

MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Heritage Hill Room
187 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

MEETING MINUTES December 09, 2019

PRESENT:

Kevin Robson, Executive Director, Michigan Blueberry Commission
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
Eric Jawor, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Dennis Vander Kooi, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Rex Schultz, Heritage Blueberries, LLC
Rufus Isaacs, Michigan State University Extension
Mark Longstroth, Michigan State University Extension
Dave Reenders, Crossroads Blueberry Farm
Timothy Miles, Michigan State University Extension
Marc Erffmeyer, Farm Bureau Insurance
John Wise, Michigan State University Extension
Heather Throne, MDARD
Dru Montri, MSU CANR
Jim Kells, MSU CANR

ABSENT:

James Sumners, Michigan Blueberry Commission

Call to Order

Chairman Creela Hamlin called the meeting to order at 9:01am, performed a roll call, and verified the presence of a quorum.

Meeting Minutes Approval

The Commission reviewed the minutes from October 15, 2019 (**ATTACHMENT A**).

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to approve the October 15, 2019 meeting minutes as written with support from Steve Hunt; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.

Adoption of Agenda (ATTACHMENT B):

The Commission reviewed the proposed agenda.

MOTION: Shelly Hartmann moved to adopt the agenda as is with support from Eric Jawor; motion carried unanimously.

Dru Montri, MSU CANR:

Dru Montri, Director of Government & Stakeholder Relations for Michigan State University's College of Agriculture & Natural Resources who also serves on the Michigan Commission of Agriculture, provided an update about the budget appropriations affecting agriculture in the State of Michigan.

Secretary's report:

Secretary Shelly Hartmann reported that 17 First Handler reports have been received to date along with 110 grower reports of the 527 sent out collecting a total of \$189,750.79 representing approximately 63,250,263.33 pounds of blueberries. \$6,279.99 of that amount was grower provided versus First Handlers representing approximately 2,085,683.70 pounds. An additional 45 growers were added to the database from First Handler reports.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Cheryl Sullins distributed the financials for the MBC since October (**ATTACHMENT C**). Not much activity since last meeting; mainly deposits. Current balance of checking is \$12,084.18. Savings balance is \$351,394.75. There are a few obligations that will be paid soon such as the additional funds for the irrigation work at the TNRC planting, the \$33,333.33 for the third of the cost of the 3-season research barn at TNRC, and \$60,000 for RFPs. The budget will be ready for review and approval at the next meeting; we are right on track with current budget. To date, \$186,786.81 has been deposited representing approximately 62,266,333 pounds of blueberries.

MOTION: Eric Jawor moved to approve the Treasurer's report with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Discussion on impact of imports and action plans. Rex Schultz and Antonio Leduc wrote 3 policies (one on H-2A labor, one on currency exchange rates, and one on Methyl Bromide) for the Michigan Farmers Union which were approved and will be going in front of the National Farmers Union in February to be vote on. If approved, the NFU will work with their lobbyist and Washington D.C. legislatures to take appropriate action. Jerome Crosby of the Georgia Blueberry Commission asked the leaders of each state's blueberry programs to sign a support letter (**ATTACHMENT D**) that he and other members of the Agricultural Technical Advisory

Committee can take to trade leaders in Washington D.C. to start the conversation on issues American Blueberry growers face with imports.

MSU Research Report_DR. TIMOTHY MILES:

Tim Miles updated the MBC on the generic fungicide research grant MBC supported. He had 3 main objectives: 1.) Investigate the ability of generic fungicides to control mummy berry; 2.) Control anthracnose with a generic fungicide; and 3.) Assess the role of adjuvants in anthracnose control with these results: 1.) Generics were effective at controlling mummy berry, botrytis blight, and anthracnose; 2.) Mixing FRAC 3 products of propiconazole with Echo provided better control of mummy berry; 3.) Nufilm P (a NIS organic adjuvant) improves disease control in some cases but also had fungicidal properties.

Dr. Miles also briefly reviewed 5 new fungicides for blueberries- Stargus, Propulse, Jet-Ag, LifeGard WG, and Kenja. Discussion on future projects including updating blueberry fact sheets and FRAC 11 & 7 resistance research (**ATTACHMENT E**).

BREAK: 10:50AM

RECONVENED: 11:10AM

MSU Research Report_DR. RUFUS ISAACS

Rufus Isaacs reported that he, Mark Longstroth, and Kevin Robson are all on the committee to find the replacement for Eric Hanson's position (Hort specialist/Assistant Professor). Of 31 candidates, they have narrowed it down to 8 and will begin Zoom interviews next week. Whomever is chosen is expected to start mid-August 2020.

Rufus provided an update on research projects including improving pollination, controlling SWD, and Stem Gall Wasp (**ATTACHMENT F**). A couple of noted points were that the temperature threshold for pollen to be effective in high heat is somewhere between 84 and 104 degrees; Verdapryn is promising for controlling Stem Gall Wasp; and he is planning a field day to show growers results of Stem Gall Wasp research.

MSU Research Report_DR. JOHN WISE

John Wise updated the MBC about the blueberry planting at TNRC in Fennville and is looking for input on what should be done over the next couple years. The plans for the 3-season research barn were shown to the board.

LUNCH BREAK: 12:04PM

RECONVENED: 1:02PM

MDARD Update

Heather Throne informed the MBC of an opportunity for board member training to be held on February 11 from 1-4pm at AgroLiquid in St. Johns, MI. Specialty Crop Block Grants are being announced on January 6th. Applications will be due the last of February, reviewed, with awardees being announced in May.

Research Committee update

The research committee met at TNRC and brainstormed with MSUE staff members. The research priorities needed to be updated. Discussion on the proposed priorities including the need for consumer research.

MOTION: Shelly Hartmann moved to approve the research priorities written by the research committee with support from Steve Hunt; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

RFP update

Kevin asked for input on nematode research; he will invite Marisol to submit an RFP at the January meeting. Discussion on RFPs for 2020. Kevin distributed the call for research proposals (**ATTACHMENT G**).

Executive Director's Report:

Kevin gave brief update on discussions he's had with growers about research, the 3-season barn at TNRC, and the importance of attending the MBC meetings. Bill Shane of SWMREC will attend January meeting to engage with the board about planting and research at SWMREC. Discussion on the future of the check off program and proposed meetings for 2020. The following dates/times/locations were agreed upon:

- January 15 (Wednesday), 9am, TNRC (subject to change as there is a heating issue)
- April 21 (Tuesday), 9am, SWMREC
- October 13 (Tuesday), 9am, Lansing (possibly at MI Farm Bureau)
- December 7 (Monday), 9am, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids (EXPO)

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to approve the proposed meeting dates with support from Shelly Hartmann; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Kevin distributed a support letter for a proposed virus testing program needed for Michigan's blueberry nurseries (**ATTACHMENT H**). Discussion on the need to have growers at the January and April meetings for more input.

Discussion on blueberry representation at the Great Lakes Expo in the form of a booth. Other commodities have booths; would be a time commitment. Further discussion needed at January meeting.

Specialty Crop Insurance update

Marc Erffmeyer of Farm Bureau spoke about crop insurance and Whole Farm Revenue option. Less than 5% of blueberry growers have Whole Farm Revenue.

Public Comments

Rex Schultz thanked the MBC board for their work. He would like to encourage everyone to consider joining the Farmer's Union as the more you are involved, the bigger our voice will be. He also suggested that if the MBC has a booth at the EXPO, perhaps they could partner and share the cost with the Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee.

The next meeting will be at 9:00 am on Monday, January 15th, 2020 at Trevor Nichols Research Center located in Fennville, MI (subject to change if heating issue continues).

Adjournment

MOTION: Steve Hunt moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:44pm with support from Eric Jawor; motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:44pm.

Respectfully submitted by Shelly Hartmann/jls

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. 10/15/2019 MBC Meeting Minutes
- B. 12/09/19 MBC Meeting Agenda
- C. MBC Financials
- D. Blueberry Leadership letter of support
- E. Proposal to submit a SCBGP on anthracnose fruit rot
- F. Update on MSU blueberry entomology projects – Rufus Isaacs
- G. Call for Research Proposals (RFP)
- H. Support letter for virus testing