



# VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

189 VERMONT ROUTE 15, JERICHO, VT 05465  
PHONE: 802-858-9444  
WWW.VERMONTMAPLE.ORG

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Three Stallion Inn, Randolph, VT

September 1, 2016

**PRESENT:** Sam Cutting, Pam Green, Arnold Coombs, Mike Emerson, Rick Kobik, Jack Dix, Rick Marsh, Arnie Piper, Mark Isselhardt, Paul Palmer, Mark Bigelow, Donna Young, Don Bourdon, Kerry Sedutto, Emma Marvin, James Buck, Peter Purinton, Gary Gaudette, Dave Folino, Roger Brown

**Staff Present:** Matt Gordon, Amanda Voyer

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am by Board Chair, Pam Green.

**Minutes:** Don Bourdon moved that the minutes for the May, 2016 meeting be approved, Sam Cutting seconded.

**Financial Report:** Matt Gordon reported Total Assets of \$180,566.57 in checking and savings, Total Liabilities and Equity of \$241,948.23

**Logo Design/Branding Report:** There is a group of folks from IMSI working on a standard for the nutrition facts label to propose to the FDA. Emma also drafted a letter proposing that maple is not an “added sugar” until it is added to something and therefore would confuse consumers. Matt proposed that we go with the current label and address the new nutritional labels and any changes that need to be made when that becomes the new standard – likely not to happen within the next 2 years. We will go back to Select Design with that adjustment when the time comes.

Select Design needs 2 weeks of design time to send artwork to Sugar Hill, and Sugar Hill will need 2 weeks to get it in their system.

VMSA should draft a letter to dealers on best case scenario with when new jugs will be available.

Mike Emerson made a motion to approve the final jug label design and move forward. Arnold Coombs seconded. Motion passed.

**Follow-up of 2016 Strategic Planning Meeting:** Pam Green reported there was a presentation from prior Executive Director of the Cranberry Grower’s Association on their successes and challenges with marketing orders. There were 4 breakout groups that tackled areas to focus marketing efforts on.

**Use of Technology in Marketing:** This group focused on what tools sugarmakers could use in addition to their grassroots marketing efforts in terms of technology, websites and social media marketing. VMSMA providing marketing workshops available as a leading priority and making sure VMSMA website provides tools that are useful to the needs of members.



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**Maple Open House Weekend:** This group focused on identifying other partnerships to pursue in expanding the offerings and draw of visitors to attend the weekend (hotels, B&B's, restaurants, breweries, distilleries). The group also discussed the most advantageous channels to direct marketing efforts in terms of dollars spent on print, radio, tv and social media advertising as well as marketing to the membership reasons for participating in the weekend highlighting the benefits received.

**Real Vs. Fake:** This group discussed that the primary challenge lies in limited funds and resources, so what how can we educate the public in a low-cost efficient way. They discussed creating "shelf talkers" that express what's real and what isn't. These could be used at local public events and at Field days and County Fairs.

**Marketing Orders:** Pam Green reported that this group would need to glean more information on marketing orders before any proposal or information piece would be available to present.

Further discussion from the group resulted in Emma Marvin making a motion by 2020, that 100% of all elementary schools use pure maple in their lunch programs with an annual report card of progress made that the Directors can take back to their counties. Rick Kobik seconded. Motion passed.

**Real vs. Fake:** Roger Brown reported that the FDA characterizes "Maple" as a flavor, not a characterizing ingredient. We need to work on a definition of the word, "maple" – a standard of identity that ties into syrup and sugar. Abby is doing work at Proctor that may support this effort.

Roger recommend a multi-channel approach, with consumers, through congressional delegation, and make sure the story of artificially flavored maple products is told in contrast to the story of maple.

The Agency of Ag has asked VT Law school, and Roger Brown to work on the legal definition of the current FDA law. They propose we work towards defining the word "maple" and requirements on labeling and what percentage of maple should be in the product to be labeled as "maple" at the state level.

Don Bourdon made a motion to move forward with getting a bill before legislation. Arnie Piper seconded. Motion passed.

**Forest Management Plans:** There is a committee working on this, concentrating on guidelines that center around the Current Use Program to present to Forest and Parks, and eventually expand guidelines for members of VMSMA as an educational tool. The Committee needs to go through the guidelines with help from Abby. They are looking for ideas from the group.

**RO Water Discharge and Permeate Update:** Mark Isselhardt reported that as long as permeate isn't going into waters in the state or crossing property boundaries, there is not a concern. New York was successful in getting an exemption. In Pennsylvania, there is some permitting involved. Finding out who is going to take jurisdiction will be important. Wash water already has an exemption. Potentially dumping sap could create something that gets looked at in the future by the same entity.

**Mobile Sugarhouse Update:** Pam said pricing should be around \$25,000 with the hopes to get \$20,000. We do have a list of inventory. Most inventory should go with the sale of the sugarhouse as fully equipped. Decals would need to be removed because they are VMSMA trademarks. Physical condition



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of it is currently very good. We need to offer it first to the maple community before the general public and need to clearly communicate to membership our reason for the sale. Money from the sale will be used for more promotional tools.

Mike Emerson made a motion for county organizations to have 1st refusal, then membership, then general public. Dave Folino seconded. Motion passed.

**Annual Meeting:** Matt Gordon reported poor attendance in 2016. The meeting is generally the last week of January. Discussion was had on sending a survey as to what would be the best time of year. We could propose 3 dates in May and August and look into rolling locations for hosting. Does there need to be something in addition to the Annual Meeting taking place to use as a draw/hook to increase attendance?

There was a motion to amend the bylaws to allow the BOD to set the date for the annual meeting annually. Emma Marvin seconded. Motion passed.

**Other Business:** There should be a check box on the membership form for those electing not to share data info with NASS.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting will take place December 1<sup>st</sup> at the Three Stallion Inn in Randolph at 9am.

**Adjourn:** After a call for other business, Emma Marvin made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Sam Cutting. The meeting adjourned at 1:23pm.