

MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

Michigan Farm Bureau
Lansing, MI

MEETING MINUTES October 17, 2023

PRESENT:

Nancy Nyquist, Executive Director, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Dennis Vander Kooi, Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Creela Hamlin, Vice Chair, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Carly Parsley, Treasurer, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Dave Reenders, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Eric Jawor, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Jason Thomas, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Jennifer Spears, True Blue Farms/MBC Assistant Treasurer (Remote)
Jeff Haarer, MDARD
Carlos Garcia Salazar, MSU Extension
Ron Bates, MSU Extension
Cheyenne Sloan, MSU Extension
Mike de Schaaf, MSU Extension (Remote)
Ryan Wysocki, IR4 (Remote)
Rufus Isaacs, MSU
Tim Miles, MSU
Lisa Winters, MBG
Shelly Hartmann, True Blue Farms (Remote)
Josh Vander Weide, MSU
Kerri Neugebauer, MSU
Chad Reenders, MBBAC (Remote)
James Averill, MSU Extension (Remote)
Andrena Reid, Michigan Farm Bureau
Matt Smego, Michigan Farm Bureau
John Kran, Michigan Farm Bureau
Kasey Cronquist, USHBC
Kevin Hamilton, USHBC
Alyssa Houtby, NABC

ABSENT:

Rob Bodtke, Secretary, Michigan Blueberry Commission

Call to Order

Chairman Dennis Vander Kooi called the meeting to order at 9:30 am, performed a roll call, and verified the presence of a quorum.

Adoption of Agenda

The Commission reviewed the proposed agenda (**ATTACHMENT A**).

MOTION: Creela moved to adopt the agenda as amended with support from Jason; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Meeting Minutes Approval

The Commission reviewed the minutes from April 18, 2023, May 8, 2023 and June 29, 2023 meetings (**ATTACHMENT B**).

MOTION: Jason moved to approve the minutes from April 18, 2023, May 8, 2023 and June 29, 2023 as presented with support from Dave; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Reports of Committees or Officers

Chair's Report

Denny reported on several events and activities including Blueberry Field Day that he has participated in and that it was a successful season overall.

Treasurer's Report

1. Review of Financial packet (Attachment C)
2. To date the CD that was established in June has been a good investment
3. Assessment's still outstanding from one entity (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)

MOTION: Jason moved that we accept the financial report as presented; supported by Creela; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent

Jeff Haarer – MDARD, Producer Security & Ag Products Manager

1. Nancy and Jeff updated the group on continued efforts to collect outstanding assessments. The agreed upon arrangement was to have all back monies owed paid in full by September 1, 2023. That did not happen. Nancy contacted Jeff to set up a special attorney general to look at the case.
2. It was suggested that we consider an explanation of the funds collected on the handler form.

Secretary's Report

(sent via email)

I have received our first handler report last week. It represents 6,421,914 lbs. for the 2023 crop. We currently stand at 41% increase over last year (apples to apples). I have reached out to the MFB print shop to send out Grower reports requests in the next week or two. I will also be sending out the final notice to First Handlers by the end of the month.

In our last meeting, I we talked about a specific farm that we were having issues with dating back to 2019 all the way through 2022. After the meeting, Nancy set up a payment plan for them to pay down the large debt incurred over that amount of time with the goal to be current by the end of the current crop. After the plan was set up, we received three different payments totaling \$8,000. After that, the payments stopped and the last check we received bounced (\$4,000). To date, we have received \$4,000 of the total amount of more than \$26,000 due (\$21,485.81 for lbs. and \$4,812.05 interest). Due to the failing to meet our agreed plan, Nancy has started to work with MDARD and the AG to collect this amount.

Reached out to MFB to print and mail the grower notices and received a quote back in the amount of \$769.08. MFB has done this mailing for us in the past. Need to approve this expense

MOTION: Creela moved to approve the payment of \$769.08 for the grower mailing; Dave supported with unanimous verbal consent.

Research Committee

Creela shared the changes to the 2024 research priorities and thanked those that participated in the meeting. (Attachment D)

Creela also provided an update on the planting at TNRC, which during the Research Committee meeting several weeks ago, we learned that fertigation had not occurred since June. This was due to a suspected (not confirmed) virus. The farm manager is aware of the concern that the MBC has and that we should have been consulted. Planting also needs a pruning plan. It was suggested that growers show staff how to best prune.

A review of the USHBC's Leadership program project "Proposing a Berry Subgroup in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans" was shared and there was a request that the MBC support the project by signing onto a letter that was provided to the Commission.

MOTION: Dave moved that we support the public comment letter to the 2025 dietary guidelines advisory committee; supported by Jason; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Policies, Procedures & Appointments Committee

Denny brought forth a revision to existing policy to include the most recent former Commissioners in assisting in the nomination process when there is an upcoming or vacant Commission seat. (Attachment E)

MOTION: Carly moved; Eric supported; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

USHBC/NABC Update

USHBC and NABC President Kasey Cronquist, Kevin Hamilton, VP of Global Marketing & Communications and Alyssa Houtby, Director of Government Affairs joined the meeting.

Kasey shared with the group that the USHBC council is comprised of 41 members and the NABC board has 14. Both groups are experiencing significant growth, including adding Kevin and Alyssa's positions in the last year.

Kasey shared that the first leadership class was a success and that the first class and second got to meet one another during the recent Blueberry Summit in Savannah.

Alyssa shared some of the current legislation that she is monitoring in DC, including the Farm Bill. (Attachment F)

The Blueberry Hill Climb will be January 29-31 and registration is currently open. She encouraged attendance and went through the schedule for those days including a new feature of state displays at the Red, White and Blueberry reception and the announcement of the Blueberry Legislator of the Year which is Senator Stabenow.

Kevin talked about his background with the "Avocado's from Mexico" campaign that he worked on and about the marketing potential and opportunities for blueberries.

Kasey shared the benefits of joining NABC and they include:

- Reduced cost for meetings
- Alyssa's work and advocacy
- Additional data and insights
- Regular crop and storage reports

National Policy Update – John Kran (MFB)

The federal government is currently funded through November 17th, and an election for Speaker is being held today. There are 6 remaining weeks on the congressional calendar of session. Top issues we are looking for changes to and monitoring changes to H-2A, Farm Labor grant program, trade, etc. (Attachment G)

Executive Director Report

Nancy highlighted the activity of Senator Peters this summer promoting his SWAT Act and had visits with:

- MSU visit – Denny & Dave (May)
- Crossroads Blueberry – Dave & Kelly & Family hosted (July)
- All staff @ Jawor's (August)

Attended a late May Ag leader's dinner at Cowles House representing blueberries. Dinner was Michigan themed and each of the commodities attending the dinner were somewhere on the menu.

Working with MSU and Ben Smith on Enviro Weather to make it phone friendly.

SEEDSS Initiative was included in part in the MDARD budget for the current fiscal year, (\$1 million in recurring funding and \$5 million one-time dollars. While we have many details to work out, the spirit of cooperation by our leaders in AgBioResearch and Extension and commitment to programmatic goals we outlined is evident. However, the funding provided in the current fiscal year is not sufficient to provide the answers our industries and MI agriculture in general need relative to current and long-term climate impacts and solutions. The FY24 state investment was a beginning point in addressing the issues and future direction of the program, but the current level of funding is insufficient to provide solutions needed.

The IPM Alliance Tour (8/21-23) was a success and thanks to Creela and Matt Hamlin for allowing the group to visit one of their fields and be a part of a Samba wasp release.

Other blueberry specific meetings attended include:

- Priorities and goals discussion with Director Boring and Kathy Angerer (MDARD)
- IR-4 Regional meeting and priority setting
- Blueberry Field Day
- MBBAC September meeting
- MFB hosted Commodity Executives
- AFBF Trade Advisory Committee meeting in Traverse City – big thanks to Dave, Eric and Chad for participating.

Nancy also brought up the website situation. We have two existing proposals and Nancy will check out other state commissions and inquire about traffic, value, etc.

MOTION: Eric moved to table the website discussion to the December meeting with support from Jason; motion carried with unanimous verbal support

MDARD Update

- 1.** Jeff Haarer
 - a. SCBG will be announced earlier this year in December
 - b. Currently undergoing a reorganization moving from 6 divisions to 4 bureaus
 - c. Online grant system will be rolled out soon

MSU Update

1. Ron Bates
 - a. Presidential search is still on track with a plan to announce new president by the end of the calendar year
 - b. Enrollment is up this fall for both CANR and MSU overall
 - c. MSUE held 1st ever 4H Day at the Capitol, very successful
 - d. MSUE is undergoing a “strategic direction” process starting later this fall with 7 focus groups
 - e. Project GREEN RFP will be released in December
 - f. Still working to backfill retirements
2. Josh VanderWeide
 - a. Planting update: have arrangements for all the plants, PH testing is done, raised beds being worked on, deer and rabbit fence has been installed and waiting on mulch delivery
3. Rufus Isaacs
 - a. Working on a gall trial at Jawor’s, thrips were a big issue with the hot weather this summer, released the Samba wasp at 30 sites this year with 39,000 wasps.
4. Tim Miles
 - a. New IR-4 project, doing stem blight research and has a new SCRI grant
5. Carlos Garcia Salazar
 - a. Had great results with his nematode and SWD research this summer, hoping to secure more funding
6. Cheyenne Sloan
 - a. Provided a list of dates for the upcoming year and will distribute at our December meeting. Highlights include:
 - i. February: SW Hort Days in Benton Harbor
 - ii. February 15th Applicator training in Allegan
 - iii. Fruit School February 27-29
 - iv. March 6th season kick off
 - v. March 13 SWMREC applicator training
 - vi. April 3rd pollination meeting

MBBAC Update- Chad Reenders

Chad is working with a group on freezer space issues, participated in the AFBF Trade Advisory Hearing in Traverse City, is planning on going to the Hill Climb in January and has applied to be on the crop insurance task force with NABC.

Adjournment

MOTION: Eric moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:41 pm with support from Creela; motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Nyquist

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. 4/18/2023 MBC Meeting Agenda
- B. 1/18/2023 MBC Meeting Minutes
- C. MBC Financial Packet
- D. Research Priorities
- E. Policies & Procedures
- F. NABC presentation
- G. John Kran presentation