

MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

Trevor Nichols Research Center
6237 124th Ave, Fennville, MI 49503

MEETING MINUTES January 08, 2019

PRESENT:

Creela Hamlin, Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Steven Hunt, Vice-Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Kevin Robson, Executive Director, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Cheryl Sullins, Treasurer, Michigan Blueberry Commission
James Sumners, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Dennis Vander Kooi, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Jacob Clemons, Michigan Blueberry Commission Research Committee
Jennifer Spears, True Blue Farms, LLC
Dr. Ron Bates, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Rex Schultz, Heritage Blueberries, LLC
Miguel Ochoa, A&L Farm Market
Emily Helson, MBG Marketing
Dave Trinka, MBG Marketing, Michigan Blueberry Commission Research Committee
John Kinahan, Hanson Logistics
Dr. John Wise, Michigan State University Extension

ABSENT:

Shelly Hartmann, Secretary, Michigan Blueberry Commission, arrived @ 12pm
Eric Jawor, Michigan Blueberry Commission

Call to Order

Chairman Creela Hamlin called the meeting to order at 9:05 am; performed a roll call and verified the presence of a quorum.

MOTION: Steve Hunt moved to have Jennifer Spears assume the duties of the Secretary in Shelly Hartmann's absence with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda (ATTACHMENT A):

The Commission reviewed the proposed agenda. Due to scheduling conflicts, the need to move the MSU Update (XI) and Research Update (VIII; a.) RFP Discussion) was discussed.

MOTION: Steve Hunt moved to adopt the agenda with the MSU update and Research Update moved up, supported by Jim Sumners; motion carried unanimously.

MSU Update:

Dr. Ron Bates reported that Project GREEN proposals are due today. Kevin will be part of the review process this year. They have just hired a new IPM position based in Berrien County at SWMREC, Dr. Mike Reinke who will start February 4th.

MSU will be looking at candidates next week for a viticulture position also out of Benton Harbor.

Dr. Eric Hanson retiring at end of 2019 calendar year; department is making proposals to have position filled either this fall or the following spring. He may continue, possibly via grant dollars, in some capacity to complete projects.

Southwest Hort Days is coming soon- beginning of February.

Research Update / RFP (Request for Proposals) Discussion

Kevin reported that there were 5 submissions to MBC's request for research proposals (**ATTACHMENT B**); the Commission reviewed each proposal individually and discussion took place on each:

- 2 from Dr. Rufus Isaacs (**ATTACHMENTS C & D**)
 - MBC19-01 (Developing New Control Programs for SWD in MI Blueberries): It was noted that the different approach to controlling SWD with things like behavior modification versus a pesticide was favorable
 - MBC19-02 (Improving Pollination of MI Blueberries): This is a follow up to the \$5,000 sponsorship MBC provided in 2018. It was noted that it's favorable that the research could tell what pesticides the bees don't like, fungicides are addressed, there will be degree-day predictions, night spraying research, and additional heat exposure answers.
- 2 from Dr. Tim Miles (**ATTACHMENTS E & F**)
 - MBC19-03 (Establishing a Blueberry Planting for Plant Pathology Research on MSU's Plant Pathology Farm): Discussion highlights- Difficult to find growers who will allow Dr. Miles to inoculate their bushes with disease; would be helpful for him to have own planting. Concerns were location of the planting (not typical/optimal growing area for blueberries) and MSU budgets & turnover.
 - MBC19-04 (Investigating Generic Fungicide Options for Controlling Anthracnose and Mummy Berry in MI Blueberry Fields): It was discussed that there is a need for research on generic products as growers are at the mercy of sales representatives; there could be a cost savings to growers. Efficacy tests would be helpful; research on the inert ingredients (adjuvants) would be beneficial.
- 1 from Dr. Carlos Garcia-Salazar (**ATTACHMENT G**)
 - MBC19-05 (When and What to Spray: A Systems Approach for Spotted Wing Drosophila Management): It was discussed that this proposal may not be beneficial for serving the entire blueberry industry for this year as the main focus is on a limited number of growers; may be early as new research potentially coming.

MOTION: James Sumners moved to fund the RFPs MBC19-01, MBC19-02, and MBC19-04 with support from Steve Hunt; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Discussion with John Wise regarding the planting at Trevor Nichols Research Center. The Commission reviewed and discussed the original decision to purchase 3 year old plants to get a jump on growth and research time. Discussion on how plants in pots for 3 years have the potential to get root bound and may not do as well once planted versus a 1 or 2 year old plant in a 1 gallon pot. The TNRC planting will include fabric row covers and drip irrigation; a 3 year old plant will require a larger hole cut in the fabric which could cause a multitude of issues later. Discussion on benefits of purchasing plants that were grown from tissue culture versus root cuttings.

MOTION: James Sumners moved to table the discussion on the purchase of plants until after lunch with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.

RECESSED: 11:15am

RECONVENED: 11:26am

Meeting Minutes Approval

The Commission reviewed the minutes from December 03, 2018 (**ATTACHMENT H**).

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to approve the December 03, 2018 meeting minutes as written with support from Steve Hunt; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.

Reports of Committees or Officers

Treasurer's Report:

Kevin informed the board that the audit with Joel of Maner Costerisan was going well; Jennifer put together a DropBox account to supply Joel with required information. Not quite complete yet as there are a few outstanding things such as First Handlers who have yet to return reports and assessments; Kevin has reached out to them. A formal audit report will be provided at the April board meeting.

Treasurer Cheryl Sullins distributed a summary of September, October, November, and December financials as well as a detail of financials (**ATTACHMENT I**). Cheryl reported that we have collected \$189,522.78 from First Handlers representing approximately 63,177,142 pounds of blueberries. We have collected \$13,447.60 from Growers representing approximately 4,482,520 pounds of blueberries. We received 13 grower reports and assessments that fall under the 50,000 pound production threshold totaling \$509.27 representing approximately 166,709 pounds. The total collection amount is \$202,970.38 representing approximately 67,826,372 pounds of blueberries.

Cheryl additionally reported that we received 22 requests for reimbursement for a total amount of \$1,203.58. The checks for the 13 growers who fall under the 50,000 pound threshold are being returned to the growers; auditor Joel is aware and onboard with returning the checks.

Jennifer edited and distributed the Reimbursement Request form (**ATTACHMENT J**) to help the grower better understand the requirements for completing and requesting reimbursement.

Discussion on growers requesting reimbursement who delivered to a First Handler.

Discussion on the Financials Cheryl distributed (ATTACHMENT I). Moving forward, Joel Korson of Maner Costerisan will provide (for a fee) financial statements that are easier to understand.

Cheryl distributed a Simple Budget Overview/2019 Budget (ATTACHMENT K). Review and discussion of the same.

Discussion on the need for tech upgrades for treasury work such as a laptop and a QuickBooks software subscription.

MOTION: Shelly Hartmann moved to purchase a laptop and QuickBooks software subscription for the MBC with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

MOTION: Jim Sumners moved to approve the 2019 Budget with support from Shelly Hartmann; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

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

BREAK FOR LUNCH: 12:06pm

RECONVENED: 12:28pm

Secretary's report:

Secretary Shelly Hartmann reported the Spring USHBC meetings will be held in San Diego, California from March 6, 2019 – March 8, 2019. The USHBC has changed the method of delivery for the cold storage reports; you must now sign in to get it.

Regarding assessments, we have collected from 23 First Handlers and are still working to get the reports/assessments from 6 more. The breakdown of fresh versus process is 52% fresh and 48% process.

Discussion on sending Kevin Robson to the USHBC Spring meeting in San Diego.

MOTION: Steve Hunt moved for the Commission to send Kevin Robson to the USHBC Spring meeting in San Diego in March with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Executive Director's Report:

Kevin Robson reported that he spoke with Michigan Ag Council with whom we joined in June 2018 at the \$1,000 level. They are looking forward to continuing our partnership; if the MBC wishes to continue the membership, we will need to decide at the April board meeting. The membership is now approved in the budget.

Kevin disseminated 5 letters of support he was requested to pen (ATTACHMENT L).

Steve Hunt discussed an effort brought to his attention by Ben Smith of the Hort Society to request the Department of Labor (DOL) not increase the prevailing wage in Michigan.

MOTION: Steve Hunt moved for the Commission to write a letter of support to National Council of Ag Employers who are requesting DOL to not increase Michigan's prevailing wage with support from Cheryl Sullins; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Kevin will report back to the board at the next meeting regarding the progress of that effort.

Kevin announced that the EPA Decisions Makers tour sponsored by the IPM Alliance will be July 22 – 24. Kevin has volunteered to plan it along with Ben Smith of Horticulture Society and Emily Helson of MBG. He has secured the South Haven Conference Center with a budget of \$11,000 comprised of IPM Alliance dues. They would like to see fruit harvested and are excited for the tour. It's a chance to bring any concerns or changes we would like to their attention.

MDARD Update:

Heather Throne could not make the meeting but sent regards via Kevin. She also wanted to remind the Commission that this is the meeting where it's necessary to appoint the Executive Committee.

MOTION: Jim Sumners moved to keep the Executive Committee as is with Creela Hamlin as Chair, Steve Hunt as Vice-Chair, Cheryl Sullins as Treasurer, and Shelly Hartmann as Secretary with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Continuation of plant purchase discussion that was tabled until after lunch.

MOTION: Steve Hunt moved to purchase 2 year old blueberry plants in 1 gallon pots from Hartmann Plant Company for the 5 acre TNRC research plot with support from Jim Sumners; motion carried with 5 votes in favor and one abstention (Shelly Hartmann).

Public Comments

Rex Schultz thanked Kevin for all his hard work and dedication to MBC. Kevin thanked the growers in attendance.

John Wise distributed a job posting (**ATTACHMENT M**) from MSU to fill a farm manager position at TNRC due to the unfortunate passing of Jason Seaward in October.

The next meeting will be at 9:00 am on Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 at Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center in Benton Harbor, MI.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 1:14pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Spears

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. 01/08/2019 MBC Meeting Agenda**
- B. Recap of MBC's Request for Proposals (RFP) 5 submissions**
- C. MBC19-01 Dr. Rufus Isaacs Research Proposal (SWD Control Programs)**
- D. MBC19-02 Dr. Rufus Isaacs Research Proposal (Improving Pollination)**
- E. MBC19-03 Dr. Tim Miles Research Proposal (Blueberry Planting @ MSU)**
- F. MBC19-04 Dr. Tim Miles Research Proposal (Generic Fungicide Options)**
- G. MBC19-05 Dr. Carlos Garcia-Salazar Research Proposal (Systems Approach to SWD Management)**
- H. 12/03/18 Meeting Minutes**
- I. MBC Financial Summaries Sept/Oct/Nov/Dec and Detail**
- J. Revised Reimbursement Request Form**
- K. MBC 2019 Budget**
- L. MBC letters of support (5)**
- M. MSU job posting**