NHMPA April 12, 2022 Monthly Meeting Minutes

7pm via Zoom

Members Present: Dave Kemp, Andrew Chisholm, Alisha Powell, Darrell Fisk, Doug Byam, Chris Olsen, John Kenney, Kelly Byam, Charles Hunt, Nathan Adams

Members Absent: None.

Meeting called to order at 7:04pm by Andrew Chisholm

1. **Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes/Upcoming Meeting Dates**
2. 3/1/22 Board Meeting Mins: Motion to approve by Darrell, second by Chris
3. Next Monthly meeting date: Tuesday May 10 (limited availability)
4. **Introduction of new potential board members:** John Kenney, Kelly Byam

Andy introduces John Kenney, who has volunteered to join the board. He has been sugaring for many years in Cheshire County. He has experience from having been on the board of directors at Cheshire Fair, and many other agricultural endeavors. Motion to approve John by Andrew, seconded by Doug Byam. All in favor, none opposed.

Also, Kelly Byam has been helping out in many capacities lately, especially with responding to emails for the association and has taken over many responsibilities that have taken a lot of pressure off our workloads as well as saving the association money by taking some of the work away from Morning Ag Clips (MAC). She has been responding to emails in a very timely manner and has been helping us out greatly. She has great customer service skills. Andy makes a motion to approve Kelly as a board member, seconded by Dave, all in favor, none opposed.

1. **How was everyone’s season?** Chris Olsen had a great season. He made more syrup per tap than prior years. John had a good season with 135 taps and made 52 gallons. He is planning 800 taps for next year. Darrell shares that Ben made 10K gallons. Andy works with Chris Hicks and they didn’t have a very good season with weather issues and an early end. Dave Kemp had a tough season due to repairs that had to be made and other issues. Charles had a great season, the best ever that they have had. They had a best ever Maple Month. Doug and Kelly Byam had a great year as well. Alisha & Nathan relate that they had a pretty good season at Stuart & John’s, it felt very up and down but ended up with a good crop.
2. **Container Shortage Update, Pricing Increases:** Andy shares that pint containers shipped today to Sunnyside. Quart containers have been going out every week in limited numbers. Most have gone to Sunnyside because he has the biggest backlog. Otherwise some have gone to other distributors. Andy is in touch with Gordy from Bacon jug regularly, every Tuesday and Thursday. The distributors have been good about allocating to different producers as well. There have been 3-4 pallets a week. For now we have deferred any plans for CDL jugs as long as Bacon can continue to trickle out quart jug production; but if anything changes we would continue to pursue that option. Doug thinks it’s a good idea to stick with Bacon, because he has heard about a lot of issues with the CDL jug caps. Progress is being made, but we aren’t caught up yet. We are about 480 cases short now from 680 short at the high. Andy always felt the best option was to keep with Bacon jugs to keep one cohesive jug option for our members, but we had to explore other options in case Bacon couldn’t get us the jugs out. Gordy continues to work on getting us more jugs as time goes on. If we had placed an order with CDL in February, we wouldn’t have gotten those jugs until late May or June; so this option is working out better.

The maple cream container prices have gone up, and the rice packages have gone up dramatically. In 2019 for a 1.4 oz $158/case. The last purchase order in 12/21 was $178. For 1.5 oz it went from $158 to $178 in 12/21. We have heard it may go up beyond that as well. We will need to address that price increase. The container subcommittee just consists of Darrell, he will call and see if Bill is still looking to participate. We had also discussed that the dye that we use is owned by Ben’s. Darrell doesn’t believe he would give it up. Andy says that it could be purchased from Rice Packaging for $1,200. Darrell thinks that we could continue to use Ben’s. Andy and Darrell discuss different perspectives on how best to move forward with this in the future, and move into discussion regarding container accounting. Right now accounting is straightforward because the containers that come in, also go right out. Chris wonders if this discussion would be more appropriate for the container subcommittee to discuss outside the board meeting; At this point, this conversation will need to happen between the people on the container subcommittee and we allow the container subcommittee to deal with this outside the board meeting—Darrell, Andy and possibly Dave will meet separately to discuss. We will likely have to have a modest increase in our prices on this, as so many are having to do as a result of the current issues with inflation.

1. **Promotions Committee Update**: Wrap up of maple season ad stats, plans going forward: Andy and Alisha met with MAC and Townsquare Media to summarize the results of the ad campaigns for Maple Month. We came in under budget on both campaigns. Some of the unspent budget will be allocated to advertising for fairs this summer. The results of the ad campaigns were outstanding, with a lot of reach and engagement on the digital ads. The results were reviewed by Townsquare with us yesterday in a Zoom meeting. Andy also notes that he called many sugar houses after Maple Weekend and heard that the turnout was the best many had ever seen, hopefully due in part to the ads and also due to pandemic fatigue. Alisha notes that Townsquare Media was willing to meet with the Board to review our ad stats but we decided to summarize with everyone in the interest of time. Anyone who wants to join the meetings to hear about ad results is welcome, Kelly and John would like to be included with that. There will be more analysis of our advertising results by Townsquare forthcoming. John wonders if we only advertised with Townsquare, which seems more focused on the seacoast. Their radio stations do have a large reach across NH. We also focused a lot on the digital ads that they did too. Darrell suggests targeting down into CT as well. For next year we can build on all of this to hopefully improve results. Andy invites anyone to email him to bring feedback for the future. We will add a request to our newsletter this Friday asking for more feedback from members.
2. **New Opportunity:** Office of International Commerce – Division of Economic Development – Grant Opportunity:

 Earlier today we received an email from this office asking if we want to potentially

 apply for a grant between 200k-500k over three years to promote NH Maple on an International level. Preliminarily we are very interested in learning about this. We would be able to work on promotion of NH Maple abroad, as well as promotion of agritourism in regard to Maple. This presents many possibilities that this could open up for the NH Maple brand. Motion to move forward with pursuing this opportunity made by Andy, seconded by Doug, all in favor, none opposed.

1. **Summer meeting planning:** We have had a lot of feedback that people would like to have the meeting at a Sugar House somewhere around the state. Dave suggests that Lucien and Muriel Blais at Bisson’s Sugar House were supposed to host prior to Covid, but it had to be cancelled. Dave suggests reaching out to them to see if they would like to try it again. Date is yet to be determined.
2. **Fair planning:** Andy and Alisha met with Gail Jellie about the Big E to discuss the possibility of trying to participate once again at the Big E this year. The Dept of Ag would help us use the model that they used last year, where they employed people in the booth. They would allow us to do the same this year; they would allocate 2 people on weekdays, 3 people on weekends; the cost of those employees would be $250/day per person. As an association we would need to then recruit some volunteers to go down and help sell syrup and engage with customers. Dave states that he worries that it wouldn’t be right to not pay our own volunteers. We discussed many possibilities regarding how this could potentially work, and how it has worked in the past. It will require more planning and consideration, and we can’t make a final decision just yet. John would be interested in helping out. We will form a subcommittee consisting of Bud Taylor, Alisha, Andy, Darrell, and John to meet and discuss fair planning.
3. **Website issues**: future plans- We are well aware of the issues with our website, and how much that became an issue with renewals for memberships and also with our listings this year. We know we need to address this and we will be looking at this in the future. Kelly notes that there were a lot of issues that came through our email in regard to the sugar house listings. Chris notes that he was involved with the development of the website when it was first introduced. It was working well for awhile, but was always hard for people who aren’t tech savvy. Going forward, Chris states that he will get involved with helping with that, and Kelly will as well. Chris will also reach out to Nick Kosko who was involved in the past.

**Misc:** Darrell asks Chris if he would be willing to consider taking on the role of VP for the NHMPA board. He would be willing to possibly consider it, depending on the work load. Darrell wonders about running the idea of the International Grant by Bruce Bascom for his input on this, Andy agrees this would be a good idea. Bascom’s does a lot of business and ships syrup and granular sugar all over and would probably have some good insight.

Next meeting planned for Tuesday, May 10 at 7pm.

Motion to adjourn by Darrell

Seconded by Kelly

Meeting Adjourned @ 9:06pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Alisha A. Powell, Secretary