

MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY COMMISSION

SWMREC

1791 Hillandale Rd, Benton Harbor, MI 49022

MEETING MINUTES

April 18, 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
Rob Bodtke, Secretary, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Eric Jawor, Michigan Blueberry Commission (Remote)
Jason Thomas, Michigan Blueberry Commission
Jennifer Spears, True Blue Farms/MBC Assistant Treasurer
Jonathan Ringlein, Maner & Costerisan (Remote)
Jeff Haarer, MDARD (Remote)
Heather Throne, MDARD (Remote)
Carlos Garcia, MSU Extension
Younsuk Dong, MSU
Rex Shultz, MBBAC (Remote)
Ryan Wysocki, IR4 (Remote)
Katie Thiel, MFB (Remote)
Rufus Isaacs, MSU
Cheryl Sullins, Jubilee Berry Farms
Josh Vanderweide, MSU
Ben Smith, Michigan State Hort Society
Becky Hotovy, First Pick Farms
Kerri Neugebauer, MSU
Ron Bates, MSU Extension
Mike Reinke, MSU Extension
Eric Heavilin, True Blue Farms
Chad Reenders, MBBAC (Remote)

ABSENT:

Dave Reenders, 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 January 18, 2023 meeting (**ATTACHMENT B**).

MOTION: Jason moved to approve the January 18, 2023 meeting minutes as presented with support from Carly; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Audit Presentation: Maner & Costerisan

Jonathan Ringlein

1. Jon presented the audit of the 2022 MBC year completed by Maner & Costerisan
 - a. Included 3 reports (**ATTACHMENT C,D,E**)
 - i. Audit
 1. They provided an unmodified opinion for our 2022 year
 2. Reduction in net position of \$81,624
 3. Not concerned by more debts than credits because of 140% of unassigned fund balance (could last about 1.5 years)
 - ii. Management Letter
 - iii. Governance Letter
 - iv. Representation letter (MBC)

MOTION: Creela moves that we accept the Audit from Maner & Costerisan as presented with support from Jason; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Jeff Haarer – MDARD, Producer Security & Ag Products Manager

1. Nancy contacted Jeffs department to assist with unreceived collections on a specific grower who had not paid since 2018.
 - a. Grower did not respond to phone calls so MDARD performed an in person visit.
 - i. Grower presented documentation for grower reports
 - ii. \$21,481 est. due
 - iii. MBC compared it to our records to confirm numbers
 - b. Next step is to send a “10 day letter” to give a final warning of the total due. If they do not respond the state will get lawyers involved.

MOTION: Rob moves that MBC requests MDARD sends a 10 day letter to the individual out of compliance with MBC collections with support from Jason; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

FARM Crate Presentation – Michigan Farm Bureau

Katie Theil

1. Farm Educational Documents (**ATTACHMENT F, G, H**)

- a. FARM Crates
- b. FARM Science Lab
- c. Supported through Michigan Foundation for Agriculture
 - i. They are working on a 3 year pilot program to study what is the best way to get agricultural education in the classroom.
 - ii. MBC's money would go to support the blueberry farm crate and help with the outreach pilot program/study

MOTION: Rob moves that MBC supports the Michigan Foundation for Agriculture for 3 years for \$5,000 per year (\$15,000 total) with support from Eric; motion carried with unanimous verbal consent.

Public Comment

- 1. Ben spoke on behalf of the Michigan Hort Society. He wanted to thank us for our shared support of the Small Berry Extension agent. He also provided an update on blueberry research they have supported recently.

Reports of Committee or Officers:

Chair's report:

- 1. Since our last meeting we have gotten so busy with work from MBC. Denny is glad that the weather has cooled down outside. Nancy did an interview for Michigan Country Lines that was passed around to the group.
- 2. Present Checks to MBC Grant Recipients.
 - a. This year we funded 6 projects for MSU Researchers. Marisol has already received her check but the other 5 were passed out.

Treasurer's Report:

- 1. Review of Financial Packet (**ATTACHMENT I**)
 - a. Balance Sheet
 - i. Total Equity of \$462,346.35
 - b. Profit & Loss Budget Performance
 - i. Discussion about previous year collections due
 - 1. They will be readdressed in our October
- 2. Partnership NABC Hill Climb
 - a. In working with MBBAC, there was the opinion that Michigan needed representation at the NABC Hill Climb currently going on.

MOTION: Denny moves that we split the cost up to \$1,500 with the MBBAC to send a Michigan rep. to the NABC Hill Climb in Washington D.C. to help educate on the issues in the Michigan Blueberry Industry with support from Rob. Supported with unanimous verbal consent.

MBC is financially supporting the educational aspect of this trip and in no way is supporting any lobbying.

- 3. Evaluate agreement for financial services/Assistant Treasurer

- a. Evaluation with Jennifer and Shelly of the previous years services.
- b. Last year they agreed to a one year agreement (through the Maner audit)
 - i. They estimated 80 hours and came in around 78 hours.
- c. They have interest in continuing to do this again. The agreed amount was \$25/hr.
- d. We will continue to evaluate this agreement annually.

MOTION: Creela moves that we continue to pay Jennifer and Shelly as the Assistant Treasurer at \$25/hour with support from Eric. Approved with unanimous verbal consent.

- 4. Review policy around check signing
 - a. Carly is asking if her name should be on our Checking Account
 - b. Denny agrees that it should be
- 5. USHBC Leadership Scholarship
 - a. Last year we made this motion but no growers made the cut.

MOTION: Creela moves that we support any Michigan Grower to the USHBC Leadership Program with \$1000 to attend this program with support from Carly. Approved with unanimous verbal consent.

MOTION: Rob moves that we approve the April 18, 2023 Treasurers report with support from Jason; motion carries with unanimous verbal consent.

Secretary's Report

Nancy is making excellent progress on closing not only the 2022 crop reporting but collections but the crop years 2019 ,2020, and 2021 as well. We will start with the official numbers. For the 2022 crop we have a reported poundage of 56,439,386.88 (51% fresh/49%process) creating income of 167,790.31\$ less \$1182.13 in reimbursement requests. That represents all but one last first handler. It is estimated that our total 2022 crop in Michigan will max out around 59,413,095.48 lbs., representing income of \$176,711.44. I have updated numbers for 2021 as well. The current official number is 70,802,707.48 lbs., representing \$211,035.15 less \$1,342.97 for reimbursements. Unofficial numbers for 2020 stand at 70,401,471 lbs., creating income of 210,413.46. For 2019 our new unofficial number is 80,919,611.92 lbs., creating income of \$244,650.26.

Research Committee Report

- 1. TRNC Funding Request
 - a. **(Attachment J)**

MOTION: Rob moves that we support TNRC with \$5,000 to fund the installation of a generator to backup the insect growth cambers with support from Eric; passed with unanimous verbal consent.

2. TNRC Planting Update
 - a. They have pruned the new planting and it looks good.
 - b. Fertigation installation seems to be on track
 - c. The underperforming area has one more year to pull out of the slump before we look at removing and abandoning instead of replacing.
3. SWMREC Planting
 - a. Josh Vanderweide
 - i. He provided an update on the SWMREC planting
 1. They are working on repairing tile and planting a summer cover crop (leaning towards rye)
 2. He has decided to stick with the first site despite copper in the soil.
 - b. Rufus said the current farm manager at SWMREC is retiring this June and we should work to educate and build a relationship with the replacement.
4. Cultivar Gall Wasp Evaluation Update
 - a. Rufus talked about field work completed to see the susceptibility of current and future varieties to Gall Wasp.
5. TNRC Advisory Committee
 - a. Creela spoke about the most recent Committee meeting in February and recent purchases of TNRC.
 - b. She visited the new wet lab and it looks great.

Policies and Procedures Committee

1. Denny would like to add MBC Nominations as a responsibility to the Policies and Procedures Committee
 - c. His idea is that up to 2 of the most recent people leaving the commission be a part of this group
2. Current people on the Committee are Carly, Dave, and Denny.
 - a. Denny has spoken to Shelly and Cheryl to assist with future nominations

MOTION: Denny moves that we add MBC Nominations as a responsibility to the Policies and Procedures Committee with support from Jason; passed with unanimous verbal consent.

MSU/MSUE Update

1. Extension

- a. Ron Bates
 - i. Soil plant lab closed last year
 1. Lab manager retired and equipment was too old
 2. To maintain soil testing they are working with A&L labs to run tests and MSU will provide recommendations to growers
 - a. Mailers can be purchased through MSU for this program
 - ii. Project GREEN
 1. 42 total projects were funded
 2. 15% of approved projects were connected to Blueberries

- iii. Renovations to MSU Greenhouses
 - 1. They are starting the bidding process now and hope to start the renovations this fall
- iv. SESMA (**ATTACHMENT K**)
 - 1. Securing Environmentally Sustainable Michigan Agriculture
 - 2. Modeled after the success of Project GREEN
 - 3. A request from the State of Michigan for funding research projects in agriculture to a changing environment (environmental and invasive projects)
 - 4. A request of \$16 million initially with \$10 million recurring.
- v. Apple Extension Specialist Position
 - 1. Clarksville Research Center
- vi. Apple Extension Specialist replacement on the Fruit Ridge
 - 1. Lindsay Brown
- vii. The college of Ag is looking for their new President
 - 1. Teresa Woodruff is the current Interim

2. Faculty/Staff

- a. Carlos Salazar-Garcia
 - i. He has been meeting with planning commissions, asking questions about their actions impacting blueberry farms in Ottawa County.
- b. Kerri Neugebauer
 - i. Covering for Tim Miles
 - ii. They have applied for a SCBG supported by MBC
 - iii. They have applied to a Federal grant for Anthracnose
- c. Mike Reinke
 - i. They have a Hort Society grant to look for viability of UAV chemical applications in blueberries.

MDARD Update

3. Heather Throne

- a. SCBG
 - i. 34 applications received
 - 1. \$3.3 million in requests
 - 2. Michigan has a total of \$2.2 million available
- b. Brad Deacon
 - i. Public Act 63 of 2022
 - 1. PA232 have a strong recommendation of recording of meetings

MBBAC Update- Rex Schultz

4. Chad is currently at the NABC Hill Climb

5. Senator Stabenow is retiring at the end of her current term

- a. MBBAC is in talks to see who will be replacing her on the ag committee to start to build a new relationship

6. USDA zoom meeting

- a. Existing crop insurance program
 - i. It seems like USDA is considering breaking out varieties by season (Early, Mid, Late)
- 7. Next Meeting
 - a. Thursday April 20, at TNRC 1-4pm
- 8. State Rep Greg VanWoerkom
 - a. They had a meeting with him to share current challenges blueberry farmers are facing
 - b. Water discharge permits and EGLE
 - i. Processing facilities

Executive Director Report - Nancy

1. SESMA/SEEDSS update
 - a. Currently being presented in the house budget committee
2. USHBC
 - a. Nancy was thankful for the opportunity to attend the last USHBC Meeting in San Diego.
3. NIFA Grants
 - a. She served on a panel to review research project applications
4. NABC Membership
 - a. NABC is looking for us to become a member for \$2,750
 - i. We get access to the NABC Data and attendance meetings
 - ii. Seat at the table to future task forces
 - iii. The group requested Casey or someone from NABC come and speak with MBC about what that money would be used for. Nancy will look into it for our October meeting.
5. Farm Innovation Grant
 - a. Review committee. \$200k award to Younsuk and his irrigation efficiency project.
6. IPM Alliance Tour
 - a. Weeds and Nematodes
 - b. August 21-23, 2023
 - c. Based out of Grand Rapids this fall
 - d. Greenhouse tours but also interested in seeing blueberry farms
 - e. They are visiting TNRC
 - f. Government Employees
7. Website Update
 - a. Gravity Works proposal was received last night
 - i. They are part of the MFB Family
 - ii. Nancy has been working with them to regain control of our website
 - iii. \$5,700 annual charge to refresh and maintain our website
 - iv. This is tabled until the October Meeting to do more research into associated costs.

- v. We will reup the domain to hold the current website as-is.

Public Comment

9. Eric Heavilin thanked us for supporting the Michigan Foundation for Agriculture and investing in the next generation.
10. Eric Jawor
 - a. Senator Gary Peters and a group visiting their farm soon. Does MBC have any interest in attending?
11. Chad Reenders joined remotely to thank us for sponsoring a part of his trip to the Hill Climb.

Adjournment

MOTION: Creela moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:18 pm with support from Rob; motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Bodtke

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. 4/18/2023 MBC Meeting Agenda
- B. 1/18/2023 MBC Meeting Minutes
- C. Maner & Coserisan Packet- Final
- D. Maner & Coserisan Packet- Management
- E. Maner & Coserisan Audit Letter
- F. Farm Crate Summary
- G. Farm Crate Example
- H. 2023 Ag Literacy Program
- I. MBC Financial Packet
- J. TNRC Generator Request
- K. SESMA