

## **BOD MEETING MINUTES**

### **Zoom Conference Online**

**December 13, 2021**

**Board Members present:** Arnie Piper; Mark Isselhardt; Emma Marvin; Dave Mance; Ed Smith; Donna Young; Jenna Baird; Moe Rheame; Reid Richardson; Ted Young

**Staff present:** Allison Hope; Cory Ayotte

**Guests:** Winton Pitcoff

#### **Winton Pitcoff, NAMSC:**

Winton Pitcoff is the new Executive Director for NAMSC. He also runs the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association, which he has done for 12 years. Winton noted that Massachusetts attended this year's Big E. He said 40% of attendees were wearing masks. He provided some background on NAMSC. Prior to him taking over, Mike Gerald had been running the council for 20 some years. He turned it from a volunteer-based council into a significant council. The council went through a strategic hiring process that led to Winton's hiring. They have committed to him working for them for two years. Winton explained that any member association can have a seat on their board, just as long as they pay dues. NAMSC publishes a quarterly newsletter. Winton has focused on adding a lot of beginner "how to" topics to the newsletter. A lot of small producers have asked for more hands-on topics in the newsletters. NAMSC's education dues go to places like the Proctor Maple Research Center. Members associations can apply for up to \$5,000 dollars for their projects. NAMSC has also done several projects thanks to an Acer grant. One of the bigger projects was creating [www.mapleresearch.org](http://www.mapleresearch.org). Finally, with Proctor Maple Research Centers help, they are working on a new Maple Syrup Producers Guide, which should be available in the spring. Winton ended by saying that NAMSC has 17 members from various states and provinces, however, there is a big Vermont sized hole. Vermont was once a member. Vermont still supports the research funds. Winton wants to start up the conversation again about Vermont rejoining.

Emma Marvin shared that long ongoing concerns that VMSMA had were regarding the transparency about the spending of funds. VMSMA wants to make sure what we give is well spent. When VMSMA left, it was due to lack of transparency. Winton said they started publishing a budget and reports because they've taken on a mire of projects. Now there is a transparent budget, which he is happy to share with the VMSMA board. Winton said that dues have not gone up in many years and they won't go up anytime soon. Currently, it is \$4 per member and Digest subscriptions are also \$4 per member.

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

Allison gave a quick overview for the Treasurer's Report. Currently, VMSMA is doing better than budget even without income from the Big E. The cost of inventory is a little higher as we are ordering a lot more items. Allison said it might be time to raise item prices. With the new proposed budget, Allison wanted to note that Cory and herself will be working 30 hours/week. Also, for 2022, VMSMA is creating a new hobby/small 1-99 tap count member category. Vermont Evaporator is donating a year of membership for their customers. The total income budget that you see is starting to look more like you remember FY19. VMSMA has some grant revenue coming in via our Specialty Crop grant. Cory and I are thinking about changes with the warehouse. A lot of members complain about the shipping costs from the warehouse. Going down the budget, Allison said that Advanced Web Listings have been doing well this year. The Printing and Distribution line is for maple subscriptions. Members pay \$28 to us and we pay \$25 to Maple News. A bulk of VMSMA's expenses is wages. Now that Cory and Allison are at 30hours/week, that has brought down expenses. Looking at the advertising line, more money is being put towards Maple Open House Weekend and less to The Maple 100. We have switched advertising from PBS to VPR. VPR has a larger reach than PBS. Under licenses and fees, VMSMA pays a 12% commission to the state for Big E sales. Most of the meals and entertainment goes towards catering for the annual meeting. Printing and publication is for our quarterly printed newsletter. The contractor line is associated with the Big E and the stipends for the booth volunteers. Professional fees are related to sugarhouse certifiers. Accounting line is for the warehouse and Pace and Hawley. Professional fees are mostly for our graphic designer Great Big Graphics. The royalties line is for NAMSC research fund and the royalties received from Artisan and Hillside. The travel line is mostly for hotels for the Big E. The internet line is for Wi-Fi for Allison and Cory. The mileage line is mostly used on Allison and Cory's bank runs and Cory's photo project. Currently, we have a \$36,000 profit for the year, more than we actually realized in FY18 and FY19. We've become tighter with our spending. Donna Young asked when we pay dues to IMSI? If we pay dues to NAMSC, what category dues do we pay? IMSI is based on members who were not friends of maple. Those are non-voting members. If we decided to become members of NAMSC, we would do something similar. 1-99 tap count wouldn't count either. They are non-voting members based on by-laws.

Because there weren't enough members on the call there wasn't a quorum to vote on the budget. A vote will happen at the next BOD meeting.

### **Committee Updates:**

Since the BOD's last meeting in October, Emma said that all committees have had at least one meeting if not more. A tremendous amount of work is happening at the committee level. The Membership committee has had a lot of conversations with members. The Big E committee is talking about how to get more volunteers. The Marketing committee is fleshing out a new program (passport program). The Packaging committee is about to order jugs from Hillside that will be delivered to Peter Purinton for labeling. Lead time for containers is 6-8 weeks and 4-5 weeks for labels which is better than what Hillside can offer when they label. This is a new process for VMSMA and a lot will be learned after the first truck load. Dealers can't reserve a whole truck load, and they must put down a 25% down payment for their portion of the truck load. Arnie Piper asked if VMSMA staff will do the admin work? Allison will invoice dealers for

the down payments and then we'll move our way through the process. A trailer load will cost VMSMA approximately \$33,000.

**Review of Elections:**

Review of policy. As each county meeting happens, people need to know expectations. The last update was in September of 2020. Most counties will do a vote at their annual meeting. VMSMA will help counties if need be.

**UVM Extension Notes:**

Mark Isselhardt is co-chairing a committee that is working with NASS. Their goal is to try to increase participation and accuracy. Mark is working on IMSI grading schools. There is a lot of demand for quality education. Grading school was originally scheduled to be two days before it was canceled because of COVID. Now, he is trying to modify the program to get more people in it.