

# MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

Trevor Nichols Research Center  
6237 124<sup>th</sup> Ave, Fennville, MI 49408

## **MEETING MINUTES September 25, 2018**

### PRESENT:

Creela Hamlin, Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
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  
Dennis Vander Kooi, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
James Sumners, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Kevin Robson, Executive Director, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Dr. Ron Bates, Michigan State University/Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Heather Throne, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Dr. Doug Buhler, Michigan State University  
Mark Longstroth, Michigan State University Extension  
Dr. Timothy Miles, Michigan State University  
Dr. Rufus Isaacs, Michigan State University  
Dr. Carlos Garcia, Michigan State University Extension  
Dr. John Wise, Michigan State University Extension  
Miguel Ochoa, A&L Farms  
Dave Trinka, MBG Marketing  
Emily Helson, MBG Marketing  
Tim Remington, Remington Excavating

### ABSENT:

Jacob Clemons, Michigan Blueberry Commission

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Creela Hamlin called the meeting to order at 9:35am; performed a roll call and verified the presence of a quorum.

Executive Director Kevin Robson gave update on MBC website; go-live date target is 10/01/18. Kevin then referred to the 2 documents he included in handouts (**ATTACHMENT A**) discussing the need for an RFP (Request for Proposal) to streamline process of receiving proposals from researchers. Jackie DeSander Lindsey of MSU has offered to receive the proposals and send to Kevin who will then present to the MBC for decision. Kevin would like the Commission to decide on the proposed RFP process at the October board meeting.

## **Adoption of Agenda (ATTACHMENT B):**

The Commission reviewed the proposed agenda. Mark Longstroth requested time to talk about the Blueberry Program during the Great Lakes Fruit & Vegetable EXPO in December. Emily Helson of MBG requested time to present the US label pilot program currently in the works at MBG/Naturipe (during Public Comment period).

**MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to adopt the agenda with the additions, supported by Jim Sumners; motion carried unanimously.**

## **Reports of Committees or Officers**

### **Chairman's report:**

Short report; made it through harvest. She is looking forward to the MSU visit in October as last year was worthwhile and educational.

### **Vice-Chairman's report:**

Not much to report other than abandoned fields are still an issue and the problem is increasing.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Treasurer Cheryl Sullins distributed an updated balance sheet/monthly summary (**ATTACHMENT C**). There hasn't been much activity over the summer. The Executive Director service contract fee was paid to Farm Bureau; Treasurer thanked Kevin for all his hard work. It was clarified that the contract period is November 9 – November 9.

It was noted that the previously approved sponsorship fee of Ag Innovations Day has not been sent to Ron Bates yet; Treasurer will issue asap.

Cheryl stated that she briefly spoke with some First Handlers/Processors to get an idea of what the Michigan blueberry crop looked like this year to gauge the amount of assessments the MBC can expect to receive; the consensus was between 62 and 67 million pounds, which is down significantly.

Balance on checking account is \$27,650.17 and Savings/Money Market is \$129,234.38.

The matching grant reimbursements have yet to be received. The \$30,000 for the Specialty Crop Block Grant will be invoiced to MDARD asap for reimbursement.

Regarding the PA-232 annual audit requirement, Cheryl will work with Shelly and Jennifer of True Blue to update QuickBooks to streamline the audit process. The audit will happen before the end of the year.

**MOTION: Steve Hunt moved to approve the Treasurer's Report with support from Shelly Hartmann; Motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

## Secretary's report:

Secretary Shelly Hartmann and Kevin Robson discussed the needed elections for MBC. Shelly Hartmann, Cheryl Sullins, and Jacob Clemons' terms are set to expire December 31. Shelly has agreed to continue her service. Discussion on how meetings will not be as extensive or as often as the first year since most policies and procedures have been established; expected to have 4 meetings in 2019.

Nominations are due to Governor's office asap- Need 2 options for each open seat. Chairman Hamlin requested that all board members bring names of potential board members to the October 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Kevin Robson offered to speak to anyone interested to provide a scope of what being on the Commission would entail.

Kevin Robson relayed the Heritage Hill Room at Amway Grand has been booked for the Monday of the Great Lakes Expo in December to meet with researchers and staff of MSU and MDARD; all check off programs do this to meet with them as well and update industry. Kevin will email details later.

Shelly discussed the crop and estimates the Commission will receive approximately \$180,000-\$195,000 in assessments.

Shelly stated that the MBC will now be responsible for submitting names to the USHBC for representatives. Shelly and Kevin will meet with USHBC leaders in New Orleans first week of October.

Shelly brought up that she spoke with a blueberry grower friend in North Carolina who is dealing with the impact of Hurricane Florence; extent of damage is unknown, but it is not good.

Discussion on the Grower Report that growers are to submit to MBC annually to ensure all assessments are collected. The Commission had approved a form in February, but it was lacking a certification statement. After receiving USHBC's grower report, it was thought that MBC should follow suit as this is the format growers are accustomed. Secretary Shelly, assisted by Jennifer, mirrored the USHBC Grower Assessment Report form & Memo and distributed for approval (**ATTACHMENT D**).

**MOTION: Steve Hunt moved to approve the updated Grower Report with support from James Summers; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

Dennis Vander Kooi noted that the latest Cold Storage report shows the lowest numbers in 6 years.

## Policy/Procedure Development Committee Report:

Kevin Robson spoke for/to the Committee- He would like the Committee to review and update the reimbursement policy/procedure for expenses he incurs on behalf of the MBC. There are expenses beyond the current \$250 limit without a vote that he has and will continue to incur such as his plane ticket to the USHBC meetings in New Orleans. He will work with the Policy/Procedure Development Committee to update and hopefully have something to vote on at the October 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Discussion on the Grower "Think Tank" MBC had hoped to host in September, but December may work better.

It was decided that the previously scheduled November 6<sup>th</sup> meeting is unnecessary; the Secretary will send out a notice of cancellation.

## Meeting Minutes Approval

The Commission reviewed the minutes from May 15, 2018 (**ATTACHMENT E**).

**MOTION: A motion was made and supported to approve the May 15, 2018 meeting minutes as written; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.**

## Executive Director's Report:

- a.) Kevin Robson presented the Commission's newly created website on the projector and reviewed the features; discussion on the same.
- b.) 2018 Harvest- Kevin noted 65 million pounds seems to be the number of the 2018 harvest. Sizing was an issue. The rain events had a lot to do with the lack of tonnage.
- c.) EPA Decision Makers Tour (8/22 – 8/24/18)- Kevin attended. Was facilitated by the IPM Alliance. Visited Sacket Potatoes.
- d.) Fruit Acreage Inventory Survey- important survey for research to know what is being grown and how much.
- e.) IR-4 Regional Field Coordinator- Kevin served on the interview panel for the position who will work under John Wise of MSU; Anthony VanWoerkom was awarded the position. **\*Public Comment- John Wise noted that the IR-4 position will have a presence in the industry; will have an office at TNRC as well as at the Grand Rapids Kent County Extension.**
- f.) Ag Innovations Day (June 28)- Weather had an impact on attendance. Dr. Ron Bates stated there were 182 registrants; it was a good day, but weather worked against them. Dr. Bates thanked the MBC for participation and sponsorship.
- g.) Ag Commission Meeting (7/18/18)- The Director of Ag requested an update on the MBC from Kevin; he attended and spoke on our behalf. He emphasized the hard work the Commission has done over the last year to the Director.
- h.) Vietnamese Delegation (7/27/18)- USHBC hosted delegates from Vietnam; toured Leduc's, True Blue, and MBG.
- i.) National Blueberry Festival (08/09/18)- Kevin attended the festival and spoke on the MBC to the many visitors in South Haven.
- j.) Board Member Training (November 9)- Would be beneficial training for anyone who is unfamiliar with serving on a board. Kevin is willing to put together a group registration if anyone is interested.
- k.) USHBC/NABC Fall Meetings (Oct 2-5)- Kevin will be attending and will report on the outcome at next meeting.

**\*Public Comment-** Dr. Carlos Garcia of MSU Extension shared a concern about how blueberries and cranberries get lost in translation in Mexico in regard to trade and taxing fruit. There is a word for cranberries in Spanish but they are being marketed as blueberries and targeting diabetic consumers. Dr. Garcia will put something together for Shelly and Kevin to present to USHBC at the meetings.

## **Research Committee's Report:**

Dr. John Wise reviewed the site prep that has been done on the plot at TNRC for our research. He presented the MBC with planting options for cultivars and field layout (**ATTACHMENT F**). They would like to begin planting one year from now. The 3.5 acre plot would be designed for multiple research projects. Discussion on best planting strategies (spacing, raised beds, fabric or mulch, trickle & overhead irrigation) and which cultivars to plant to best represent the industry and grower concerns.

Kevin thanked Dr. John Wise, Tim Remington, and all MSU Extension staff for their hard work.

## **MSU Update**

Dr. Ron Bates stated that the University is underway in the search for a new president. Project GREEN process is wrapping up. They are needing priorities from each industry. Dr. Buehler stated that the RFP will be released in October. The 20 year anniversary of Project GREEN was a great event. Dr. Bates is looking forward to working with Jackie DeSander on the MBC's RFPs.

Mark Longstroth passed around an agenda for the EXPO in December (**ATTACHMENT G**). Discussion on Blueberry Day of the EXPO and review of the agenda. He has asked Kevin Robson to speak on behalf of MBC to which he agreed.

Dr. Bates discussed the MBC's visit and tour of MSU on October 11 (agenda is **ATTACHMENT H**). Dr. Bates would like feedback on what Commission would like to discuss and priorities. The Dean of MSU and Director of Extension will both be in attendance for an hour.

Discussion on the visit.

**\*Public Comment-** Dave Trinka of MBG would like MBC to discuss horticultural positions – weed science and economics as this was a tough year.

## **MDARD Update:**

Heather Throne stated they received the ok from USDA for the State Plan they submitted in May. Grants team will be working diligently on these in the coming weeks. MBC can start incurring costs as of October 1<sup>st</sup> as part of the SCBG (gall wasp and fruit acreage survey). Rural Development grants are open now. Application and guidelines are on website; passed out informational flyer (**ATTACHMENT I**). They are preparing for the transition to a new administration coming in after the election.

Dr. Bates distributed a document (**ATTACHMENT J**) titled MSU Partnerships with Commodity Based Positions for the Commission to review.

## **Public Comments**

Emily Helson presented a slideshow about a new labeling campaign MBG/Naturipe is testing for 2019- the purpose is to promote US/State specific grown fruit. She displayed examples of pint clamshells with the proposed labels. MBG would like feedback from the Commission in regard to the campaign.

The next meeting will be at 2:00 pm on Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at Michigan State University's Agronomy Barn.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION: Steve Hunt moved to adjourn meeting with support from James Sumners; motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Shelly Hartmann

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Competitive Grant Proposal & MBC Call for Research Proposals**
- B. 09/25/18 Meeting Agenda**
- C. Treasurer's Report- Financials & Summer Month Summaries**
- D. Grower Assessment Report & Memo**
- E. 05/15/18 MBC Meeting Minutes**
- F. Proposed field layout for research plot at TNRC**
- G. Great Lakes Fruit & Veg EXPO Blueberry Agenda**
- H. MBC visit to MSU Agenda**
- I. MDARD Rural Development Grant Fact Sheet**
- J. MSU Partnerships with Commodity Based Positions**