NHMPA Board of Directors Meeting

Sunday April19, 2020 7pm via Zoom

Board Members:

Bill Cheney Director David Kemp Director

Darrell Fisk Director Win van Mourik Director

Chris Olsen Director- absent Sue Folsom Treasurer – Zoom host

Nick Kosko Advisor to the Board

Guests:

Brad Presby – member Brian Folsom – member Pam Hird – USDA

The meeting was started at 7:11 pm.

Sue started the meeting and thanked everyone for joining the meeting. All members were asked for any comments or questions on the Treasurer’s Quarter 1 Report that was distributed in advance of the meeting. Nick asked about Brenda’s info for Maple Month promotion. Sue replied she’d asked but had not heard back from Brenda, yet which was unusual. Maple Month promotion was only a little over 4 thousand dollars as of March 31st. We have a 460.00 credit with Binnie Media for future radio ads. Darrell asked where the revenue for the excess Big E syrup that was sold was showing up. It was not clear so Sue will check the quarterly detail from Freedom Accounting in case they actually posted it to container sales. Darrell made a motion to accept the treasurers report as printed. Bill seconded the motion. All present voted in favor.

Sue asked Pam Hird if she had any information from USDA that she could pass on that we might share with our membership. She was stated she was happy to join our meeting and looking forward to working with us. She hadn’t anything specific to pass on from the federal level right now. Reports aren’t due out until May 2020 for the 2019 data.

Sue asked Brad Presby if he had any questions at this point as a guest to the meeting. He indicated that although he thought a couple folks he knew might have been interested in serving again, they have decided not to at this time and he would not as well. Some folks are nervous about the COVID 19 issue. He knows some folks are looking to a fall event to help because they are sitting on a lot of syrup. According to Brad it’s talked about in various circles that 70% of maple sales happen in the fall so this would be a good time to try out a fall event. Pam commented that all of New England typically have big promotions in the spring. She heard that sales were down because everything was cancelled but thought the fall was a good option to pursue.

* Fall Event to replace Maple Weekend

Next Nick was asked to report on talks with the other maple associations about having a fall event. He was on a Zoom conference call with all US maple states and a couple provinces in Canada. Although he said all of the Canadian s would likely get on board. Discussions centered on an event around Columbus Day week/weekend. It would be promoted across the whole maple belt. Promotion would be up to each individual state to carry out. New York has volunteered to come up with a Logo/message (free of charge) with input from everyone that would be consistent across the maple regions. They are waiting to hear from each association if they are on board. So far VT, MI, WI, NY, ME that he knows for sure so far have approved participation. Nick thinks we should too especially since we have left over Maple Month budget money to do this. NH has more tourists in the fall than in the spring. Even with competing events happening through the fall like pumpkin festivals and apple orchards, it’s our best opportunity to bring sales to the membership. Nick pointed out that this could be the start of a new tradition for the association to have two annual events. This would not replace maple weekend but be an add on event. Sue asked if there were any more meetings planned and Nick said yes after they have reports back on participation. Maybe the end of April. Bill asked about timing of advertising. When would we start that? Win suggested that the sooner the better to get that promotion plan worked out. It would give us better chances for outreach. Brad suggested getting in touch with Travel & Tourism. Nick said we work with them for Maple Weekend. According to Nick, Maple Month planning is usually started 3 months in advance to get all the contacts lined up. Prices for ads may be higher in the fall because of the competition from more sources and in the spring there’s less going on. Brad commented that people will really be wanting to get out if things are eased up with the COVID19 pandemic by then. Dave Kemp agreed and suggests we try to complement other events so that everyone can get the maximum result for all. **Darrell made a motion to approve a fall festival. Bill Cheney seconded. Vote was called and all present voted in favor.** Nick will send an email to the group to say we will participate. Also asked for any ideas and suggestions.

* NCIC & Grant Funds

NCIC was contacted by Sue to find out about possible grant funding to help with the fall event. They don’t have funds until July for the next distribution. We would be responsible to fund 35% of a project and they would cover 65%. Sue asked if anyone had any concerns about us looking into that further. Nick asked if there was any stipulation on reporting back from the project. Most things like this want to have a deliverable/measurable report at the end. Sue said she didn’t notice any of that in her initial read through of the application materials and she’d check with Aaron on this. Sue will send Nick a copy of the paperwork to look over. The board members had no concerns about following up this possible source of funding. Brad asked if there was any federal money from the stimulus that we would qualify for. Pam was asked if she knew and thought we should look at the farmer funding and the USDA website might have something there. We could also look at the SBA site (small bus Assn). Other than that, she hasn’t heard any more than us. Nick mentioned he spoke to someone from the SBA a week ago and at the time there was nothing in the farm bill. But it looks like something might come out later. Could be some help if we could prove our income was affected by COVID-19. It would mean showing a drop in revenue because of a decrease in container sales due to the shutdown. But since the banks are handling this it’d be hard to know which one to go to. Nick said he’d reach out to Congressman Pappas’ office for info since he’s the head of the Maple Caucus in Washington.

* Gathering Tank summer edition

Gathering Tank is usually done completely by Brenda with submissions from others. Sue will reach out to Brenda for getting that going. We will aim for a May release date.

* Summer Meeting

Summer Meeting - we don’t know if the social distancing will be relaxed enough by then to hold one. It will likely depend on how NHs infection rate goes and what the Governor does. It may be as much dependent on how Mass is doing with their infection. Darrell said maybe we should work on a venue in the meantime. Brad suggested that August would be the latest we could hold a meeting depending on how that all goes. Nick said he thought Lucien offered to host this year to celebrate his 100th anniversary. Sue will ask him.

* Fairs: Big E – Deerfield - Hopkinton

Fairs – Win said we may need to consider cancelling everything and save money for the fall promotion. Darrell said he thought we should think about them despite not knowing what will happen. Need to have something in place in case they could happen to keep from scrambling at the last minute. Darrell offered to contact Hopkinton Fair and see if they’d let us back in. Nick recommended doing Deerfield if it’s allowed since we only pay after the event based on gross sales. Sue said she’d be surprised in the Big E happened given the current infection rate in Massachusetts since it brings in over a million people over two weeks to the fair.

* Other Business

Darrell brought up that we talked about doing a questionnaire to members. Sue said she remembered that topic being talked about, but we hadn’t decided on moving it forward at that time. Now may be a good time to get responses while folks are thinking about what they need. Darrell said some people are looking for glass containers so that could be a question. Nick said in past surveys the number one item mentioned was “Education” from the members. Sue asked if there was a particular topic we could look into. Perhaps reach out to Proctor for topics they already have done that we could offer. Mailing surveys to everyone was discussed but the cost gets costly and dues only add up to a little over $7,000 annually to cover basic Association costs. That’s why container sales and extra revenue from the fairs are so important to our survival. Nick will put some questions together for a new survey. Need some yes and no and some dialog type answers. Anyone with ideas for the survey can let Nick know. Nick said the last few emails had a much higher open rate than in the past. That was a positive note.

Dave Kemp brought up the Maple Museum since we still haven’t moved the balance of the collection items from the barn into the museum building at the Rocks. It’s important for us to do this as the SPNHF has asked us to. Darrell commented he would like to see a trailer made to travel and display some of the collection at fairs etc. Sue offered to reach out to Nigel about arranging a move of the remaining items from the barn. She’s had several people offer to help move stuff when the time comes. Brad said he has tractors and trailers to load stuff on. We’ll probably need some kind of cutting saw to cut down a couple evaporators.

Dave also commented that we need to continue to push the message that this is the ***members***NHMPA and we need engagement & support from many more members to help spread the work load out. Please get involved and give back.

Win brought up the website. There was an issue with the website map, and he had to have Google maps turned on and then off again once we were in lockdown. This saved us money because each map click charged us a fee. There was also the thought that the website needed some upgrading and if we wanted to try and do that now. Loud Canvas is not really doing any new projects at the moment, however. Bill Cheney commented that we should probably wait since income will be uncertain this year. Sue said she’d want to defer any web updates until next year. Even if things open up in the fall with Lod Canvas, we would not want to be doing anything with the website during a fall promotion event. Win agreed. Nick asked if they could give us a static map instead of an interactive map. Win said he’ll reach out to them and Brenda about that.

Motion to adjourn was made by Win and seconded by Darrell Fisk. Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm