

Washington Asparagus

Washington Asparagus Commission

January 14, 2021, 1:00 p.m.

Chair Gary Larsen presiding

Zoom Meeting

Minutes

Chair Gary Larsen called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm.

Introduction:

Commissioners: Chair Gary Larsen, Bill Middleton, Gary Johnson, Steve Thomas, Zach Miller, and Rebecca Weber

Administrative staff: Alan Schreiber, Wendy Harrison and Liesl Zappler

Guests: Norm Inaba, Jim Christopherson, Jim Middleton, Scott Thomas and Charlie Brown

Approval of Minutes

Alan asked for approval of the October 21, 2020 minutes. Rebecca noted several changes, and she will send additional wording.

Zach made the motion to approve the minutes as amended. Jon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Election – Officers

Nominations were made for Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer.

Gary Larsen made the motion to nominate himself as Chair, Zach Miller as Vice Chair and Bryan Lynch as Treasurer. Steve seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial

Annual Report

Alan reviewed the annual financial report and check detail. Wendy will discuss the monthly bank fees with Columbia Bank. Wendy will also balance the Contingency Fund. The budget needs to reflect the research grants that flow through the Commission to make it clearer to the Board. For upcoming Board meetings there will be a Profit and Loss (PNL) document as the primary financial report, as well as a supporting document.

Budget Review and Adjustment

There was a Specialty Crop Block Grant dealing with organic asparagus. The WSDA had difficulty with how the contract was administered and requested reimbursements for these funds. Alan suggested moving \$10,000 to the Reserve fund. Alan offered to take a \$5,000 reduction in the 2021 Administrative contract. There is another SCBG for marketing WA asparagus. Overall, the budget will be similar to last year.

DES Issues

Temporary administrative contract

Alan discussed the concerns with DES which stemmed from a series of letters regarding contracts sent by DES in 2018 to the wrong address. DES suspended the Commission's delegation of authority and since then WAC will need all expenditures to be approved by DES. The delegation of authority should be returned to the Commission by May. There is a temporary contract with Alan and the Administrative Service contract will need to be sent out to bid in April.

Committee Reports

Trade/Legislative

Alan testified this week to the International Trade Commission regarding the 201-tariff case, and the lawyers were very interested in the impact of exports on the asparagus industry. Alan will keep the Board updated on this.

Charlie Brown gave a legislative update including agriculture overtime and the removal of the exemption, carbon reduction legislation and transportation projects. Alan will provide information to the growers on the overtime rules.

Market Education

Marketing Plan

Alan shared a press release from Evado and discussed their 2021 marketing plan. Due to Covid, restaurant outreach was stopped and more efforts were put into retail outreach and social media marketing. This effort included grocery store partnerships and Kroeger will highlight Gourmet growers. Gary was concerned over additional costs and Liesl will follow up with Heather regarding this. Bill thanked Safeway for supporting WA growers.

The Promotions Committee voted to have Evado facilitate updating the WA asparagus logo and website. Sandy, Liesl and Gary will review the designs and make recommendations to the Board.

Asparagus Festival

Bill said that due to Covid they're unsure if they'll be able to hold the event. It's a lot of work for a short but popular event. The Middleton's appreciate the WAC support. The festival is in the budget and if it is allowed to under state guidelines the Commission will participate.

Research

2021 Field Research

Alan reviewed the asparagus research projects and the Research Committee review. Liesl will put the report on the WAC website. Alan hopes to have an asparagus field day this year.

Geiger Lund harvester

Alan reviewed the harvester and discussed its use for Spring 2021. It will be provided free of charge for the WAC to evaluate it. Alan will follow up with the owner on bringing it to Eastern WA.

Approval of Contracts

Gary Johnson made the motion to approve the contract for Alan Schreiber with ADG per the proposal for research, the contract with Cascade Government Affairs to provide government affairs services and the contract with Evado PR for marketing. Zach seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The HR committee has extended the ADG contract for Administrative Services through April. The RFP for Administrative Services needs to be created in February. If there are multiple proposals, they can review them or pull the RFP until after the main part of the asparagus season and extend the ADG contract through August. If there's only one proposal, they could approve it at the time. Norm agreed to stay on the HR Committee with Gary Larsen, Gary Johnson and Rebecca.

Steve moved to authorize the HR Committee to proceed with the RFP and contracting process for administrative services. Gary Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Budget

Alan reviewed the 2021 budget.

Zach made the motion to approve the budget as presented. Jon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:26 pm