**Washington Asparagus Commission**

Meeting minutes – January 15, 2019

Benton County PUD, Prosser

Chair Gary Larsen called the meeting to order at 1:47 pm.

**Introduction**

Commissioners: Gary Larsen, Gary Johnson, Norm Inaba, Jon Nishi, Steve Thomas, Bryan Lynch and Rebecca Weber

Administrative staff: Alan Schreiber, Zuly Carrillo and Liesl Zappler

Guests: Zack Miller- Gourmet, Travis Nelson, Scott Thomas, Scott Middleton, Alec Bern, Jim Middleton,

**Election – Officers**

Chair Gary asked for nominations for positions for Treasurer, Chair and Vice Chair.

Chair Gary asked for a motion re-approve the nominations of officers- Bryan as Treasurer, Norm as Vice Chair and Gary as Chair.

*Norm made the motion to approve nominating the current slate of officers. Jon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously*

Chair Gary asked for nominations to fill the position vacated by Jeff Muse in District 2.

*.*

*Norm nominated Zack Miller for the position. Bryan seconded. The motion passed unanimously*

**Approval of Minutes**

Rebecca noted clarifications in the October meeting minutes.

*Steve made a motion to approve the minutes with the changes made by Rebecca. Zack seconded the motion.* *The motion passed unanimously*

**Financial**

**Annual Report**

Alan reviewed the 2018 budget and expenditures. Part of the reason money was left over for local marketing was due to donations. There is Specialty Crop Block Grant money for marketing with Evado. There was $210,082 in assessments and increased funds from dividends. Alan estimated 24,0000,000 pounds of asparagus for 2019. Alan reviewed the checks that were cut since the last meeting. This included travel costs shared with IR-4, meeting meals and administrative fees.

*Bryan made a motion to approve the budget as read. Steve seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

**Budget Review and Adjustment**

There was an independent review of the accounting. ADG’s Bookkeeper, Zuly Carrillo, explained the report which included information on the WAC CDs. The Commission had moved them to accounts with higher interest. Gary Johnson asked about what to do with the maturing CDs. The Commission plans to roll them over. Rebecca asked about the fourth bullet regarding the chart of accounts set-up, which is in Quick Books. Norm asked about the 2nd paragraph regarding financial disclosures. Alan explained that for the accountant to sign off on a full budget, they would have to do a full financial review, and this was just an overall review of the books.

Alan reviewed the 2019 proposed budget. This was discussed at the last meeting. The research budget was reduced from an earlier version. The Committees will meet to review the proposals and provide their input. Local Marketing was increased to purchase more asparagus for outreach efforts. Money was taken from Trade and Legislation and placed in other budgets. Special Projects had almost $17,000. $10,000 could be moved to the Reserve fund, as was done last year. The total available to spend is $252,996. Money for Cascade Gov’t Affairs could come from Contingency or other funds. There was discussion on a trip to Arizona to see the mechanized harvester. Alan explained that the money from the growers should benefit them, but if the market is bad and assessments go down, there is a risk of not being able to fulfill programs. This is why putting money in a reserve fund is recommended. There is also $110, 000 in the Board Designated Reserve, which is in the CDs. Chair Gary suggested putting $5,000 in the Contingency fund. Rebecca appreciated that the budget had been approved by the State of Washington.

**Committee Reports:**

**Trade/Legislative**

Alan reviewed the annual contract with Cascade Government Affairs, which tracks relevant agricultural and labor issues at the state level and provides a weekly report. The Commission asked to keep the contract at $12,000 instead of the $14,000 that had been requested. The money in the contingency fund can be moved at the direction of the chair. If there was a pressing issue, the legislative funding could be increased. The overtime exemption could be an issue. Bryan asked about WA Growers League. Alan said that other commodities might not be as impacted as asparagus, as labor is more of an issue.

**Market Education**

**Arizona trip**- Alan will find out where the machine is and when they’re harvesting and go from there on planning a trip.

**Marketing Plan**- the Committee reported their feedback to Evado and are happy with the marketing plan. There is $40,000 from the Commission and $40,000 from the Specialty Crop Block Grant in funding. There was a question as to how the funds are allocated. Alan will ask Evado to estimate the levels of effort by market. There will be more effort into CA this year. The marketing is targeted toward Seattle, Portland, Spokane, Boise and San Francisco. Less effort will be put toward Boise this year, and more toward San Francisco.

**Asparagus Festival**- Scott Middleton gave an overview on 2019. They bought 2 new trailers for the field tours as last year’s tour was in an overflow situation and people were turned away. Last year there were 1,200 visitors and this year they estimate there could be 2,000 attendees. They plan to add more food vendors, more parking and an ambulance. There will also be an educational asparagus booth. The Chamber of Commerce, TV news, radio ads and social marketing were the main ways of outreach. The Commission is a sponsor, is providing the educational booth, T-shirts, asparagus for the food vendors, paying for Back 40 BBQ and helping to set up.

**Research**- Alan reviewed the proposed trials which included control of aphids, weeds and disease, as well as variety trials and irrigation. There will also be a Field Day. Alan will submit for a Section 18 for Warrior for control of European asparagus aphid. There was discussion as to the merits of the $5,000 irrigation trial and it was decided not to include this project.

**Approval of Contracts**

**ADG (Schreiber) – administrative contract-** the contract that was signed last year is a 3 year contract, with an annual assessment. The Commission was asked if they wanted to discuss ADG without Alan present, but they declined.

*Norm made a motion to approve the contract with Evado. Bryan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

*Norm made a motion to approve Alan to negotiate the contract with Cascade Gov’t Affairs. Steve seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

*Gary Johnson moved to approve a contract with ADG to do research according to the final research proposal. Norm seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

**Adoption of Budget**

The $5,000 from Research budget went into the Board Designated Reserve.

*Jon made a motion to approve the budget. Zack seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (They approved version 4.)*

**Other Business**

Norm wanted to add that Los Hernandez restaurant in Union Gap has an asparagus festival in May. Norm also said John O’Reilly asked on behalf of the Enology Society if the Commission wanted to participate in the asparagus and wine tasting, as they have done in the past years. The Commission would like to continue this.

**Public Comment**

Travis asked about the Mexico trade tariff, which was unknown, but the consensus, based on other commodities, is that it will be the same.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:31 pm