



Vermont Cheese Council

MINUTES ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, January 29, 2011

10 am to 3 pm

Cloudland Farm

Woodstock, Vermont

Present: 45 members and guests.

Mark Fischer opened the meeting by greeting those present and introducing the Executive Committee and Vermont Cheese Council (VCC) Coordinator Rachel Schaal.

Review of the year:

Our Regional Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) is in year two – Karen Lynch from USDA Rural Development spoke briefly and stated that this has been one of the most successful grants they have funded.

Two new grants funded for 2011

- We received a \$30,000 USDA Ag. Innovations Center (AIC) which will fund some of the coordinator's salary for work done on the Cheese Festival.
- We also received \$9,570 for an Educational Programming and Outreach grant which will allow us to sponsor workshops for retailers, chefs and cheesemakers to enhance communication with one large event and several smaller events. This grant was entitled *Let's Talk About Cheese* and the narrative was written by Christopher Coutant of Provisions International with budget development and assistance by Rachael. The money will help fund the actual event and will occur between now and September. Mark asked for volunteers to work on a committee to determine what workshops to sponsor. Laini Fondillier (Lazy Lady), Michael Lee (Twig Farm), Vince Razionale (Jasper Hill) and Allison Hooper (Vermont Butter and Cheese) volunteered and were invited to the Executive Council meeting on Wednesday, February 16 at 1 pm at Provisions International in White River Jct. for further discussion.

Cheesemakers Festival (*to be noted from now on in these minutes as CF*) update

- This has proven to be a money maker. Mark described that it may seem that the VCC is sponsoring the CF, but the money all will come back to the VCC.
- Some changes are that there will be an increase for the number of attendees.
- VCC has taken a greater lead on setting up the 2011 festival

ACS Awards

- We recognize that the need for increased sales is not a motivator for small producers, but Mark asked for thoughts about what would stimulate small producers to submit entries.
- Based on a survey done last year, the VCC will continue to be a Bronze sponsor which includes sponsoring a breakfast.
- ACS is has an increased emphasis on food safety.

Website update

- Rachel is working much more directly with Elisa and eventually she may be able to edit the website itself as she is learning Dreamweaver.

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- Notes from our meetings are posted in the *Members Only* section.
- The password for the *Members Only* section is now: cleanmilk
- Thanks to everyone for updating their own information. Please note that often the retailer is using the VCC site to describe the cheese they sell.
- Please review the site regularly. We will be using the *Members Only* area to apply for VIAC tuition remission as well as the 1998 VCC *Code of Best Practices* and the *Food Safety Plans for the Artisanal Cheese Maker...Step by Step* guide in pdf format.

E-newsletter

- Rachel stated that she really needs input from the members to make the eNewsletter great.
- We discussed reducing the eNewsletter to every other month due to Rachel increasing activity with the cheese festival.

Hardcopy newsletter

- This represents ~19% of our annual budget
- The Executive Committee recommended that we only produce the hardcopy newsletter once annually in the late spring to be available for tourist season. There were no objections to this change. It was suggested that we increase the print volume to 5,000 and have them available at the CF. We send out 2,000 and have the rest available for the CF so the public can use it to sign up for the eNewsletter.
- The audience for the hard copy of the newsletter is retailers, restaurants, cheesemakers.

Workshops:

- In 2010 we held a cheese technology workshop with Marc Druart and a Sensory workshop with Montse Almena. Both were well attended.
- A HACCP workshop was held in October with Scott Donnelly. The attendees are now HACCP certified food safety officers. This was put out on with short notice as the grant funding was to expire. We would like to continue hosting more workshops on food safety. All present were encouraged to have a HACCP plan. Agency of Ag is able to review the plan and sign off on it. Audited every four months. This replaces the state inspection. The benefit is that the FDA only visits every five years if this plan is in place. The HACCP plan really relies on documentation rather than sampling. Rather than sampling the same area, one would sample various areas in the environment.
- VIAC scholarship program – continues to be strong. We paid for 52 days which was a record number of VCC members taking advantage of the VCC/VIAC relationship.

Treasurer's report - Sebastian von Trapp.

- Refer to: *A note from the Treasurer: 2010 in review*
- Refer to: *Vermont Cheese Council 2010 Actual and 2011 Budget*
- VCC purchased a *Dell* laptop and *Quicken* software so that we can communicate more easily with our bookkeeper
- We need to accurately communicate and exchange information with our grant funding sources.
- RBEG pays a great share of the coordinators' activities.
- There was discussion about why the funds for the CF were not included on this budget. As the VCC is a 501(c3), we discussed keeping them separate, however, the CF budget is available for members to review. The VCC treasurer has not been involved with those funds to date, but we do anticipate that will change in the near future.
- Eventually the CF funds could have a line item on the VCC budget.
- A long term strategy is that the CF will be funding the coordinator's position once the RBEG funds have been exhausted.
- Sebastian quickly reviewed each of the Income and Expense line items.

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- Discussion digressed to what to do with the VDPC funds we receive for Dairy Promotion from the Vermont Dept. of Ag. It was suggested that we investigate more funding for promotion.
- It was suggested that not all members need to be in lockstep with one another as the mission of the VCC is to facilitate the work of the cheesemaker members.
- **David Major made a motion to form a committee to be chaired by Vince Razionale to look into establishing marketing planning for the VCC. Seconded by Mark Fisher. All were in favor of the motion. Meri Spicer from Grafton Village, Mateo Kehler from Jasper Hill, Allison Hooper of Vermont Butter and Cheese as well as Jody Farnham volunteered.**
- There will be an article in the *New York Times* regarding the 60-day rule for selling raw milk cheeses. Food safety is at the heart of this. This will especially affect soft cheeses. Vermont is poised to set the food safety standards for the country.
- Jody Farnham stated that the VIAC tuition remissions were not included as a line item in the proposed budget. For 2010 the total was \$6,875. It was suggested that this sum needed to be added. As there is an increase in the cost of the VIAC workshops, this should be increased slightly.
- Mark Fischer suggested that we would like to be able to have someone visit every cheesehouse for technical assistance.
- **David Major made a motion to approve the proposed budget, but amended it to include an additional \$6,875 for the VIAC tuition remission line item discussed above. Peter Dixon then made an amendment to David Major's motion to decrease the budget by halving the hard copy newsletter line item as we will only be producing one print newsletter. All approved the amended budget of \$77,730.**

Elections Executive Committee

Nominations and Elections

Mark described the Executive Committee and reminded those present that all VCC members are members of the Board. Thus all present are eligible for election to the Executive Committee. Eric Johnson will be leaving the Executive Committee. Mark Fischer nominated Jeremy Stephenson from Springbrook Farm for the position of Vice Chairman. Sebastian nominated Mark Fischer for President.

Slate of Officers:

Mark Fischer – President
Jeremy Stephenson - Vice President
Linda Miller - Secretary
Sebastian von Trapp – Treasurer
Christopher Coutant - Advisor
Lisa Battilana – Advisor
Laini Fondiller – Ex officio/advisor

- It was suggested that we ensure that there is a Nominating Committee for next year. **ACTION:** The Executive Committee will do this during the planning meeting in December 2011.
- Allison Hooper also pointed out that our By-laws state that we warn the slate of officers in advance of the election. This will be a good starting point to ensure that the Nominating Committee be formed prior to the Annual Meeting.

Other Business:

- Allison Hooper brought the group up to date on the handoff of Vermont Butter and Cheese to the VCC. Sponsorship is a large part of the work that needs to be done. All need to be completed by December to catch people during their budget cycle. She asked for help so that the work can be shared. She has historically made approximately 50 calls. Some of the former sponsors have withdrawn due to other commitments. If the requests/follow up is shared, it will make light work. **ACTION:** A committee was formed to help make these calls. Mateo Kehler from Jasper Hill Farm,

Clay Whitney from Cabot, Lisa Battilana from Woodstock Farmers Market and Allie Marino from West River volunteered.

- Mark Fischer stated that Rachel has taken on extra hours as the VCC coordinator, but this needs to be reviewed to ensure that there is enough time available to do both her regular duties and the CF work.

Paul S. Kindstedt, Ph.D. Professor, Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Vermont described a new book project:

- He is trying to develop a new program specifically for farmstead, artisan cheese geared towards quality, cheese chemistry and technology. This is not specifically food safety. He asked what are the issues faced by those present. From this inventory, Paul will then look at common challenges to tailor his research.
- Paul and Marc Druart will work together on this.
- Paul will email members on what is best contact to discuss research needs.
- If need for site visit, they will do so.
- Then Paul will attempt find funding resources. Cheesemakers may be needed to support this.
- Please let Paul know any specific needs each cheesemaker may have.

Paul is also working with the UVM to develop different business models and economics of different approaches to making cheese whether it is farmstead to purchased milk to aging at Jasper Hill. They will ask what the constraint is and what can be done to make life easier. This grant needs to involve cow's milk due to funding agency.

- Bob Parson will be in touch. The cheesemaker may be involved in a case study.
- This project is in the second year of a three year grant.

Paul serves on the Vermont Dairy Industry Association Board which is looking for ways to bring all elements of the diverse Vermont dairy industry. They are hoping to have the VCC members help with this.

Laini Fondiller – distributed a handout regarding raw milk published by Rural Vermont

- There are dairies selling raw milk without being licensed.
- Laini suggested that we may need to have a conversation with the House Ag Committee.
- Selling raw milk from the farm has had less stringent regulations.
- Presumably the raw milk is not supposed to be processed.
- The Vermont Farm Bureau takes the position that it is okay to sell fluid raw milk in small quantities with little oversight.
- Those that do process milk need to adhere to more stringent controls.
- There are two levels of sales: one is up to 40 gallons as well as up to 12 gallons. The caveat is that there is supposed to be sampling at the Waterbury lab every two weeks. This is currently not being done due to personnel restraints.
- Mateo Kehler suggested that we take a formal position as a cheesemaking community as we have the most to lose.
- It was stated that we need to have the full facts before we take a position.
- Ellen Fox suggested that any PR statements we make need to have a positive spin about what it means to be a member of the VCC promoting the image of following food safety criteria rather than taking a negative view of what others are doing.
- We will be using the revised cheese brochure to make this clear.

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- It was suggested that a discussion with Rural Vermont should occur before a public statement is made.
- As part of the public education, perhaps the VCC designation might be included on the label to indicate quality and licensure.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

Lucille Giroux, Cheesemaker, Fromagerie la Moutonniere, Inc., Ste-Helene-de-Chester, Quebec – described an outbreak of Listeria in Quebec and the ramifications of that incident. There was a question and answer period which was extremely informative and interesting.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Simon Miller
Secretary



Vermont Cheese Council

Saturday, January 29, 2011

Cloudland Farm

Woodstock, Vermont

Annual Meeting Attendees

Name	Cheese Affiliation	Email Address
Rachel Schaal	VCC Coordinator	vermontcheese@gmail.com
Peter Dixon	Consider Bardwell	dixonpeter@mac.com
George Miller	Jericho Hill Farm	jerichohillfarm@gmail.com
Linda Miller	Jericho Hill Farm	jerichohillfarm@gmail.com
Michael Lee	Twig Farm	Twigfarm@shoreham.net
Mark Fischer	Woodcock Farm	woodcockfarm@myfairpoint.net
Gari Fischer	Woodcock Farm	woodcockfarm@myfairpoint.net
Stan Biasini	Mt. Mansfield Creamery	cheese@mtmansfieldcreamery.com
Ann Doe	Boston Post Dairy	bostonpost@bpd.comcastbiz.net
Susan Blouin	Boston Post Dairy	bostonpost@bpd.comcastbiz.net
Karen Lynch	USDA Rural Development	karen.lynch@vt.usda.gov
Bonnie Hills	Cobb Hill Farm	jessnbon@vermontel.net
Jody Farnham	VIAC	jfarnham@uvm.edu
Allie Marino	West River Creamery	westrivercreamery@comcast.net
Clay Whitney	Cabot Co-Op	cwhitney@cabotcheese.com
Jesse Wernet	Plymouth Cheese	Jesse@plymouthcheese.com
Peg Galloup	Hildene	peggy@hildene.org
Caitlin Scornecchia	Hildene	
Greg Bernhardt	Blue Ledge Farm	blueledgefarm@gmail.com
Jay Kerner	Black River Produce Corp.	JKerner@BlackRiverProduce.com
Jeannine Kilbride	Cobb Hill Farm	cobhillcheese@gmail.com
David Major	Vermont Shepherd	info@VermontShepherd.com
Vince Razionale	Jasper Hill Farm	vince@cellarsatjasperhill.com
Mateo Kehler	Jasper Hill Farm	mateo@cellarsatjasperhill.com
Dan von Trapp	von Trapp Farmstead	dan@vontrappfarmstead.com
Jordan von Trapp	von Trapp Farmstead	
Sebastian von Trapp	von Trapp Farmstead	sebastian@vontrappfarmstead.com
Jon Wright	Taylor Farm	taylorcheese@comcast.net
Jill Jones	Crowley Cheese	
Meri Spicer	Grafton Village Cheese	meri@graftonvillagecheese.com
Molly Pindell	Sage Farm Goat Dairy	mollypindell@gmail.com
Neil Urie	Bonnieview	bonniecheese@gmail.com
Laini Fondiller	Lazy Lady	laini@sover.net
Angela Miller	Consider Bardwell Farm	angela@considerbardwellfarm.com
John Putnam	Thistle Hill Farm	info@ThistleHillFarm.com
David Rachlin	Grafton Village Cheese	David@GraftonVillageCheese.com

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Ellen Fox	Shelburne Farms	efox@shelburnefarms.org
Allison Hooper	Vermont Butter and Cheese	ahooper@vermontcreamery.com
Judith Irving	Fat Toad Farm	fattoadfarm@gmail.com
Lisa Battilana	Woodstock Farmers Market	lisa@woodstockfarmersmarket.com
Jeremy Stephenson	Farm for City Kids	