



Vermont Cheese Council

Executive Council Meeting via Telephone

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

11 am to 1 pm

Minutes

Present on telephone: Laini Fondiller, Eric Johnson, Andy Kehler, Linda Miller, Mark Fischer, Jeff Egan, Jody Farnham, Ellen Ogden. Joined at 12:30 pm - Christopher Wainhouse

Laini – described reason for her becoming president was to increase membership and to focus VCC. Agenda for this meeting to discuss:

- Budget
 - Newsletter
 - Brochure
 - Culinary map
 - Fund raising/Cheese events
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- Total Budget - \$33,000 which includes \$30,000 from Merck but does not include the \$17,000. No money received yet from Dairy Promotion. This will be coming in April, but can get this in designated increments. Andy will email revised budget to all. For ACS - \$2,000 to cover Friday breakfast. VBC will purchase \$400. Four cheesemakers will contribute \$1,000 each. We voted at annual meeting to fund \$1,500. Thus we have to contribute an additional \$100 in order to fully fund breakfast. With this we will receive one ticket – potentially give to Allison Hooper.
 - Coordinator – budgeted for \$18,250. Change this to \$250/day or \$31.25/hour. Ellen plans to work ~2 days/week or \$500/week (\$2,000/month or \$24,000/year). The rationale is to put in more time and include Merck funding. The coordinator will need to write grants to make this a self-sustaining position. RBEG grant will fund from one to three years. Ellen asked for clarification from the Board of expectations. Jody asked if this is a position Ellen wants. She would appreciate more direction and a vote of confidence to know where we want her to go. Eric asked if she would like a more specific job description than the one presented at the annual meeting or a protocol. She stated that she would appreciate a conference call once a month as well as direction on the priority of the Board. Mark suggested that we adopt this level of funding. All on call agreed. Laini also asked that we bring on a lesser paid person to help with menial tasks such as mailings etc. All agreed. Ellen will just keep track of these hours and submit to Andy.

- Farm Bureau Expense – \$600 for bookkeeping service for paying bills and tax preparation etc. Rate has tripled to \$25/hour, and VCC had 46.5 billable hours last year. This did not include phone calls or postage.
- I STEPPED AWAY. FILL IN.
- Brochure - \$5,000. We have been working on this by committee (Christopher Wainhouse and Mark Fischer) and now the Board is revising. Mark suggested keeping current tri-fold format. Cost is \$2500 for 10,000 copies plus cost of Tim Newcomb for redesign. Laini would really like to move this forward. Let's look at what Jane and Tim did. She really would like to have the retailers listed on the brochure. In order to increase membership we need to have them on board as an associate member. Listing them would help entice them to become associate members. The trail map is used for going to farm, but should really show where patrons can buy the cheese. Jody offered to help make calls to Retailers. The list needs to be revised to include VT Grocers Association and independent grocers associations. Christopher stated that she would be willing to send request to her contacts. Ellen would like to include membership request as a self-mailer included in brochure. Will send the letter out asking retailers to become associate members with a follow up call. Timeline: We may not have this done until June. We must have this prepared by August festival.
- Membership letter. ACTION; Laini will write the letter, edited by others, stating that we are in the process of updating brochure and would they like to be included. Ellen will coordinate with Tim to get graphics. Ellen will work with Jody and Christopher to do mailing and follow up calls. The audience is all of Vermont cheese retailers. Starting place is those on the Draft brochure. Cheesemakers can add their own local stores. This compilation will be done by mid-March. Send lists to Ellen. Linda can convert Word documents to Excel spreadsheets. Linda will get membership list off web site (get document from Elyssa). Send final list to Ellen who will create mailing labels. Existing black and white membership form to be sent out to all others (38-40 Cheesemakers and ~50 Friends).
- Postage and Office Supplies - \$780/year.
- Newsletter - \$8,000 (includes Printing). Jane is willing to do future hard copy newsletter. Laini would like to produce two newsletters per year and use it to do a review on two cheese magazines, *Cheese Connoisseur and Culture*. Discussion on history of newsletter. Mark suggested doing a bimonthly eNewsletter produced by Ellen. Jane's hard copy could become Ellen's eNewsletter for that bimonthly period. Jane would be responsible for content, but could take items from the eNewsletter. Need to have continuity of design between the two. ACTION: Laini will coordinate timing of production of both newsletters with Jane and Ellen.
- Website - \$3,000.
- Tuition Remission VIAC - \$5,000. VCC members pay \$125/day for VIAC classes. Jamie Cherington (Conservation Fund) paid a portion and VCC paid rest of fee ~\$150. This year the total cost was \$7,000 for attendance at classes

(VIAC charged only \$5,000. VCC paid \$2,500. Jody will send \$2,500 that would have been paid by Conservation Fund). One individual went to nine classes. Mark suggested having a ceiling of up to \$500 per producer (4 days of classes). Discussed who would be responsible for noting when the ceiling had been reached. This upcoming year Jamie will not be able to pick up her portion of the tuition reimbursement. Ellen suggested having a coupon available for the cheesemakers to complete and include with VIAC registration. ACTION: The Board will discuss and get back to Jody on what we decide.

- Advertising - \$1,000. ACTION: Take this off budget.
- Seminars/Tastings, Dinner Events and Group Events. These are budget neutral for income and expense. Jeff stated that Vermont Fresh thought we were aggressive in projected income. Ellen sent some breakdown of contact to restaurants today. Discussed removing these line items. We do need to show some events because we had described this in our RBEG proposal. These events can be “friend raisers” and not fund raisers.
- Strolling of the Heifers - \$1,500.
- Cheese Festival - \$2,500 Bronze sponsorship (\$2,500 from VT Dept. of Ag) plus \$1,600 for Friday breakfast. Andy stated that VCC had given \$2,000 in January for Louise Calderwood to write Merck request grant which was supposed to be the VCC contribution. This seems to have been forgotten. ACTION: Andy will write a note to Allison Hooper to clarify this donation.

We exceeded our time limit and did not get to the other agenda items.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Simon Miller
Secretary