



# VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

189 VERMONT ROUTE 15, JERICHO, VT 05465

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## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

**Three Stallion Inn, Randolph, VT**

**December 1, 2016**

**PRESENT:** Pam Green, Arnold Coombs, Mike Emerson, Rick Kobik, Jack Dix, Arnie Piper, Mark Bigelow, Donna Young, Don Bourdon, Kerry Sedutto, Emma Marvin, James Buck, Gary Gaudette, Dave Folino, Megan Davis, Jason Gagne,

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

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 am by Board Chair, Pam Green.

**Minutes:** Rick Kobik moved that the minutes for the September, 2016 meeting be approved, Mike Emerson seconded. Motion approved.

**Financial Report:** Matt Gordon presented the report highlighting line items comparing 2015 to 2016. The meeting in January will have a budget for 2017.

**Bylaw Amendment:** Don Bourdon and the Governance Committee worked on language for amending the bylaws to give us flexibility for the date of the annual meeting. They proposed we delete the current language, and add a revision that would replace it giving the board discretion over the timing and location for the annual meeting. To effectuate the change a 10-day notice needs to be given to membership for a vote.

Mike Emerson made a motion to accept amendment as written. Emma Marvin seconded. Motion passed.

There was further discussion whether to convene for a special meeting or keep the January meeting for this year. A group consensus was reached on notifying the membership of a special meeting to be held at the Addison County Meeting on January 14<sup>th</sup>. The warning will go out with the absentee ballots to be mailed with the 2017 membership renewal letters. The notice will explain that the meeting is a formality with the vote captured mainly through absentee ballot. Pam can facilitate the special meeting. Mailed in ballots need to be received by January 13<sup>th</sup>.

**FDA Labeling Update:** Emma Marvin reported that 2 weeks ago Dave Chapeskie from IMSI, reached out to an FDA contact and essentially there is no update. It may be that the change never is made and it could be the middle of December before we have any more information and whether we need to be persistent with staying on top of any labeling changes. Numerous states are participating (it's a federal issue not just Vermont). Pam Green acknowledged appreciation for all the hard work Emma has put into this as the lead.



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Pam also mentioned that there may be issues down the pipeline for labeling and storage of maple specialty products and maple cream especially for those retailing at farmer's markets and events when the product is temporarily not being refrigerated as stated it should be on the packaging. Emma suggested we ask Cornell about storage with maple specialty products included cream.

**2016 International Conference Update:** Matt Gordon reported it was a successful event from an attendee perspective. There were 400 attendees throughout the 4 days. The Calcutta raised over \$10,000 for the NAMSC research fund - almost double what had been raised at past conferences.

Pam Green expressed gratitude for the 17 volunteers on the main committee and 30 volunteers at the event and for all the sponsors, with special thanks to Leader for their padfolio donations, CDL for their French translations, and Addison County Sugarmakers for their generous sponsorship of the off-site event as well as kicking in an additional \$3,000 above what they had already committed. Numbers are not fully in, but it appears we may be \$2,000 short on overall expenses over revenue generated from registration and sponsorship.

**Big E update:** Matt Gordon reported, while not a record year, it was a good year with \$202,000 and with long time manager Beanie Masterson retired, he acknowledged appreciation for Mike Christian stepping up into his role as co-manager bringing 10-years of experience at the Big E to the role. Gratitude was also expressed for the 4 board members, Arnie Piper, Donna Young, Jack Dix and James Buck for taking the time to volunteer at the Big E, each of them for multiple days.

Matt decided to purchase new registers, ipads, and chip readers for use in the booth and reported that was tremendously helpful. Square can also give complete data info live. He reported that a \$30,000 check was made to VMSMA from profits at the Big E. VMSMA will be looking for a new canning arrangement.

**Logo Design/Branding Report:** Matt Gordon reported the logo proof has been approved as of November 18<sup>th</sup>. The final quart size jug proof was available and presented at the meeting. The hope is that Sugarhill will start shipping around the new year and at that time, the silk screen jug will stop being made.

Discussion was held on the need for a more active container committee in policing the dealers especially with the new jugs. There was discussion on having notification sent to dealers on abiding by the contract they've signed as a dealer.

Matt is working with Select Design to have something to present at the January conferences. The seal will also be useful for those with private label jugs. It will be available as both a digital file and a sticker to apply. This may also be used for new signage to replace the old Maple Sold Here signs.

**Status of VMSMA and NAMSC:** Matt Gordon reported in 2015 NAMSC raised the dues, they doubled it from \$2 to \$4 per voting member, roughly \$1,700 to \$3,400. We elected to pay dues in 2015 at the old rate, and NAMSC didn't say anything. We tried to do the same thing this year, and they applied it to our



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missing 2015 balance. Matt has sat on the one annual meeting twice now, has sat on a committee or two, and has heard nothing, struggling with seeing the benefit in belonging. Ontario has pulled out. NAMSC did not contribute money to the 2016 International conference we held. NAMSC and IMSI have a lot of overlap.

Mike Emmerson made a motion we suspend payment of membership dues until we have an explanation for the increase in dues, how it is spent and how it serves us. Jack Dix seconded the motion. Motion passed. We would still receive the Digest and still donate to the research fund. Matt will deliver the news to NAMSC.

**Old Business:** A notice has been drafted for sale of the mobile sugarhouse. Pam Green proposes we put it in the membership mailer for sale at \$28,000. The executive committee will make the final decision on the sale, with the option of asking the rest of the board to weigh in with any questions. Money from the sale will be earmarked for a tangible marketing project. The annual county meetings can propose ideas for how that money is spent.

The Maple Contest will still happen at the Farm Show. Matt Gordon has committed to being in charge of publicizing the contest, UVM Extension will work on coordinating drop-off areas around the state, and we'll work on judging and the display. The VMSMA booth at the Farm Show will need volunteers as Pam Green expressed it is not a good use of Matt Gordon's time to spend 3 days manning the booth when he could otherwise be working on more important projects. The dates are January 31 – Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>. Arnie Piper will work Wednesday, Donna Young will cover Thursday, and Megan Davis can help every day until 2 pm. Sampling should be available of maple syrup using some of the leftover maple from the Big E. There should also be consumer guides, a nutrition poster, information on real vs. fake and small spoons and squeeze bottles for sampling.

**New Business:** Matt Gordon reported that there is an ALB Event on December 13<sup>th</sup> put on by the Forest & Parks in support of the invasive pest program to thank the communities in Massachusetts for what they had done in the quarantine of Asian longhorn beetles. Pam Green reported they cut down hundreds of thousands of trees, an enormous sacrifice to prevent the spread. Matt said we are donating maple syrup to the breakfast and he will be attending. Forest and Parks will be sending a delegation down as well. They're hoping that the press from this event will put an understanding out to the general public impressing upon how big a deal this is.

Emma Marvin reported a representative from the Agency of Ag and Abby Nelson will be holding a meeting directly following the BOD meeting to discuss connecting maple to schools throughout Vermont and what a plan might look like. Arnie Piper and Emma will be leading and invited other members of the board to stay and participate.

Maple Open House Weekend for 2017 will be March 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. We received \$5,000 in funds from VDTM that will need to be spent on out of state marketing of the event. The Maple Conferences dates are January 14<sup>th</sup> in Middlebury at the high school, January 21<sup>st</sup> in Brattleboro at the SIT Graduate Institute and January 28<sup>th</sup> in Morrisville at People's Academy.



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Emma Marvin reported that VT Maple is in a space station. Gary Gaudette asked for support for syrup for the troops for an upcoming military deployment. The board discussed using leftover syrup from The Big E and to not exceed current inventory, using pints. Mike Emmerson made a motion to support the troops with syrup once Gary provides all the details needed with doing so, Arnold Coombs seconded. Motion passed.

**Next Meeting:** January 31<sup>st</sup> at the Farm Show, Champlain Valley Expo, Essex Junction at 9am.

Motion to adjourn at 12:24pm by Don Bourdon, seconded by Emma Marvin. Motion passed.