



New York State Maple Producers Association

Minutes of January 6, 2017 Meeting

Vernon-Verona-Sherrill High School

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by President Tony VanGlad. The Secretary read the roll. Present were Tony VanGlad*, Vice President Greg Zimpfer*, Treasurer Karl Wiles*, Secretary Dottie Merle, Executive Director Helen Thomas, Mike Bennett*, Leroy Burnham*, Mike Grottoli, Dwayne Hill*, Jake Moser, Hugh Newton*, Gordon Putnam, Scott St. Mary*, Dave Schiek, Angela Swan*, Doug Thompson*, Dan Truso*, Don Weed*, Haskell Yancey*, and Greg Zimpfer*. (* indicates voting members of the Board.) Also in attendance were Joseph Ganley from NY Ag & Markets, Steve Childs our Cornell University NY Maple Specialist, Dean & Ruth Esther Delavan, Kristiann Frank, Damian Hill, Mike & Debra Kenny, Lyle Merle and Don Moser.

The group recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States.

Greg Zimpfer moved that the minutes of the September 30, 2016 be approved as presented, 2nd by Dwayne Hill – carried.

Open to Membership – there were no items brought before the group.

Officer's Reports

- **President** Tony VanGlad reported that things were relatively quiet over the last few months. He attended a meeting at Ag & Markets in Albany on bourbon barrel syrup – we will be sending a letter to Commissioner Ball stating our organization's position on this issue. He also attended the Ag Society meeting – there were three items presented on behalf of maple. At the Fire Code review meeting at the Department of State on January 3rd, there were no questions raised regarding the proposed fire/public safety codes for sugarhouses for Maple Weekend. As representatives of NYSMPA, Tony & Helen stated our support for the proposed code.
- **Treasurer** Karl Wiles reported that everything is going fine. Our Profit & Loss shows a loss because of the lag in getting reimbursed from the State for some of our expenses. We have to have at least \$100,000 on hand to prepay the expenses and wait for reimbursement. Karl did reiterate that our direct costs per member are about \$65 versus the \$50 we are charging. Dwayne Hill moved to accept Karl's report, 2nd by Haskell Yancey – carried.
- **Executive Director** Helen Thomas said she has attended a number of meetings on behalf of the Association. Along with attending the meetings with Tony that he mentioned, she also attended the IMSI meeting in October regarding nutrition labeling, the Produce Show in New York City in December. Helen felt there was more interest in maple at the Produce Show than she has seen at other types of trade shows (i.e. restaurant, wine tastings). As of this morning, there are 525 members of the Association for 2017 – 10 are new this year, and 174 have not renewed yet. Helen would love to get over the 700 level this year. Cristi Williams, who has a maple operation with her husband, is helping Helen as office clerical support, continuing the fine job she did with state fair bookkeeping. Maple Weekend planning is in progress. Angela Swan commended Helen for all the work she does, including Maple Weekend.

VVS Welcome and Report

Kristiann Frank, VVS FFA President, welcomed the group. She said they anticipate over 1,000 participants this year and that there are multiple new vendors. In the spring, they plan to use GVRMA grant money to do a tour in the Genesee Valley to teach others about maple – they are hoping to go to Rochester and New York City this year. Helen spoke on behalf of the Board thanking the FFA for all the promotion and good will they provide for maple, and for the outstanding effort put forth to make the VVS Winter Conference happen.

Unfinished Business

- Greg Zimpfer moved that the President should sign and submit the updated By-Laws, 2nd by Scott St. Mary – carried.
- Maple Cream Labeling regarding the word “refrigerate” on the label. Helen reached out to Pam Green in Vermont to discuss possible changes in the labeling. Something needs to be done before the NY State Fair since the issue was brought up at the last Fair by Onondaga County health inspectors. Steve Childs said the Food Venture Center shows that in short periods of time, there were no microbiological changes when the cream was out of the refrigerator. Leroy Burnham suggested “refrigerate after opening”. This is still a work in progress.
- Maple Sap Beverage SOI – explanation of maple water/maple beverage. Helen passed out the SOI Definition from NY Ag & Markets. Maple Water is sap from the maple tree – if it is permeate, it is bottled water. The FDA said they do not want to see the product called maple water ... another work in progress. IMSI is trying to get common agreement regarding the SOI and labeling for maple sap as a beverage in all maple jurisdictions. As a point of interest, Helen has had inquiries from Wegman’s indicating they will be doing their own maple sap water beverage this year.
- Fire Codes – The purpose of the proposed fire code changes is to allow sugarhouses to conduct alternative uses for educational/promotional purposes. Helen said they have been working on this code for four years – technically speaking, under existing regulations sugarhouses are not built or zoned for public access. The purpose of the code is to protect producers who invite the public to visit, such as at Maple Weekend. It appears the proposed code will be on the agenda for the Codes Council meeting January 23rd, we expect it to be approved. We have indications from Department of State that they see this as a work in progress and that they want to work with our members to make the code reasonable. Members will be encouraged to be cooperative with their local authorities, but in case of interpretation differences, we can call on the Department for assistance. In addition, our member Charles Wallace, who is a code enforcement officer, has offered his assistance.
- Maple Logo Usage – Do we allow the logo to be used on retail packages? The logo is trademarked and was designed as a marketing tool for our membership. Tony appointed a committee to come up with ideas during the lunch break, topic deferred to business session this afternoon.
- Haskell Yancey moved that we put the new logo on membership plaques, 2nd by Dwayne Hill – carried.

- **Billboard Advertising Proposal** – Helen said the consensus vote recorded is that we should move ahead with this program in the spring – combine general NY Maple advertising and Maple Weekend. There was some discussion on locations and digital versus plain billboard formats. Where would we get the best bang for our buck? Zoey will come up with a proposal and the Executive Committee should have authority to approve and move ahead. If a member has a specific location recommendation, they need to get that information to Helen by January 13th. Karl moved we authorize 20 to 25 billboard months within the \$60,000 budget to be spread around the State with the approval of the Executive Committee, 2nd by Doug Thompson. After further conversation – carried.
- **Cornell Endowment** – the fund has been established and the balance is close to \$100K this year. We need to grow that fund if we are serious about having a position funded. There was discussion on possible ways to raise funds. Helen asked for approval to spend \$1,000 researching fundraising possibilities. Greg moved to give approval, 2nd by Scott St. Mary – carried.

Lunch Break at 11:45 a.m. – meeting called back to order at 12:35 p.m.

IMSI Report – Due to concurrent meetings, Lyle joined us at this point to give his IMSI report. Lyle reported that Quebec has had 3 ft. of snow and Ontario has had lots also. This year's crop might be only average due to deep snow in the woods. There is 83MM pounds carryover in the Federation. Markets are increasing steadily by 7-10% per year – the worldwide market is presently 160-170MM pounds. An IMSI committee is working on creating an Industry slogan. It would be helpful for Zoey to talk with IMSI President Ray Bonnenberg if possible for an exchange of ideas from likeminded people. Dwayne moved we approve asking Zoey to discuss marketing with the IMSI President if possible at no expense to us, 2nd by Scott St. Mary – carried.

Lyle said the rest of the industry is impressed at the marketing New York is doing. The Federation is putting \$5-6MM a year into generic marketing of maple syrup worldwide. Packers are putting more money into marketing than the Federation is. Everyone at IMSI felt the Omni promotion was successful in creating a general awareness of maple syrup and uses.

We could have a challenge growing consumption. New nutrition labeling laws (out in 2018) emphasize sugar in foods that is “added to the diet.” Commissioner Ball is speaking at the CAO today and he has said if we are having trouble with the FDA he would be glad to help us. Health Canada wants a label on the front panel stating that sugar is bad for you. The IMSI has asked the FDA to consider maple syrup labels to have an asterisk to the NFP and a corresponding footnote explaining what 'Added Sugars' means and does not mean for single ingredient products. Our preferred wording of the footnote is “All sugar in this product is a natural, unprocessed component of pure maple syrup. Nothing has been added.” The Board wants to see if the IMSI can get this compromise before taking any actions ourselves.

Further news from IMSI – The FDA does not believe “maple water” is appropriate labeling for a maple sap beverage. RO permeate water is not allowed to be called bottled water – it can be called maple water, maple tree water, maple sap water.

Dr. Navindra Seeram, University of Rhode Island, has done a lot of work analyzing what is in maple syrup in research sponsored by the Federation. He proposes to develop a test that can prove if maple sap water came from the maple tree. Dr. Seeram has paperwork for a grant for \$250K for a combined U.S./Canada research project. NY Ag & Markets believes there could be funding available to help with this through the Specialty Crop Funds. Joe Ganley will check with Ag & Markets to see what they think about this.

Unfinished Business Continued

Angela Swan on behalf of the committee passed out a proposed licensing agreement to be used as a boilerplate for use of the new maple logo. Karl Wiles moved we accept this agreement upon legal approval, 2nd Haskell Yancey – carried. Tony thanked to the committee for their efforts.

New Business

Lobby Day will be February 7th. Jeff Williams, NY Farm Bureau, recommends that we send eight to ten people from our Association to form two teams. He suggested we ask for the same money we asked for last year. Tony VanGlad, Greg Zimpfer, Dave Schiek have volunteered – any others interested should let Dwayne know.

Bourbon Barrel and other flavor enhanced syrup – There was a meeting December 3rd at Ag & Markets to determine regulations concerning these products. Details resulted from the meeting for both process and labeling regulations that will be shared with members in forthcoming newsletters. Ag & Markets will help write those articles. To summarize, the consensus of the meeting attendees was that liquor barrel aged syrup is a safe process that could, therefore, be done in a regular sugarhouse. We drafted a letter to Commissioner Ball requesting an exemption from 20-C kitchen requirements for this product. Also at this meeting, a standard of identity for maple sap beverage was presented to us by the Department. The letter includes an acceptance by our Association for that definition. Dwayne Hill moved that our President sign this letter, 2nd by Don Weed – carried.

Helen is looking for some direction on handling the requests she gets looking for product. Sometimes the request requires kosher syrup, organic, granulated maple sugar, etc. Helen has used left-over granulated sugar from the Fair to go into the tea. Sometimes she needs syrup samples of all four grades for a show and sometimes there is not difference in the grades she gets. It was suggested that when she needs samples that she gets all four grades in quart glass bottles from one producer. She will contact our member producers asking them to sign up to be on the list if they are interested. The Association will pay the producer wholesale for the product. It was agreed that for special orders from Ag & Markets that Helen keeps handling them as she has been doing, which is to find a producer with the specified product who can handle the labeling and deadline requirements.

Syrup Quality Assurance Plan – this is in response to the off-flavor syrup that was entered in the judging at the State Fair as well as numerous comments at board meetings by the Directors. Tony suggested an article in *The Pipeline* that the Board wants to help producers increase the quality of their syrup. Steve Childs is happy to have a class in each region that would also be publicized through Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The Membership Committee chair, Scott St.Mary, moved that we increase dues by \$5 to \$55 for 2018, 2nd by Doug Thompson – carried.

We have been invited to participate in the NY Forester's meeting January 25-27 in Syracuse. There is a \$350 fee to sponsor a table. Mike Bennett moved that we participate, 2nd by Hugh Newton – carried with one abstention.

We have been contacted by Ag & Markets to participate with a product donation for the Council of NE Ag & Markets which will be held in Cooperstown, NY in June. NY Ag & Markets is hosting regional commissioners of each state for a two day convention – expect less than 100 people. Tony moved that we support this event up to \$750 in product, 2nd by Dwayne – carried.

It was requested that all Board members sign the 2017 Conflict of Interest statement.

Dwayne moved that the Association reimburse the President \$.54 per mile when attending functions on behalf of the Association, 2nd by Doug Thompson – carried.

The Association is purchasing polo shirts for the Board members to wear when representing the Association. Greg moved that we purchase the shirts at the Association's expense, 2nd by Dwayne – carried.

Committee Reports:

State Fair – Dave Schiek reported that the cleaner has been in. We will have the floor in the cooler painted with mold resistant paint after a few drains have been added. We had power issues last year and will have another panel box for the popcorn machine this year which should alleviate the problem. We will be working with a minority contractor on the floor drains. It is possible the vendor next to the popcorn machine may not come back this year which would make a couple spaces right next to our booth available. Dwayne moved that if that occurs that we pursue the extra space, 2nd by Doug Thompson – carried.

Maple Weekend – Angela Swan reported that we have 163 participants this year – the dates are March 17, 18, 24 and 25. The press release goes out next week – Zoey has been very helpful. Overall, looks like attendance was up last year. Angela is doing a class tomorrow on how to get the most out of your maple weekend.

North American Maple Syrup Council – Eric Randall's report was submitted.

Legislative Affairs – Dwayne attended the NY Farm Bureau banquet in Albany. Dean Norton will be replaced as President by David Fisher from St. Lawrence County.

New York Certified – Ag & Markets could do some promotion on this program Maple Weekend. They will ask restaurants (424 certified across the state) if they have a recipe item with maple in it that A&M will blast it out for them. Joe Ganley said they are looking for pictures and information on Maple Weekend and will post on the Taste NY website – Angela will send him pictures.

Maple Tour – Jake Moser said the tour is scheduled for August in Lewis County – will be anchored in Lowville at the Ridgeview Motor Lodge and Restaurant. The committee has reserved 30-40 rooms and a meeting room downstairs. Plan a couple presentations on Sunday evening. Monday will center on Jefferson/Oswego areas with eight stops. Tuesday will focus in Lewis County and one stop will be the Museum. They will be meeting again this month to continue tour planning.

American Maple Museum – a Newsletter was included in everyone’s package. Haskell Yancey said they have completed an audio tour of the museum. The Hall of Fame will be moved to the 2nd floor. The NAMSC is providing part of the funding for the upgrade.

President Tony VanGlad announced they are searching for a new Secretary. An ad will be run in ***The Pipeline***.

To better align our budget planning with the State funding, Tony moved that our next meeting be held on May 17th at Helen’s office, 2nd by Dwayne Hill – carried.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dottie Merle, Secretary