

# MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

Michigan State University, Kellogg Center  
219 S Harrison Rd, East Lansing, MI 48824

## MEETING MINUTES

**October 27, 2017**

### PRESENT:

Steven Hunt, Vice-Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Shelly Hartmann, Secretary, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Jennifer Spears, True Blue Farms, LLC  
Cheryl Sullins, Treasurer, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Heather Throne, MDARD  
Creela Hamlin, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Dennis Vander Kooi, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
James Sumners, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Ron Bates, Michigan State University  
Mark Longstroth, Michigan State University  
Kevin Robson, Michigan Farm Bureau  
Lorrie Merker, MBG Marketing  
Emily Helson, MBG Marketing  
Dave Trinka, MBG Marketing

### ABSENT:

Jacob Clemons, Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission

### Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Steve Hunt called the meeting to order at 2:30pm.

The Vice-Chairman verbally reviewed the agenda. One requested item was added; Heather Throne asked to give an MDARD update.

**MOTION: Shelly Hartmann moved to adopt the agenda, Creela Hamline seconded; motion was carried by unanimous verbal vote.**

Steve welcomed MSU ex-officio board member, Ronald Bates, PHD. Comments from Dr. Bates.

### Meeting Minutes Approval

Table reviewed the minutes from September 19, 2017.

Discussion on having policies that get approved/adopted noted in minutes in chronological order and attaching them to said minutes.

It was also noted that a correction needs to be made to a board member's name- the last "s" was missing from James Sumners' last name.

**MOTION: Creela Hamlin moved to approve the minutes with amendment to add discussed revisions and attachment of Policy to Endorse/Support Researcher's Request for Support from MBC, seconded by Cheryl Sullins; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.**

### Reports of Committees

Executive Director Committee: Dennis Vander Kooi distributed a recommendation memo to the board for the part-time Executive Director position. The committee thoroughly vetted 3 candidates and is recommending that the board select Kevin Robson of Michigan Farm Bureau. A service agreement from Michigan Farm Bureau was distributed and reviewed by the table. Discussion of the same with revision recommendations by Brad Deacon of MDARD for Item #1 and #7 and the table.

**MOTION: Shelly Hartmann moved to accept the Executive Director Committee's recommendation to contract Kevin Robson as Executive Director with revisions to Michigan Farm Bureau's service agreement made by Brad Deacon and the Commission. Support from Jim Sumners; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

Kevin Robson stepped out of room to give the board time to discuss the agreement. After returning, Kevin suggested a meeting within a week or so to discuss revisions of the agreement and finalize. Meeting was set for 2:00pm on Monday, November 6, 2017 at Trevor Nichols in Fennville.

Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee (MBBAC) update: Creela Hamlin gave an update on the MBBAC stating that they are now focusing on the political issues such as NAFTA/imports on behalf of the Michigan blueberry industry now that the Commission is directing the research side of things. The MBBAC is hosting a meeting at TNRC on Monday, November 6, 2017 at 12:00pm to discuss the Specialty Crop Alliance and their efforts.

Treasurers Report: Cheryl reported that the number MBC owes the Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee (MBBAC) was incorrectly reported at the September 19, 2017 meeting. The correct total is \$6,077.40 (six thousand, seventy-seven dollars and forty cents) for startup costs that were borrowed for referendum costs. There is an open balance of \$82 for the opening of the PO Box. The Commission has received one assessment to date. The current checking account balance is \$87,646.76 (eighty seven thousand, six hundred forty-six dollars and seventy six cents). The Post Office in Grand Junction has mixed up Michigan Blueberry Commission mail with Michigan Blueberry Growers Association mail. There is a need to set a policy in place in regards to the receiving and handling of mail sent to MBC. Cheryl is working on writing up a policy for review and approval of the Commission; should have something by the 11/6/17 meeting.

**MOTION: Dennis moved to approve the Treasurer's report with support from Creela; motion passed by unanimous verbal vote.**

USHBC Update: Shelly provided a recap of the United States Highbush Blueberry Council's meetings held in Grand Rapids earlier this month. The tour was well received and enjoyed by attendees from all over the world.

The Ambassador program proved successful with Creela, Jim, and Steve attending for the first time. The MBC's contribution of \$100 was not properly recognized due to a misprint but USHBC assures that they will correct their minutes and disseminate accordingly. USHBC will now look to MBC for Michigan's blueberry grower's needs.

MDARD update: Heather Throne requested to give an update from MDARD. The Value-Added grant deadline is November 7<sup>th</sup>. MDARD will announce the Rural Development grant opportunities at the next meeting. A card was distributed announcing the public comment period for Specialty Crop Block Grants requesting input for where those federal funds should best be utilized. They are asking for commodity groups to submit letters regarding their priorities. The public comment period ends December 8, 2017.

### **New Business**

Confidentiality agreement discussion is tabled until Kevin Robson is officially acting in his role as Executive Director to better help organize.

### **Old Business**

Website/email progress- Heather sent application to Chairman Clemons that gets submitted to USDA who approves, sends back to MDARD to finalize paperwork; funds must be spent by August 2018. Funds can be used to develop logo, website, and promotion.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments were provided.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION: Jim moved to adjourn meeting with support from Creela; motion carried by unanimous verbal vote.**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by Shelly Hartmann