



WASHINGTON ASPARAGUS COMMISSION
1:00 PM, MARCH 31, 2021
ZOOM CONFERENCE
CHAIR GARY LARSEN, PRESIDING
MINUTES

Chair Gary Larsen called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.

Introduction:

Commissioners: Chair Gary Larsen, Gary Johnson, Jon Nishi, Manny Imperial, Bryan Lynch and Rebecca Weber

Administrative staff: Alan Schreiber, Wendy Harrison and Liesl Zappler

Guests: Norm Inaba, Charlie Brown, Heather Jensvold & Lauren Fior - Evado, Lori Hayles, and Jim Middleton

Approval of Minutes

Alan asked for approval of the January 14, 2021 minutes. The nominations were reviewed for accuracy.

Gary Johnson made the motion to approve the minutes. Bryan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial

Financial Report

Alan reviewed the financial report and check detail. \$55,000 was approved for the 2021 Administrative services fee, which is a reduction of \$5,000.

Gary Johnson made the motion to approve the financial report. Bryan seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There were additional costs for the updates of the website and logo, which is about \$4,500. This can come out of the operating expenses.

Covid 19 Virus Situation

Liesl reviewed the current Covid requirements for farms and packing sheds. Alan mentioned that there are still masks available for growers from a grant last year, and he'll be sending communications out regarding this.

Committee Reports

Marketing/Education

Evado report

Heather gave an update on their efforts. They've partnered with Kroger for a 2 week ad, May 1st - 15th, on their shopping app for \$8,000, with the hope of reaching \$16,000 - \$40,000 in sales. This will cover all Fred Myer and QFC stores in WA and OR. The new logo will be in three ads in WA which will also feature grower profiles that may be used for in-store promotions in eastern WA. Safeway will run ads for Mother's Day and from May 9th to the 22nd. A social media ad will run for three weeks on Facebook and Instagram for WA, OR and the east coast. Rosauers in Spokane will have ads, promotions and recipe cards. The website should be ready next week. Gourmet is the provider for Kroeger. Evado will do outreach for April 21st as WA asparagus becomes available.

Local promotions

The Middleton's are negotiating with the Benton-Franklin Health Dept. over how and whether to have the Asparagus Festival. They may wait to have the festival until June. The WAC will participate if it follows state guidelines. There is no Asparagus-Beef Day at the Capital this year.

Research

Field research plan for 2021

Alan gave an overview of the fertility and variety trials and the Geiger Lund harvester. They hope to have the harvester available to other growers if it's successful in our initial trials.

Trade/Legislative

Federal Issues/National Asparagus Council

The CA Commission was closed, and it was part of the formation of the National Asparagus Council with WA and MI. Now WA and MI will run it. The Executive Director of WA is the Chair, the Executive Director of MI is the Vice- Chair, the Chair of WA is the Treasurer, and the Chair of MI is the Secretary. John Bakker of MI is retiring at the end of June.

The International Trade Commission conducted a 201 investigation to see if the blueberry industry was suffering negative impacts from imports but there was a finding of no impact. Alan and John Bakker had been hopeful for a similar case for asparagus if there was a finding for the domestic blueberry industry.

State Issues

Report on 2021 State Legislative

Charlie Brown gave an overview on the overtime legislation. He encouraged farm workers to send their messages to the legislators. He recommended that growers document their use of overtime.

Report on Michigan/Mexican asparagus industries

Gary Larsen had spoken with Jim House and gave an update on Mexico and Peru asparagus industries. Mexico is finishing their season by the end of April. Peru will be increasing at the same time and will take the east coast markets. MI also ships to the east, leaving the rest to WA. Total volume in WA will be down due to acres taken out last year. A few growers in Caborca will try to harvest until the end of April, Baja will start mid- April.

Alan said that WA produced 19.5 million lbs. last year, and he thinks that was down 1-2 million pounds due to cold weather. With more normal weather, he thinks it could be up to 23 million lbs. with a lower price of \$.90 season long average. MI did 19.5 million last year, a lot was processed, and their season was also hurt by heavy frost. Assuming a normal weather year, they project 22-23 million lbs. this year.

Executive Director Search

Rebecca gave an update on the process. The HR Committee (Gary J, Gary L, Norm and Rebecca) met and got the RFP out. The current contract goes through April and they expect to have a new contract in place by then.

Commissioner presentation on situation in their district

Bryan hopes to harvest at the end of next week.

Norm had frost for three days in a row and is working ground now in preparation for harvest in a week or two.

Gary Larsen lost a lot of topsoil in the windstorm, is running water now and hoping to harvest next week.

Gary Johnson said it's pretty normal conditions and is hoping to harvest next week.

Alan hopes to cut by the 6th or 7th.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 2:57 pm