**WASHINGTON ASPARAGUS COMMMISSION**

**Asparagus Commission Office**

**Sunnyside, WA 98944**

**July 18, 2018**

**Gary Larsen, Chair, Presiding**

Chair Gary Larsen calls the meeting to order at 11:16 am

**Introduction**

Present: Gary Larsen, Norm Inaba, Rebecca Weber, Jeff Muse, Gary Johnson, Jon Nishi, Jim Middleton, and Steve Thomas

Administrative staff present: Alan Schreiber, Jennifer Garcia

Guests present: Travis Meachem, Travis Nelsen,

**Approval of Minutes**

Rebecca made a change on the minutes, she added the date for the previous minutes on March.

Chair Gary Larsen asked for a motion to accept minutes.

*Jeff Muse made the motion to approve the minutes with the correction Rebecca made. Jon Nishi Seconded the Motion. The minutes are from March 28,2018.*

**Financial Report**

Alan goes over all the expenditures as of July 12, 2018. What funds have been spent and what there is left over.

**Assessments**

Assessments rules are that everyone is supposed to pay in 30 days by the 30th of the previous month. Not all assessments are in yet, and not all are due by this time. Alan stated all the sales and pounds are expected to be reported by the next meeting. At this time there is about 18 million pounds reported, by the end of all assessments reported Alan estimates there should be about 23 to 24 million pounds reported.

**Check Details**

Alan went over all the checks written since last commission meeting.

Chair asked for a motion to pass the financial report.

*Jeff made a motion to approve the financial report. Steve Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

**PMA**

The chair of director would want to find a candidate or two to attend the annual PMA. Alan believes they should send someone that has not attend the PMA before.

**Asparagus Festival**

Asparagus Festival was a huge success overall this year. There was about 1,000 tickets sold this year, a lot of people showed up and seemed to enjoy the festival. One of the things they did different this year was doing more advertisement on social media and it worked. Alan mentioned they would like more help from the asparagus industry to help with the festival. He believes the Commission should take this opportunity to give more education regarding asparagus.

**Research**

Norm is the Chair of the Research Committee that was formed the previous month of June by Gary. Brayan lynch, Jim, Travis, Zac Miller, and Jeff were present for that meeting.

On that meeting they went over topics that they thought it would be a good idea to present to the board and procced with research. Alan provided a history of the Commission funding research.

One of the discussions was about mechanized harvesters. The Committee wanted to know if the board would be interested on sending someone to see the Geiger Lund model that is going to be used in Arizona this next year. Travis mentioned he will be going to Arizona around February or March and could look at the machine. The Gary believes it would be a good idea to send someone down to Arizona and look at this machine. Alan is directed to line up one or two people to go down and look at the machine and the second person is coordinate with Travis.

Finding a replacement for Diuron. Alan mentioned there is a lot of issues on finding a replacement for post-harvest soil residual herbicide in this area. There is also interest in finding a means for foliar control of night shade.

The Committee also talked about asparagus replant issues, having a variety trail, and when would it be a good time to do the asparagus variety trial. During the Research Committee meeting someone mentioned they should do an asparagus variety trial in a replant situation and see how new varieties reacted. Alan is currently in the process of taking out 10 year old asparagus, he mentioned he is able to put in an asparagus trial right in top of the old asparagus planting. However, he is still soliciting ideas and input from more people on what they would to see done. When Alan puts together the proposal, it will include ideas of the Research Committee,

EPA is not allowing Warrior II to be registered until it goes through a comprehensive review of the whole class of insecticides (pyrethroids) so they currently have the registration on hold.

The Asparagus Commission has had sustain effort in the funding research including pest management research. Alan has been working with IR4 Project to get new pesticides registered as well as working with asparagus researchers in California and Michigan. Alan gave an update on all of the new pesticides that are coming for asparagus based on the states’ research program and the IR-4 Project.

**Filed day**

Date: August 29th 2018

**Evado**

Lauren called at 12:30 pm.

Lauren went over the marketing effort elaborating on the strategies they used to promote Washington fresh asparagus. They were able have articles placed in magazines such as Alaska Beyond (Alaska Air) with a readership of 2.2 million. They also established a chef outreach program where they had chefs cook asparagus at their restaurant. Blogger outreach is another strategy they used reach different social media influencers. A lot of bloggers use their social media platform and post beautiful photos and receipts. Lauren mention they reached out to bloggers who had large local followings on social media and provided information regarding asparagus. They offered gifts cards to bloggers to purchase Washington asparagus to cook and write about it. Overall they generated about 200,000 online and social media impressions across Washington, Portland, Coeur d’Alene, and Boise.

Chef outreach program. They were able to set up partnerships with produce distributers in each of the four target markets. They had the distributers take fresh asparagus to chefs and had them share their favorite recipe and photos and place Washington asparagus on their menu. They also encouraged them to make posts about the asparagus dishes on their social media. There was a lot of positive feedback.

San Francisco-they worked with a Californian distributor, Honey Bear Fruit Co. who sells to wholesalers in San Francisco. Lauren stated they created 40 pieces of point of sale material for Washington asparagus in their network of store network in Bay area. Honey Bear saw a steady sales growth in the volume of Washington asparagus being sold in San Francisco. She believes there is a lot of opportunity to continue to grow next year.

Metropolitan Market- there was a campaign that was created to run in stores across their 6 locations in King County. Evado facilitated a trip for the Metropolitan Market produce and marketing team to visit Inaba Produce and Allen Produce. It was very educational they were able to take photos of harvesting asparagus fields as well as packing. They were also able to create a short video from the trip, which will be used in 2019 marketing asparagus season. Metropolitan was able to sale about 65,000 pounds of asparagus this year, which is a 10% increase from last year.

Social Media- Lauren mentioned they focused on Washington, Portland, Boise, San Francisco, metro New York and Boston. They reached out to a lot of people, rough about 32 million impressions.

The plan for 2019 is to work on the same timeline as 2018 and continue to work on social media campaign, chef partnerships, and store partnerships such as Kroger and Safeway.

Alan ask about how impactful was the outreach effort in Boise? Lauren said there was a short window where they were only able to market before the Idaho asparagus season started. They couldn’t use the chef promotion there because they didn’t have a produce partner. However, of the marketing they did, they received good feedback.

Gary asked what their plan for Spokane is. Lauren said for Spokane they would really like to target a bigger brand like Kroger or Safeway and also do additional chef outreach.

Alan mentioned to Lauren that the Commission has a Marketing Committee and there is still two more years left of the Specialty Crop Block Grant. He does not know what the budget will be for the following year, they are committed for $30,000. They are probably going to have a marketing committee get together the goal is to have a final plan for Lauren by October. Alan said they will be in touch with Lauren regarding the plans for 2019.

Norm would like to know more about Portland. He didn’t get much input about what happen to Portland. Alan needs to arrange a Marketing Committee.

**Trade**

Nothing is going on regarding federal levels and there seems to be no issues at this moment.

There does not seem to be any state issues at this moment.

Jim Middleton would like more information on the influence of Mexico asparagus during out market window.

**Labor**

Alan mentioned that he was short labor in his packing shed. Jim mentioned that this happens every year when the cherry season comes along. Overall, the consensus was that labor was not an issue this year.

**End of Harvest Report**

Alan mentioned he does not have all the prices yet because not all assessments have been turned in.

**Grading Standards**

Gary stated the industry should look into our grading standards so they are similar to other production regions. He believes they should put together a committee to compare standards and see if they want to proceed with making changes..

Alan asked if there’s interested in pursuing this or at least examining grading standards and if so they would have to invite everyone that is involve with packing asparagus in Washington. It was decided to pursue this through the Marketing Committee and invite every handler to attend the meeting. He was instructed to put this on the agenda for the next quarterly board meeting.

**Changing the Marketing Order**

Alan mentioned they had talked about changing the marketing order for the past year. There was a review of the planned changes including things such as reducing from three Districts to two, expanding the reach of the Commission to cover the entire state, removing term limits, removing the requirement that all research be done at WSU and lowering the age for growers to serve on the board.

Alan stated there was the option to have expedited rule making and he was instructed to pursue that option.

Alan mentioned to the board that the WAC would be sponsoring $500 to the WSCPR with the 2018 crop tour as they had done every year since 1996. The funds will come out of operations.

**Other Businesses**

Rebecca just wanted to mention that the Director of Ag has been in Washington DC this week, with several different commodities.

Chair Gary asked for adjournment of the meeting.

*Norm made the motion to adjourn. Jeff second the motion. Meeting adjourned at 2:43 pm.*