



# Vermont Cheese Council

## MINUTES - ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, January 28, 2012

10 am to 3 pm

Cloudland Farm

Woodstock, Vermont

**Present: 41 members and guests.**

10:00 **Coffee reception**

10:30 **Welcome** - Mark Fischer - Introductions: Executive Committee & Coordinator

**2011 Review** – Rachel Schaal

### **Grants:**

**RBEG** – We are in year three of the 3-year grant which allows for extending to five years.

**Agriculture Innovation Center** – Both of these grants were extremely successful.

- **Festival** - \$15,000 grant to further marketing, finance subsequent festivals, facilitate transition from VBC, branding.
- **Let's Talk About Cheese** – Series of 8 events starting in June which included six farm tours. Had an average of 5-10 retailers at each. Two events for retailers to talk about difficulties in selling cheese and caring for cheese. Final event was held in December for 70. The feedback was that the retailers want more information about the cheesemakers and their cheeses. They are excited to be engaged with the cheesemaker.

**Festival Report** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Festival was a huge success. Sold out six weeks before event with 1,750 tickets at \$35 per ticket. Rachel stated that this has been a wonderful committee. The Festival netted \$30,000, about double from 2010. Intention is to use some of these funds to support VCC Coordinator position. Rachel invited comments from group about their experiences. We cannot increase number of tickets. There were only 12 complaints, with the major complaint was that it was very crowded in the venue. Some were unhappy that they had to purchase tickets for wine tasting. One suggestion was to clear people out from session one before allowing entry to session two, but this would be very difficult to do. Mark asked if we hosted this as a two-day event, would the cheesemakers be willing. No one present felt that this was a viable option.

### **For 2012:**

This year there will be two types of tickets - one for just cheese, and one for cheese and wine purchases. The regular purchase price will be \$35/\$45 for cheese/wine ticket. Still to be worked out is how to reimburse wine makers. It was suggested that we need to understand where attendees are coming from. Alison Hooper stated it was approximately 50% in state and 50% out of state.

**ACTION: Need to think about allowing children to enter for free.**

We will be changing the front tent to just include sponsors. We hope that the Festival website will go live in mid-February. We will not be doing the tasting dinner the night before, but have a time to wind down after the Festival.

### **VCC Administration**

**Membership** – Three new members. Dancing Cow and Ploughgate no longer have active membership status.

**Website update** – Rachel asked for updates especially pictures including children, Farmer's Market events, etc. She mentioned that all photos show good food safety practices. Rachel is learning DreamWeaver. She has been working closely with Elysa and is becoming proficient so that we can reduce our costs for the website maintenance.

**eNewsletter** – we are still trying to determine the purpose of the eNewsletter. Rachel really depends on the cheesemakers to send information for this forum.

**Hardcopy newsletter** – this is a very large portion of our budget, and Rachel asked that we discuss this during the Treasurer's Report. Perhaps we should go to a PDF format that is sent electronically and create hard copies by request. Another thought is to change this to an Annual Report format as this would then be useful when applying for grants etc. This does change the audience a bit, however, we are not clear on precisely who that audience currently is. We will be clearing up the recipient list to pare down to those who truly are interested in receiving a hard copy newsletter. The question was asked what do other states do, and for the most part anecdotally it was stated that most are creating solely electronic copies or black/white copies. It was suggested that we use social media instead to distribute information and have Jane Dale write the copy. Vince suggested using MailChimp instead of iContact as it is cheaper and has better reporting.

**VIAC scholarship program** – each cheesemaker was allowed 5 class days per year in the past. Starting this year, we will shift having the distribution of the funds come from the VCC directly rather than getting a report from VIAC as to how many days have been used by each cheesemaker. There are class schedules on the tables.

11:15 **Treasurer's report** – Sebastian von Trapp proposed budget line-by-line

### **Discussion regarding line items:**

- AIC was a one-year Grant
- RBEG funds to increase in anticipation of Rachel increasing her hours as well as needing to spend down these funds over the next two years.
- Membership – we hope to increase Associate Members
- Annual Meeting – guest speakers were less costly this year
- Map/Brochure – anticipate decrease as 2011 costs were due to redesign
- Newsletter – the hard copy currently is about 11% of the Expense budget
- Coordinator expense to increase due to increased activities and hours. These hours do not include the Cheese Festival hours.
- Postage is for sending brochures primarily to the distribution center for the rest areas etc.

- Sponsorship Expense will decrease in ACS sponsorship from Platinum to Bronze sponsorship (The value of this is that the VCC stays in the picture) as well as no longer actually having a sponsorship for Cheese Festival.
- Web expenses decreased due to Rachel making changes in house.
- VIAC Risk Reduction - \$8,000 one-time expense. Castanea Foundation will be funding balance of \$32,000 for 10 cheesemakers for this program.
- HACCP Handbook – Peter Dixon project. Beta version completed in 2011. Final version to come out in 2012.

**Checking balance:** \$50,533.39. **Money Market balance:** \$7,717.22.

**11:35 Work for 2012**

- **Festival** – The question was asked about having a *People's Choice Award* rather than an ACS style tasting. We discussed potentially increasing the price of the ticket. **Action: Rachel will bring this suggestion back to the committee.**
- **HACCP Handbook and VIAC Program** – We'll be hearing from DJ D'Amico and Peter Dixon this afternoon. The plan is to have these two work together.
- **Education: Seminars/Workshops** – Rachel asked those present what the interest might be. What will be useful? Christopher asked if the group present were in favor of having seminars/workshops for retailers as well as for the cheesemakers. The consensus was that this was very valuable. It was suggested having a publication on what molds are acceptable and which are not. Christopher does have a brochure on cheese care guidelines. Christopher stressed how important labels are when sending cheeses to a retailer. It was suggested that we think about developing a fellowship for training stores how to know cheeses and cutting cheese at the counter. Mark asked if there were interest in the group to develop a handbook out of a day's discussion. Will discuss this afternoon in the Open Forum. Sister Noella has offered to come talk about molds. More to come on that. Kathy Biss will be going to Maine this Spring, and perhaps she might be available for a class in Vermont as well. It was suggested having a "Pop Up Cheeseshop" or having this at a Farmers Market.
- **Membership Survey** – This needs to be done as part of the RBEG grant.
- **VCC Bylaws – Update.** The copy we have did not have the changes we made regarding dues in 2009. We plan to really review Bylaws over the course of this year, and will bring back recommendations for the Annual Meeting in 2013.
- **Other** – Paul Kindstedt's book coming soon.

**12:00 Executive Committee Elections** – we had asked for nominations prior to this meeting. Rachel announced the following slate of nominees: Jeannine Kilbridge (*Cobb Hill*), Vince Razionale (*Cellars at Jasper Hill*), Nat Bacon (*Shelburne Farms*). Proposed nominees seconded by Angela Miller. The slate of officers was accepted unanimously:

**President** – Jeremy Stephenson  
**Vice President** – Vince Razionale  
**Secretary** – Nat Bacon  
**Treasurer** – Jeannine Kilbridge

**12:30 LUNCH**

**1:45 VIAC Food Safety Program - DJ D'Amico**

2008 RBEG funded project – 17 producers. This has been refunded for 10 additional cheesemakers. Findings from initial project was for getting ready for changes in upcoming food safety regulations. DJ will help the cheesemaker identify possible areas of concern. With the first group he found a general lack of good hygienic practices such as storage, handling, documentation. FDA inspections are increasing. These inspections are leading to more recalls. The plan for this group:

1. Process control will be reviewed.
  2. Check calibration of equipment.
  3. Routine monitoring of benchmarks.
  4. Give suggestions for improvement to these 10 producers. Plan is to spend a day.
    - Starts with a thorough walk through of the facility.
    - Will then do 20 environmental sponge samples for *Listeria*. FDA is now using this as criteria as well. On follow up DJ will do an additional set of sampling.
    - Go through cheesemaking processing.
    - Five hygiene swabs will be done. These are testing for non- *Listeria* bacteria.
    - He will take milk, curd, and whey samples for *Listeria*, *Coliform*, *Salmonella*, and *Staph aureus*.
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1. Follow up will be done by phone to review.
  2. Will produce a microbiological report.
  3. Will give suggestions for salting
  4. Will repeat process a second time

There are currently six farms signed up for this group. DJ is looking for four more participants. There was discussion regarding whether or not the results will be published. The former study was not set up to be published. It will be up to the VCC and Castanea whether or not the results of the study are made public.

DJ pointed out that not finding a bacteria on a particular day of sampling does not necessarily mean that it does not exist. It just may not exist at that point in time.

Mateo asked about other research projects for 2012. UVM will only be doing some cheese-related work due to a lack of funding. He asked DJ what would be the best approach we should take for funding a project for 2013. Trying to prove that food is safe through science only works by showing where risk might be. Best to highlight when a process is safe. We should assure that all Vermont cheesemakers are following best practices. The more negative reports that come from the FDA inspections, the worse it will be for the collective of cheesemakers. The take away is that the VCC may wish to enforce best practices.

**2:30 HACCP Handbook - Peter Dixon** – written manual using the ideas that the FDA will be using to train us to create on farm HACCP plan.

- Start with creamery inspection – done by milk inspector
- Go to DJ's checklist – these are the prerequisite programs (aka good manufacturing programs). Everyone on staff needs to be trained and have documentation that this has happened.
- On top of the eight, we will add six more programs including environmental

cleaning, supplier, recall, etc.

- Then use the Hazard Analysis (pathogens) and identify Critical Control Points (pasteurization, fermentation/pH, 60-day aging, cold storage).
- The plan is small, the program is very large and supportive.

It would take a 1 to 1 1/2 days to write the program for the processor. Discussed having a full day seminar similar to what Scott Donnelly had done.

If a cheesemaker has a plan, use that to build on it.

Peter spoke about a study done last year with 154 firms, 41 were artisan...of those there were 30 positive swabs. 8 positives out of 41 were positive. Both were 20% of total as opposed to DJs stats of 10%.

Two new studies on artisan cheese in retail. Targeted at soft cheeses.

**3:00 Membership Open Forum** – Is there interest in having a discussion group. Yes, there was some interest. Vince suggested that the VCC needs to be more creative. This will be discussed further by the Executive Committee.

**3:15** The meeting was closed.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Simon Miller  
Secretary



Saturday, January 28, 2012

Cloudland Farm

Woodstock, Vermont

**Annual Meeting Attendees**

| <b>Name</b>         | <b>Cheese Affiliation</b> | <b>Email Address</b>   |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Clay Whitney        | Cabot Co-Op               | <a href="mailto:cwhitney@cabotcheese.com">cwhitney@cabotcheese.com</a>                   |
| Michael Lee         | Twig Farm                 | <a href="mailto:Twigfarm@shoreham.net">Twigfarm@shoreham.net</a>                         |
| Rachel Schaal       | VCC Coordinator           | <a href="mailto:vermontcheese@gmail.com">vermontcheese@gmail.com</a>                     |
| Peter Dixon         | Consider Bardwell         | <a href="mailto:dixonpeter@mac.com">dixonpeter@mac.com</a>                               |
| George/Linda Miller | Jericho Hill Farm         | <a href="mailto:jerichohillfarm@gmail.com">jerichohillfarm@gmail.com</a>                 |
| Sebastian von Trapp | von Trapp Farmstead       | <a href="mailto:sebastian@vontrappfarmstead.com">sebastian@vontrappfarmstead.com</a>     |
| Mark/Gari Fischer   | Woodcock Farm             | <a href="mailto:woodcockfarm@myfairpoint.net">woodcockfarm@myfairpoint.net</a>           |
| Becky Loftus        | Blythedale                | <a href="mailto:blythedalefarm@valley.net">blythedalefarm@valley.net</a>                 |
| Susan Blouin        | Boston Post Dairy         | <a href="mailto:bostonpost@bpd.comcastbiz.net">bostonpost@bpd.comcastbiz.net</a>         |
| Ellen Fox           | Shelburne Farms           | <a href="mailto:efox@shelburnefarms.org">efox@shelburnefarms.org</a>                     |
| Anne Doe            | Boston Post Dairy         | <a href="mailto:bostonpost@bpd.comcastbiz.net">bostonpost@bpd.comcastbiz.net</a>         |
| Vince Razionale     | Jasper Hill Farm          | <a href="mailto:vince@cellarsatjasperhill.com">vince@cellarsatjasperhill.com</a>         |
| Nacho Villa         | Von Trapp Farmstead       | <a href="mailto:ignvilla@gmail.com">ignvilla@gmail.com</a>                               |
| Dane Heubner        | Grafton Village Cheese    | <a href="mailto:dheubner@graftonvillagecheese.com">dheubner@graftonvillagecheese.com</a> |
| Jesse Werner        | Plymouth Artisan          | <a href="mailto:Jesse@plymouthcheese.com">Jesse@plymouthcheese.com</a>                   |
| Mario Lanzilotta    | Cheese                    | <a href="mailto:mario.lanzilotta@gmail.com">mario.lanzilotta@gmail.com</a>               |
| Jon Wright          | Taylor Farm               | <a href="mailto:taylorcheese@comcast.net">taylorcheese@comcast.net</a>                   |
| Kenny Hart/wife     | Crowley Cheese            | <a href="mailto:ken@crowleycheese.com">ken@crowleycheese.com</a>                         |
| Judith Irving       | Fat Toad Farm             | <a href="mailto:fattoadfarm@gmail.com">fattoadfarm@gmail.com</a>                         |
| Sophie Starr        | Cobb Hill Farm            | <a href="mailto:allstarrs@vermontel.net">allstarrs@vermontel.net</a>                     |
| Jeremy Stephenson   | Spring Brook Farm         | <a href="mailto:jstephs@gmail.com">jstephs@gmail.com</a>                                 |
| Larry Ference       | Spring Brook Farm         | <a href="mailto:lsfeyborg@yahoo.com">lsfeyborg@yahoo.com</a>                             |
| John/Janine Putnam  | Thistle Hill Farm         | <a href="mailto:info@ThistleHillFarm.com">info@ThistleHillFarm.com</a>                   |
| Amber Reed          | Spring Brook Farm         | <a href="mailto:amberfreed@gmail.com">amberfreed@gmail.com</a>                           |
| Allison Hooper      | Vermont Butter and Cheese | <a href="mailto:ahooper@vermontcreamery.com">ahooper@vermontcreamery.com</a>             |
| Lisa Battilana      | Woodstock Farmers Market  | <a href="mailto:Lisa@woodstockfarmersmarket.com">Lisa@woodstockfarmersmarket.com</a>     |
| David Major         | Vermont Shepherd          | <a href="mailto:info@VermontShepherd.com">info@VermontShepherd.com</a>                   |
| Nat Bacon           | Shelburne Farms           | <a href="mailto:nbacon@shelburnefarms.org">nbacon@shelburnefarms.org</a>                 |
| Angela Miller       | Consider Bardwell Farm    | <a href="mailto:angela@considerbardwellfarm.com">angela@considerbardwellfarm.com</a>     |
| Jeannine Kilbride   | Cobb Hill Farm            | <a href="mailto:cobhillcheese@gmail.com">cobhillcheese@gmail.com</a>                     |
| Kimberly Ingraham   | Willow Moon Farm          | <a href="mailto:Paws3funvt@gmail.com">Paws3funvt@gmail.com</a>                           |
| Mateo Kehler        | Jasper Hill Farm          | <a href="mailto:mateo@jasperhillfarm.com">mateo@jasperhillfarm.com</a>                   |
| DJ D'Amico          | UVM                       |  |
| Christopher Coutant | Provisions International  | <a href="mailto:christopher@provisionsintl.com">christopher@provisionsintl.com</a>       |
| Peter Moen          |                           |  |
| Sharon              |                           |  |
| Maura Cook          | Champlain Valley          |  |