website.
 - The FleishmanHillard team is working to secure three influencers with a broad outreach. Influencer, Dude Dad would like to work with RCTB again for the 2022 season.
 - Search engine optimization – driving traffic to the website and search engine marketing, paid search, and paid digital ads are all moving forward.
 - Marsha Gray and Bill Brawley provided the Board a preview of the “Joy to the Real” campaign.
 - In September, a press release will be released with an outlook on the upcoming season. A short survey of large producers around the country was conducted to understand their expectations for the harvest season.
 - The “Joy to the Real” campaign kick-off will begin in October, with wider outreach beginning immediately on November 1st.
 - Retailer Outreach – A retail locator flyer has been created and will be shipped to suppliers that ship to retail lots. A flyer attachment was designed for wholesale producers to send via email. Next week those who have a current listing on the retail locator will get an email to update their listing.

Finance Committee – Bob Schaefer reported

- a. **2021-22 Fiscal Year Audit Schedule** – Schaefer shared that USDA, Marsha Gray, and Shaefer will have a short meeting with the auditor following the Board meeting.

Research Committee – Mark Schmidlin reported

- USDA has approved all research contracts that the Board approved at the last meeting. Those contracts have been sent on to the various Universities for their signatures.
- Completed Research projects have been added to the Research Library on the website. Marsha Gray shared that an e-newsletter will be released to make growers aware.

Governance Committee – Charles Fowler reported

- Marsha Gray will be meeting with Sue Coleman in Portland, Oregon, and they will be discussing the path forward for the Order.

Compliance Committee –Derek Ahl reported

- Potential Compliance Contractors** – Ahl shared they are moving forward with considering two compliance officers. One individual could take on some of the more significant accounts the RCTB would like to pursue.
- Ahl is requesting the Board allow the Compliance Committee to continue the discussion with one or both individuals the Committee has identified. Once the Committee is satisfied, they would like to recommend a trial contract with the permission of the Executive Committee for a maximum of \$12,000. This would allow the Committee to get started but not get over-committed.

It was **MOVED** by Derek Ahl and **SECONDED** by Gary Westlake to allow the Executive Committee to approve contracts of up to \$12,000 on compliance contractors.

Board Discussion on when the contract starts.

MOTION APPROVED.

Industry Relations Committee – Gary Westlake reported

- Marsha Gray shared that she continues to attend as many State Association meetings as possible. Derek Ahl presented in Wisconsin, Chuck Berry in Georgia, and Jane Neubauer in Ohio. Marsha Gray will be attending the PNW and Quebec meetings.
- Gary Westlake suggested the next e-newsletter should include “did you know what the RCTB does...” with direct links to social sites and websites.
- Jane Neubauer shared the consumer survey results will be released shortly.

Management Staff Update – Marsha Gray reported

- Assessment Collection** – A brief overview of the assessment collection report was provided. As of September 1, 2022, a total of \$1,695,010 has been received. Final report for the 2021 harvest season.
- Transition of NFPA Conference Planning to NCTA** – Marsha Gray shared that the RCTB has been funding the NFPA conference. Moving forward, the Real Christmas Tree Board will entertain providing funds up to \$7,000 as requested by the NCTA.

Old Business:

- Response from NCTA Regarding Communication:** As a follow up to the Board’s directive at the last Board meeting, Marsha Gray contacted NCTA to make them aware that the RCTB would like to include the entire Board on all communication from the RCTB to the NCTA. The NCTA responded that they did not want the entire Board included on emails, rather just the NCTA Executive Director and Executive Committee.
- Board discussed the NCTA description in the “know your sources” section of CTPB press releases. NCTA did not fully agree with the description we provided and provided their own. Much was agreeable with the RCTB Board, however, they directed Marsha Gray to work with NCTA to remove the reference to the number of businesses represented and to remove or reword the final line: *NCTA is also an expert resource on farm-grown Christmas trees the media can rely on.*

New Business: No new items to report.

USDA – Greg Breasher reported

- AMS/USDA is looking to fill five open positions over the next few months.
- The nomination packet was sent to the White House liaison office and has been returned and approved. Breasher hopes to have the completed packet returned by the end of the week.
- Breasher had nothing new to report regarding the collections at the border.
- Gary Westlake revisited a discussion that took place at the in-person Board meeting in February 2022 regarding using the term “Fake.” Marsha Gray noted that she would bring this up when she speaks with Sue Coleman this week.

For the Good of the Order/Announcements:

- Mark Rohlfis provided the Board with suggestions:
 - Make more of an attempt to reach the Latino community.
 - The media is tired of the supply shortage story; better to share adequate supply.
 - Provide the RCTB research links to various associations to give access to their growers.
- Charles Fowler and Renee Beutel had a conversation at the North Carolina Association meeting that the RCTB should personally invite growers to attend the Board meetings.
- Jane Neubauer stated that the Promotion committee is working hard to include Spanish in Promotions.
- Derek Ahl shared his excitement about the new marketing campaign.

Meeting Schedule:

- a. Once the financial audit is finalized, the Board will meet for a short one-agenda item.

Adjourn:

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

Chairman Roger Beyer adjourned the meeting at 12:28 p.m. Eastern time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Westlake
Secretary