

# MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

Crane's Pie Pantry & Restaurant  
6054 124<sup>th</sup> Ave, Fennville, MI 49408

## MEETING MINUTES January 15, 2020

### PRESENT:

Kevin Robson, Executive Director, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Creela Hamlin, Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Shelly Hartmann, Secretary, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Cheryl Sullins, Treasurer, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Eric Jawor, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Dennis Vander Kooi, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Jennifer Spears, True Blue Farms, LLC  
Carley Parsley, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Robert Bodtke, Michigan Blueberry Commission  
Rex Schultz, Heritage Blueberries, LLC  
Heather Throne, MDARD  
Miguel Ochoa, A&L Farms  
Emily Helsen, MBG Marketing  
Amber DeHaan, Crossroads Blueberry Farm  
Luke DeHaan, Crossroads Blueberry Farm

### ABSENT:

None

### Call to Order

Chairman Creela Hamlin called the meeting to order at 9:03am, performed a roll call, and verified the presence of a quorum.

### Adoption of Agenda (ATTACHMENT A):

The Commission reviewed the proposed agenda.

**MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to adopt the agenda as presented with support from Robert Bodtke; motion carried unanimously.**

**MOTION: Shelly Hartmann moved to add MBC Board reorganization to the agenda with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

## Meeting Minutes Approval

The Commission reviewed the minutes from December 09, 2019 (**ATTACHMENT B**).

**MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to approve the December 09, 2019 meeting minutes as written with support from Shelly Hartmann; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.**

### Chair's Report:

Chair Creela Hamlin reported she met with new MBC board members Robert Bodtke and Carly Parsey to welcome them to the board.

Creela attended one of Dr. Rufus Isaacs recent meetings where MBC was a sponsor of the research he was presenting and appreciates his time and commitment.

Creela detailed an opportunity with which she was presented regarding supporting the construction of a research station just north of the Hart, Mi area. There is currently a geographic gap in research stations for fruit and vegetable research. Discussion on the topic. It was suggested they come speak/present to MBC at the April meeting for further information in order to make a decision.

Creela was asked to sign a letter (**ATTACHMENT C**) to US Secretary of Ag, Sonny Perdue regarding current import pressures from foreign countries and the need to discuss the issue with trade leadership.

### Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Cheryl Sullins reported that assessments are still coming in and the numbers in her report reflect what has been deposited to date. Total deposited to dated is \$208,714.29 reflecting approximately 69,238,160 pounds of blueberries. This number does not include requested reimbursements totaling \$479.56 representing approximately 161,000 pounds. The balance as of December 31<sup>st</sup> in the checking account is \$18,771.84 and the savings account is \$351,459.58. She distributed the financials for the MBC (**ATTACHMENT D**) as well as the proposed budget (**ATTACHMENT E**). Discussion on the 2020 budget. We need to add \$25,000.00 for the start up package for MSU Hort position. Discussion on utilizing a local accountant to set up chart of accounts in Quickbooks.

**MOTION: Eric Jawor motioned to approve the proposed 2020 budget with the addition of the \$25,000 MSU Hort position start-up package and Treasurer's report with support from Robert Bodtke; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

### Secretary's Report:

Secretary Shelly Hartmann reported that most First Handler reports have been received to date along with 137 grower reports of the 527 sent out collecting a total of \$234,058.33 representing approximately 78,019,443.33 pounds of blueberries.

Shelly informed the board of an ag employment seminar hosted by Varnum coming up on January 30<sup>th</sup>. Shelly confirmed she will be attending the USHBC/NABC meetings in Washington, D.C. in March where the focus will be trade policy. Shelly also reported that she and Jennifer will be meeting with Gary McDowell, Michigan's Director of Ag on Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup> to give an update on the state of the blueberry industry.

**MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to approve the Secretary's report with support from Carly Parsley; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

#### **Executive Director's Report:**

Kevin reported he received a letter from the trade department on USMCA. Kevin says there are letter of support in the handouts including one regarding support for Trey Malone's survey (**ATTACHMENT F**). Kevin stated one letter of support was pulled before sending that related to PFAS testing by MSU as he wanted board approval. Discussion on PFAS testing support letter.

**MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to send the support letter for PFAS testing with support from Eric Jawor; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

**BREAK: 10:47AM**

**RECONVENED: 11:10AM**

Kevin stated he will be placing an order for a new MBC apparel item for each board member. Kevin asked for bios from Rob and Carly for the MBC website. Kevin reported the 2019 MBC audit has begun with Maner Costerisan providing the service once again. They should have a report for the board at the April meeting.

#### **MBBAC Update:**

Rex Schultz reported the Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee has reorganized as of January 7<sup>th</sup> with Rex serving as President. Their next meeting is February 6<sup>th</sup> at TNRC. The MBBAC sent out a survey to growers to gauge the grower's knowledge of the state of the industry. Rex also reported that the American Grown campaign has kicked off in Georgia. Rex stated he reached out to Trey Malone of MSU to perhaps perform an economic impact study on imports in Michigan like the one he did for Florida. The ultimate goal is to educate the consumer and level the playing the field for domestic growers.

#### **MDARD Update**

Heather Throne announced Rural Development is awarding 20 projects; ten in the UP and 10 in lower Michigan. Some of the budget cuts are being reinstated including Value-added grants of \$1.5 million for equipment, lines, etc.

MDARD is hosting board member training in St. Johns on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

**BREAK: 12:04PM**

**RECONVENED: 12:31PM**

### **RFP Review and Discussion**

Each board member provided their top 3 choices from all of research proposals (**ATTACHMENT G**).

Discussion was held on each proposal.

**MOTION: Eric Jawor moved to approve 3 research proposals: Dr. Rufus Isaacs' "Parasitoid Wasps for Biological Control of SWD in Michigan Blueberries"; Dr. Timothy Miles' "Anthracnose Fruit Rot: Assessing Alternative Control Methods and resistance"; and Dr. Rufus Isaacs' "Improving Pollination of Michigan Blueberries" with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

### **Board Reorganization**

Creela Hamlin nominated Dennis Vander Kooi for Vice-Chair.

Eric Jawor nominated the same board members to remain in the same positions: Chair (Creela Hamlin), Secretary (Shelly Hartmann), and Treasurer (Cheryl Sullins).

**MOTION: Eric Jawor moved to accept the following nominations: Creela Hamlin as Chair, Dennis Vander Kooi as Vice-Chair, Shelly Hartmann as Secretary, and Cheryl Sullins as Treasurer with support from Rob Bodtke; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

Discussion on committees: add Carly Parsley to policy and procedure committee which currently has Cheryl Sullins, Jim Sumner, and Steve Hunt. The research committee consists of Creela Hamlin, Jacob Clemons, Dave Trinkka, and Eric Jawor.

Discussion on ACRE Ag Tech project utilizing technology of the farm (**ATTACHMENT H**).

**MOTION: Eric Jawor moved to decline the ACRE Ag Tech proposal with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

Discussion on USHBC meetings.

**MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to send Kevin Robson to the fall USHBC/NABC meetings in Boston with support from Eric Jawor; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.**

## **Public Comments**

Rex Schultz inquired about the policy to transition to a seat on the MBC board to which Kevin replied that they would have to be nominated by either the Hort Society or MBG. Rex suggested that now that the Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee has reorganized, they should be a vehicle through which nominations are submitted.

**The next meeting will be at 9:00 am on Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 at Southwest Michigan Research and Education Center located in Benton Harbor, MI.**

## **Adjournment**

**MOTION: Shelly Hartmann moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:11pm with support from Rob Bodtke; motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:11pm.

Respectfully submitted by Shelly Hartmann/jls

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. 01/15/20 MBC Meeting Agenda
- B. 12/09/2019 MBC Meeting Minutes
- C. Letter to USDA signed by industry leadership
- D. MBC Financials
- E. MBC 2020 Budget
- F. MBC Support Letters
- G. Research Proposals (RFPs)
- H. ACRE Ag Tech Proposal