

## MINUTES

### Annual Board Meeting

**Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Present: Parish Hill/ Twig Farm/Consider Bardwell/Grafton Village/Lazy Lady/ Julie Danyew- Danyew Goat Farm/ Hildene/ Crowley Farm/ von Trapp Farmstead/ VT Creamery/ Jasper Hill Farm/ Boston Post Dairy/ Sage Farm/ Mt. Mansfield Creamery/ Lisa Battilana/ Jay Kerner/ Andrew Kannler/VT Farmstead Cheese Co./Shelburne Farm/Bridport Creamery/Karim Farm Creamery/Woodcock Farm/VT Shepherd/Thistle Hill/Spring Brook Farm-Farms for City Kids/Plymouth Artisan Cheese Co./Cobb Hill Cheese/Tom Bivins, Executive Director

**9:30 AM.** Rachel Fritz Schaal called the meeting to order; Meri Spicer, seconded, all approved

1. **Rachel Schaal**, President, read the mission statement and vision statement. Read a list of the VCC's accomplishments, and described her numerous phone conversations with members who reported being very happy with the VCC and the benefits of membership.

2. **President's Report** -- Monumental year, Tom Bivins, the Executive Director, will summarize the year's activities.

3. **Treasurer's Report** – Michael Lee, Treasurer, prefaced the discussion regarding the shortfall of 2016 by explaining that the expensive opportunity to be the Marquee Sponsor at the ACS in Providence in August 2015 presented itself and the Executive Board decided to go for it. We received a grant for a large chunk of the cost, but the payment had not arrived during 2015, so would be due, but already spent, in 2016.

a. Discussion of 2015 P & L -- Tom commented on the ACS expenditures and important exposure for us being major players in New England. Various attendees asked questions about the budget and how to or whether to raise money from certain obvious sources.

b. Discussion of 2016 Budget – Tom has put together and has addressed the problems, and we need to address the problem of serving members better.

Possible ways to increase income:

I: Membership dues increase- This would require a bylaw change. Michael introduced – Tom presented his proposal of increases for membership (100%, 50%, and 25%). Tom reviewed membership benefits and reported that other associations were astonished by the \$1200 value of benefits for each member. We need to raise \$26,000 as a goal.

Consensus was that not much we can do to increase membership fees would substantially change the budget.

Alison Hooper suggested that we ask people to pay more for the benefit activities, such as workshops.

It was suggested that we circulate a list of current and possible sponsors and grantors among the members.

ii. Cheesemaker Festival Exhibitor Fee for Cheesemakers- This would require a vote – get two more gold sponsors for the festival.. Increase the fees to non-cheesemakers and out of state cheesemakers. Consensus was against charging VCC members a table fee.

iii. Sponsor Increases- This is a committee vote.

iv. Ticket Price Increases- This is a committee vote. There is a price increase Early Bird = \$50; regular ticket is now \$60.

#### **c. Vote on the 2016 Budget**

Jeremy Stephenson wants us to pursue grant money and we should help Tom find it.

**David Major moves to approve the budget, IF:**

**There is no membership fee increase , if we look to add new members, send out a list of membership benefits, come back to members with a balanced budget for next year. Mateo Kehler seconds. All in favor.**

#### **4. Executive Director's Report (Power Point available for viewing)**

a. Year in Review (ED Time Chart, Listings of Events, Lobbying activities, Farm to Plate Meetings)

b. Membership

c. Vermont Cheesemakers Festival – Venue discussion re inability to grow and time change. –

Lisa. Nate suggests Shelburne's Farm Barn.

Recycling was a problem and a shame to our State's sustainability commitment ... Mateo – awesome event but could not do two days. Jasper Hill brings 20 staffers. Alternative to Shelburne is a hard sell. Visitors love it.

Whitney Lamy of Castleton Crackers suggests bringing in the VT Specialty Foods as co-sponsors? Partners? VT on the Road.. VT Mercantile at Good Food .

d. American Cheese Society Conference and Competition – VT presence was a huge success.

d. Year in Review: Press and Social Media

Members are all extremely happy with the events.

#### **5. Education and Regulatory Committee**

Mark Fischer reported on the successful January 15th Food Safety Workshop. The workshop Speaker offered his services to any of us who feel that we need help with the FDA. Contact Mark for more information.

Series of summer 2016 regional cheesemaker casual gatherings will take place and we are looking for host farms. Community building. Pleases offer to host. Jasper Hill and Consider Bardwell offered.

Jasper toying re having a two-day workshop on food safety and regulation of raw-milk cheese production. 60 day rule is going to change. Science doesn't support the 60-day rule. Verification and validation of food safety plan. JH will share and cooperate with VCC.

Meetings in Oregon and Calif. Rachel proposes that we do something similar quarterly – with 4 speakers

- a. Tuition Reimbursements for 2015
- b. Seminars and Workshops
- c. Regulatory Outlook for 2016

## **6. Election of Board Members and Officers**

a. Explanation of By-law changes in 2015 and Election Process for 2016 officers – Andrew Kannler explains why Provisions/Black River had to get Milk Handler's license and therefore would like to be full, voting members of the VCC.

Discussion: what about Seacrest? What if they come into the state and get a license; they will want a membership on the board.

Lisa Battilana is eligible to be a voting member of the board, but that would not extend to the Woodstock Farmer's Market if Lisa ever left.

Consensus was that we need further clarification before changing the "Cheesemaker only" composition of the voting membership. business of distributors vs. individual.

**Vote on this proposal that Provisions International and Black River Produce be permitted full voting membership status.**

**Move to vote on this. 12 against; 7 for. Proposal is denied.**

However, Andrew Kannler and Jay Kerner will be able to be voting members as long as they are on the board and working at their respective jobs.

- b. Call for Nominations -- nomination for VP and Treasurer:

**David Major nominates Meri Spicer for Vice President and Michael Lee for Treasurer. – Rachel seconds. All in favor.**

Vote on Advisors:

Andrew, Jay, Clay, Lisa

**Motion on slate: DM moves, AH seconds, all in favor**

**12:00- 1:00**

Break for Lunch and Networking

**1:00 to 2:00**

**NON-GMO- New England Dairy Project and Green America.**

Guest speaker was Sarah Andrysiak of Green America.

Jasper Hill has initiated its NGMO program and will be working toward certification. Kate Turcotte of Shelburne Farm reported on her NGMO program and efforts toward certification.

**2:00 to 4:00**

**VCC in 2016: What Can We Do for You & What We Need From You**

Envisioning the VCC for 2016 and how that fits into the member's needs.

Rachel, what you you think we can be doing better. Tom asked for volunteers for committees.

Sebastian asked if the exec committee would pay for milage. Answer came back: No we cannot provide milage to members attending monthly meetings. Tom explained that the board has hired John Ryan of the VT Sustainable Jobs fund to advise the Board on ways to become more dynamic and creative. Tom has arranged for a grant to cover the cost of Ryan's time.

Conversations:

Mateo wants to articulate priorities: Cheesemakers aren't connected b/c of distances and work load.

**How to network and ways to communicate.** Rachel sends announcements on our workshops. **Jeremy** is a board member of ACS and will be happy to answer any questions. Mateo on ACS: they can get more familiar with our micro problems. Alison says we should go out and connect with guilds that are similar to ours. Sebastian wants to know how we deal with the ecoli business.

Minutes of Monthly Executive Committee meetings need to go out to the membership. We need more newsletters... Meri – if we send a question to members will we get a quick response? Everyone says yes.

David Major – organization does pretty well at sending out info. We do okay, but could do better. Thank you, David.

Mateo called for the VCC to **develop a formal relationship with a scientist** to collect data and advise. Strategically, we need info from all of our businesses to be aggregated. Anonymized. FSMA – environmental testing program info. Finished product testing. Lisa: Should we hire someone? Ask Paul Kiindstead or Dr. Cathy Donnelly. Who will spearhead this inquiry?

Connect with other guilds. Maine, Oregon, for example work closely with their universities. **Vermont should pilot.**

Need Economic data, too, to take to our legislators. We have the legislators in VT to kick butt for us.

The summer socials will help members to communicate and feel connected. We'll need someone from each to report to the board so that it can initiate actions.

## **Reestablish our relationship with UVM**

Three goals:

Jeremy: Regulatory Issues to be explored. Ear to ground for FDA and VT.

Mateo: We need an anonymized picture of who we are. GMO, testing,

Vince: we need better communication among cheesemakers.

Alison/Adeline: Bring more resources to us...cost sharing, marketing .visitors to JH over festival / ACS ad they want more places to go other than JH.

VCFestival – Vince and JH will help to bring in sponsors for the VC Festival. Tom will follow up with proposals to contacts provided by Vince and JH.

Potential sponsors to be approached were:

GFI

WF

Big Y

Hannifords

Green America

Kroger

BosKa

Cosco – w/o WF

Wegmans

REGULATORY COMMITTEE – Bring it up at next EC.

Gaylen Jones, Crowley – operational issues to bring up. Environmental testing costs; can we pool info.

How can they find more good milk.

David Major: third party audit information – maybe a workshop. What are the other guilds doing about this info.

Mateo – 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit in UK has been developed for all cheesemakers. Specialist Cheesemaker Association. We'd probably have to get the ACS to kick in money.

Share the resources ie consultants.

**Motion to close from Ann, 2<sup>nd</sup>d Rachel, all approve.**