



Vermont Cheese Council
General Meeting
Saturday, January 26, 2013

Many Vermont cheese makers present (full list held by Rachel). Guests included Chuck Ross (VAA), DJ D'Amico (VIAC).

President Jeremy Stephenson welcomed the group, introduced the Executive Committee and Chuck Ross.

Chuck Ross spoke about the importance of cheesemaking and value added agriculture to Vermont. He urged unity and dialogue among different agricultural groups such as organic and conventional, dairy/non-dairy. In regards to FSMA, he said the VAA was reviewing the new proposed rules, and welcomed comments from both the VCC and individual members. The VAA would like to be the inspection representatives for the FDA, so cheesemakers have a single regulatory contact. He also recognized the lack of clarity around FSMA at this point.

The Treasurer's report was given by Jeannine Kilbride. **David Major made a motion mad to accept the 2013 budget; passed.** Discussion included:

- a new capital improvement fund to be administered by the VCC
- the gap between income and expenses being filled by funds flowing from the Festival account
- proposed new staffing model with a part-time Festival co-ordinator leading to a full-time Executive Director
- VIAC tuition remission not being used as budgeted; members were encouraged to use the funds

John Putnam made a motion to hire an Executive Director; passed.

Rachel Schaal gave the Coordinator's report, in conjunction with the written Annual Report she developed. 2012 highlights included:

- 45 cheesemaker members, including some new
- ACS sponsorship and participation, including a VT slideshow
- RBEG funding extension for a video project
- VIAC risk reduction program
- Successful VT Cheesemakers' Festival

There was discussion about continuing the venue at Shelburne Farms, and the concerns of heat, crowding, and alcohol. Festival changes were outlined.



The event has been increasingly profitable.

There was a call for better communication about VCC meeting dates, and members were encouraged to attend if interested.

VCC Survey: 35 out of 45 responded. Top 3 areas of technical assistance need were: risk reduction, hygiene/food safety, and cheese defects. 71% have increased cheese production in the last 3 years, and 71% think the VCC should better define “Farmstead” cheese.

Suggested VCC improvements include:

- More programming
- Website improvements
- Full time employee

Executive Committee Elections: current committee re-elected. Meri Spicer from Grafton elected as a new committee member.

Motions made to send Christopher Coutant a thank you card for her service to the VCC, and to give Wendy from Provisions a lifetime VCC membership; both passed.

Lunch was served. A side request was made to switch up the menu (no roast beef) in future years.

A VIAC Food Safety Program presentation was given by DJ D’Amico. 9 farms participated in 2012; work is still being finished up.

- Some cheesemakers continue to have positive environmental Listeria swabs
- The basics of proper sanitation and cleaning need to be maintained
- Old facilities, especially floors, are a major issue

Membership Open Forum: topics for the VCC to take on included

- “Farmstead” definition and labeling
- Dry hay research/workshop, as silage feeding is a problem in cheesemaking
- Dairy promotion funding opportunities
- How to facilitate public comment on FDA rules
- Making contact with other cheese guilds to learn about their work

Meeting adjourned at 3:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Nat Bacon Secretary