

MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

Farm Bureau Center
7373 W. Saginaw Hwy, Lansing, MI 48917

MEETING MINUTES

October 27, 2020

PRESENT:

Kevin Robson, Executive Director, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Creela Hamlin, Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Shelly Hartmann, Secretary, Michigan Blueberry Commission (virtually)
Jennifer Spears, True Blue Farms, LLC (virtually)
Cheryl Sullins, Treasurer, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Rex Schultz, President, Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee (virtually)
Eric Jawor, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Dennis Vander Kooi, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Rufus Isaacs, Michigan State University Extension
Mark Longstroth, Michigan State University Extension
Dave Reenders, Crossroads Blueberry Farm
Timothy Miles, Michigan State University Extension
John Wise, Michigan State University Extension
Heather Throne, MDARD
Dru Montri, MSU CANR
Jim Kells, MSU CANR
Ana Heck
Don Simon, Farm Bureau Insurance
Scott Piggott, Michigan Farm Bureau
Andy Kok, Michigan Farm Bureau
Heather Thalison, Farm Bureau Insurance

ABSENT:

None

Welcome and introduction from Don Simon, Farm Bureau Insurance. Don thanked the Michigan Blueberry Commission for being Michigan Farm Bureau regular members and for the work they are doing on behalf of blueberry growers

Call to Order

Chairman Creela Hamlin called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm, performed a roll call, and verified the presence of a quorum.

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to appoint Heather Thalison as secretary of the October 27, 2020 meeting, with support from Rob Bodtke; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.

Adoption of Agenda:

The Commission reviewed the proposed agenda (**ATTACHMENT A**).

MOTION: Carly Parsley moved to adopt the agenda as is with support from Cheryl Sullins; motion carried unanimously.

Chair's report:

Creela Hamlin reflected on the past season, discussed the spring freeze Mother's Day weekend and feels the season far exceeded her expectations. She is proud and happy to be a Michigan farmer and the ability to stay on top of regulations.

Treasurer's Report:

Cheryl Sullins gave an update on the financials and announced that we are now on QuickBooks (**ATTACHMENT B**). There is not a balance sheet yet because she is currently working on cleaning up some accounts and hoping to have the balance sheet looking good for the beginning of next year. Cheryl mentioned that we received several assessments late and there were a couple very late requests for reimbursements. Kevin contacted three growers regarding payments, and we have received two out of three payments. Kevin is going to follow up with the remaining grower whose payment is outstanding and mentioned that most of the time it is an oversight.

Current balances are \$31,936.38 in our checking account. \$114,111.09 in the savings/money market account where we earn interest. An extension was filed for the \$70,000.00 multi-year grant. MDARD approved the extension due to the inability to get the work done in 2020. All bills have been paid.

Carly asked if the researchers review the grant allotment. All researchers report back in December on what they were able to do, what they learned from the research, and suggestions on what growers should do.

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

Dr. Rufus Isaacs Update- TNRC, GREEN

Dr. Rufus Isaacs reported that research stations and labs have been able to remain open with restrictions. He provided an update on TNRC, and project GREEN (**ATTACHMENT C**).

Creela Hamlin asked for discussion from the commission regarding the plot fees. Rob reported that he is in favor of the fee but he wasn't sure that it would be enough, wondering if we should budget \$200-\$300.00 per acre.

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to approve the \$3,447.00 maintenance fee for 2020 to maintain the planting at TNRC and next year increase to \$7,447.00 with support from Rob Bodtke; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Ana Heck, Michigan Pollinator Stewardship Program

Ana Heck provided an update from Michigan Pollinator Stewardship Program and gave a presentation regarding the Michigan Managed Pollinator Protection Plan and the key recommendations for protection investment in pollination, see slides (**ATTACHEMENT D**). Ana asked the Commission to review the Blueberry Pollinators Stewardship Guide by Monday, November 9, 2020, send feedback to her email.

Secretary's Report

Kevin Robson reported on behalf of Shelly, as she was having technical issues. Kevin reported that the third notice was sent out this week, which is the final notice for First Handlers to get their assessments sent in. The grower reports are ready to be sent out via Farm Bureau's mailing service and need approval for the expense.

MOTION: Cheryl Sullins moved to mail out the grower reports and pay the FB Printshop \$611.50 plus taxes to facilitate the mailing with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

USHBC/NABC's final crop numbers have not been published yet. The virtual fall meetings went well with many online attendees, 4 keynote speakers, and 20th anniversary awardees. Rob mentioned that these meetings are now available online if anyone missed them.

For 2019, collected on approximately 79,729,573 pounds - half fresh, half process. Collected a total of \$239,199.55.

Meeting Minutes Approval

The Commission reviewed the minutes from May 27, 2020 (**ATTACHMENT E**).

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to approve the May 27, 2020 meeting minutes as written with support from Rob Bodtke; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.

BREAK: 2:15PM

RECONVENED: 2:30PM

Executive Director's Review with MFB Leadership

Creela Hamlin reviewed the letter she sent to Michigan Farm Bureau Leadership which reflects the feelings of the Blueberry Commission. They also reviewed the Executive Director Service relationship agreement and they are planning to keep it the same as the previous year. Scott Piggott mentioned that he appreciates the relationship between the Michigan Blueberry Commission and Michigan Farm Bureau. The executive director service agreement runs from November 9, 2020 to November 8, 2021, unless it is extended in writing.

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to continue current services agreement with Kevin Robson and Michigan Farm Bureau, as written with support from Rob Bodtke; motion carried by unanimous verbal consent.

FOIA and Open Meetings Act Policy Creation for 2020

MOTION: Rob Bodtke moved that we accept the FOIA and Open Meetings Act Policy as written with support from Cheryl Sullins; motion carried by unanimous consent.

Kevin Robson will send FOIA and Open Meetings Act Policy to Shelly Hartmann for filing.

USTR Section 201 Investigation update on Blueberries

The Commission reviewed the Update on USTR 201 Investigation letter (**ATTACHMENT F**). Rex, who is the President of the Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee (MBBAC) has been leading MI Blueberry Advisory Committee has joined other states to form American Blueberry Growers Alliance. Committee meets often and will be reviewing the injury and harm that imports have caused the USA Blueberry Industry/growers.

2020 Research Priorities

Carlos Garcia-Salazar, Rufus Isaacs, Mark Longstroth, and Timothy Miles put together a 2019 IPM-SWD Impact Evaluation (**ATTACHMENT G**), which was reviewed by the Commission. The research sub-committee is going to meet and discuss the research priorities and will bring suggested changes to the Spring 2021 meeting.

MOTION: Cheryl moved to hold to previous timeline for research projects. Cheryl made an amendment to include funding of two-three projects at \$20,000.00 each with support from Rob Bodtke; motion carried by unanimous consent.

MDARD Update

Heather Throne provided an update from MDARD Rural development grant applications are due November 19, 2020. Legislation allows to meet virtually through December 3, 2020.

MSU Update

Ronald Bates gave an update on MSU. He relayed that they have been able to continue working throughout the pandemic. MSU is encouraging people to operate remotely as much as they can, and they have limited capability to meet in person with approval. Hoping to do some in-person, outside events in Spring 2021. From a research standpoint, MSU had a very busy and successful summer and fall.

Commission is concerned about filling Mark Longstroth's position as well as the Horticulture position at MSU and would like to see different options for helping to fill those positions. Topic to be discussed again at the December 7, 2020 meeting.

Executive Director Update

Kevin Robson discussed the importance of the Commission to meet with MFB Executive Leadership in case there ever was an issue with the Executive Director of the Michigan Blueberry Commission. Kevin included a copy of our insurance policy (**ATTACHMENT H**). Kevin thanked the Michigan Blueberry Commission for their time and dedication. Kevin is going to work on putting together the Request for Proposals.

MOTION: Dennis Vander Kooi moved to keep the next meeting in-person, with the option for remote capabilities at 9:00am on Monday, December 7, 2020 at the Amway Grand Plaza, with support from Carly Parsley; motion carried unanimously.

Dennis Vander Kooi asked Kevin Robson to put together a synopsis of how their money is being used and leveraged through grants in the last three years.

Commission appointments for 2021 will be discussed at the December meeting. Dennis Vander Kooi is the only commissioner up for 2021 reappointment, paperwork is due by the end of November.

Public Comments

Rob Bodtke shared that the Florida Blueberry Grower Association is having open courses available to everyone, which are available for registration online, Blueberryevents.org.

Adjournment

MOTION: Rob Bodtke moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:53pm with support from Dennis Vander Kooi; motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:53pm.

Respectfully submitted by Heather Thalison

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. 10/27/2020 MBC Meeting Agenda**
- B. MBC Financials**
- C. TNRC and project GREEN Presentation**
- D. Michigan Pollinator Stewardship Program**
- E. 5/27/2020 MBC Meeting Minutes**
- F. USTR 201 Investigation letter Support letter for virus testing**
- G. 2019 IPM-SWD Impact Evaluation**
- H. MI Blueberry Commission Insurance Policy**