

REAL CHRISTMAS TREE BOARD
BOARD MEETING
October 19, 2023

Via Video Conference

Welcome and Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 11:03 a.m. Eastern Time by Chairman, Derek Ahl.

Board Members in Attendance: Chuck Berry, Bob Schaefer, Renee Beutell, Derek Ahl, Mike Jones, Jane Neubauer, Gary Westlake, Charles Fowler, Larry Downey, and Mark Schmidlin

Board Members Not in Attendance: Mike Cocco, Roger Beyer

USDA Representative(s) in Attendance: Vickie Carpenter

Staff in Attendance: Marsha Gray, Jenny Tomaszewski

Guests in Attendance: Jenny Saechao

Agenda:

Derek Ahl requested to move the presentation of the 2022-23 audit before the approval of the meeting minutes.

It was **MOVED** by Charles Fowler and **SECONDED** by Mark Schmidlin to approve the agenda as corrected. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Presentation of 2022-23 FY Audit:

- Bob Schaefer reported they had a great meeting with USDA and Propp, Christensen, Caniglia LLP. Schaefer shared that Marsha Gray does an excellent job managing the finances - the protocols for the process in which bills are paid are seamless. Very positive assessment of the audit.
- Jenny Saechao, with Propp, Christensen, Caniglia, LLP., reviewed the audit prepared by their firm for the RCTB 2022-2023 fiscal year. The audit provided a clean opinion with no issues or corrective actions to report.
- Bob Schaefer shared that on page 3 of the report, everything appears to be in the negative, which is the positive as it says nothing came to their attention.

It was **MOVED** by Gary Westlake and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to accept the audit report as it was presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Jenny Saechao left the meeting following her report.

Meeting Minutes:

It was **MOVED** by Bob Schaefer and **SECONDED** by Mike Jones to approve the September 21, 2023, Board meeting minutes as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Chairman Report:

Derek Ahl shared that a Nominating Committee was appointed at the last Board meeting, and currently, the Committee is on hold until the Secretary makes board appointments. The Secretary of Agriculture generally makes this announcement sometime in mid-December.

Management Staff Update - Marsha Gray reported.

- Gray revisited a discussion from the last Board meeting regarding the February in-person Board meeting. The Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association announced that their short course will take place on Friday, February 16th, at the Sheraton Hotel in Portland, Oregon. The Board plans to meet on Thursday, February 15th.
- Gray shared that she and Jenny Tomaszewski continue to have regular meetings with Steve Mortimore with Fishhook Development, who is creating the online reporting and payment system. The process is moving forward, working through lots of little details. There will be a soft opening for the 2023 season, inviting growers to test the system.
- Gray shared that US Customs and Border Protection did announce the assessment collection beginning on November 4th. An email was sent to all Importers of record to make them aware of the change in collection. Gray has connected with Canadian brokers to ensure they are prepared for the change.
- Question was raised about the trees that will come across the Border before the November 4th launch date. Marsha Gray shared that the process will be the same as in years past. USDA will share a report with the RCTB, and the RCTB will collect the assessments on the loads that were not collected at the Border.
- Question was raised about the new online reporting and payments system, announcing to the industry that it will be available this year. Gray shared the plan to release a newsletter once we know for sure that it will be up and running smoothly. When the assessment forms are sent in early December, an additional note in bright color will be included with the letter and form, making producers aware of the opportunity to report online.

New Business: no new items to report.

USDA - Vickie Carpenter reported.

- Carpenter shared that she has been working with the Board's staff to update the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) collection forms.

For the Good of the Order/Announcements:

- Gary Westlake thanked Roger Beyer and Mike Cocco for their service on the Board.
- Derek Ahl wished everyone a safe and profitable season!

Meeting Schedule:

- a. **Next Meeting** - The next meeting will be held on January 18, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern time.
- b. **In-Person Meeting** - The next in-person Board meeting will be held in Portland, Oregon, on Thursday, February 15th, at the Sheraton Hotel at the airport.

Adjourn:

It was **MOVED** by Mike Jones and **SECONDED** by Mark Schmidlin to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Chairman Derek Ahl adjourned the meeting at 11:27 a.m. Eastern Time.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chuck Berry
Secretary