NHMPA September 7, 2022 Monthly Meeting Minutes

7pm via Zoom

Members Present: Andrew Chisholm, Alisha Powell, Charles Hunt, Kelly Byam, Darrell Fisk,

Kate Ziehm from Morning Ag Clips. Bud Taylor present for the portion of the discussion re:fairs.

Members Absent: Dave Kemp, Nathan Adams, Doug Byam, Chris Olsen

Meeting called to order at 7:07pm by Andrew Chisholm

1. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes/Upcoming Meeting Dates
2. August 2, 2022 minutes: Motion to approve by Kelly, Seconded by John, all in favor, none opposed.
3. Next Monthly meeting date: Considered either Monday October 3, Tuesday Oct 11, Weds Oct 12: We will go with Tuesday Oct 11 at 7pm.
4. Fair Update: Bud shares that North Haverhill was not profitable, but Cheshire was. Bud and Andy reviewed inventories in and out, pricing, and sales. Bud worked with Christa from MAC to assure that the producers who provided product will be paid appropriately. We cleared about $450 dollars for Cheshire, but at North Haverhill we were down about $1500 unfortunately.

Bud felt that we developed a good relationship with the staff at the North Haverhill fair which was a good outcome there. We may be able to be in the Blaisdell Museum up there next year which would be in Bud’s opinion a better location for us to set up. Bud is planning to discuss more and meet with the folks at North Haverhill.

Bud felt that Cheshire went well overall and thanks Alisha for her work there. Deb Locke also worked hard and helped a lot with the sales at Cheshire which was very helpful and much appreciated. The most difficult part of the fair effort for these was moving product around. Bud notes that Charlie Hunt was key in helping us set up, move the trailer, and Bud thanks him as well, saying we could not have done it all without him.

Lancaster fair was cancelled for us. Bud had gone up, met with the fair staff, and met with Dave Fuller who had built the building up there. He learned more about the history up there as well. Ben had been a part of it for a few years in the past when he ran it for the association. There was another vendor who had been there in the last few years, and she had already signed a contract to be in the sugarhouse space. The fair staff was hoping the association could work in the same space with her this year. The other vendor felt strongly that she didn’t want us in the space with her. The fair committee up there expressed interest in talking with us about participation there for next year, even after this all took place. Bud believes it would have been successful had we been able to do it.

The association will have to discuss if we would like to try again next year for Hopkinton or not. We are heading into Deerfield soon. Andy and Bud have been working on this.

Andy thanks Bud, Alisha, Charlie and Deb Locke for all the work on the fairs so far. Some takeaways: We can’t run North Haverhill the way we did this year, as the cost of overnight stays is too high given that it is a smaller size fair. We would need some local help. It would be good to get into the Museum building. Cheshire overall went well.

Andy notes that for Deerfield there will be several promotional efforts including radio spots, radio interviews, and some other promotional plans. We are very optimistic about Deerfield; we have a lot of experience running the fair there and we know what to anticipate.

Andy is planning to bring his first load of syrup down to the Big E next weekend. The planning and prep for this is going well. Andy has tickets for volunteers and arrangements made. They would like us to have some maple producers down there at least some of the time. At the next monthly meeting, we will recap all of the fair numbers and wrap it all up and talk about future plans for next year.

Andy also noted that he did some work this past weekend to work on getting the association back into Hopkinton and hopes to see that come to fruition next year.

Bud also noted that John Kenney and Heidi Bundy were very helpful at North Haverhill as well, and thanked them for their efforts.

1. Alisha’s Resignation/Emergency need for volunteers

Alisha shares that she is very regretful to have to step down from her position with the board. This is something that has been wrestling with for several months, but ultimately the needs of her family are too great, and she has to focus more time at home. At times she estimates she has had to devote upwards of 10+ hours a week to the association, along with other commitments, and this is unsustainable.

Andy agrees, that the amount of work we are doing is substantial, and it is unsustainable for the long term. Kelly has been very helpful for us in answering the emails. We appreciate everything MAC is doing, but we pay them hourly. The cost of engaging MAC for treasurer work is not insignificant, and if we add Secretary work to that, it will become extremely costly, leading to the eventual financial instability of the association.

The positions held on the board are required by law as a non-profit organization.

Alisha will be staying on through Nov. 1, to hopefully help with winter meeting prep and will be available even after that to assist in a minor role where needed.

Kate Ziehm adds that this is not an uncommon position for a board like this to be in. She suggests that we meet outside of the usual board meeting to work on trying to strategize new ways to find help, because burnout is a real issue for volunteers.

MAC is willing to help with this if needed.

Andy feels that the winter meeting will be a “Make-Or-Break” meeting. We need that opportunity to sit down with members and make a strong plea for new volunteers. Andy is placing a lot of importance on attendance at the winter meeting, hoping that it will be our chance to gather more excitement about the opportunities the board has ahead, as well as engagement, help and volunteers.

1. International Syrup Promotion Grant: Andy shares that in addition to the $67K grant we received last year to promote NH Maple, we have been awarded the grant to promote NH Maple internationally. This is a very large sum of money that has been granted to the NHMPA. This is a large validation in the direction the NHMPA has been going. These grants are wonderful in terms of the opportunity to promote NH Maple, but they don’t necessarily help us with the day to day expenses that the association has to spend. The grant information as posted on USDA Website as of today is:

**“Recipient:** NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs Concord, NH

**Project Type:** Market Development and Promotion

**Award Amount:** $388,080.00

***Beyond Pancake's Best Friend: A Market Development Program to Highlight New Hampshire Maple's Many Uses to Expand Sales and Production***

New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) will develop a marketing strategy to promote maple syrup/sap products, support producers year-round and promote sustainability in production, and adapt to climate change. Funding will advertise the uses of maple as a minimally refined ingredient that can be used in everyday recipes in the United States and around the world. Once the strategy is developed, BEA will encourage and support maple producers in attending domestic and international trade events, identified after market research, and incorporate the marketing strategy into their business promotion plans. BEA will partner with the New Hampshire Maple Producers Association (NHMPA), a non-profit trade association dedicated to promoting the high quality of New Hampshire’s maple tradition. BEA anticipates this award will benefit consumers around the world by promoting New Hampshire maple production, including best practices for sustainability, while directly assisting more than 350 producers with increased sales and increased production to meet the demand for high-quality maple syrup/maple sap products. The Office of International Commerce (OIC) will lead this project for BEA, with a focus on expanding New Hampshire’s exports of maple products. This will build on a successful 2021, where New Hampshire was the #1 exporter of maple syrup and maple sugar in the United States.”

This will include market research, domestic and international food trade shows, possibly in Singapore or Japan; things like advertising, agritourism, developing new recipes, and promotional video development. We have been given a huge, amazing opportunity; but yet, we have very few viable volunteers to help us with facilitating any of this. We really need to back this up with a full arsenal of volunteers.

Kelly shares that there was an email to the NHMPA email regarding Harvest Hosts. It is a website that allows people to stay on farms for RV stays. She wonders if this would be something we could incorporate in with this.

Andy feels that could be a possibility; this and much more. This grant is so significant that he feels it will help lead to many more opportunities.

Kate says that grants really help propel an organization into another arena, growing public interest and education. The grant money is “free”, but there is a price tag with it—meaning, the association needs to maintain its own financial health in order to remain in good standing for the facilitation of these grants.

Andy agrees with that point. It is imperative that we gain more engagement, volunteers and maintain the usual business of the Association.

Andy notes that a lot of people ask what benefit the association gives them as producers, and all that we are doing with promotions and these grants really show how much we can do for NH Maple.

Kate says that right now is a good time to write to the members to talk about what members can do to help all of this move forward. Andy is planning to write something up very soon. This will of course be part of the discussion at the meeting in January.

1. New Container Prices: Andy has been working on the project for helping to adjust the potential new container prices. We haven’t changed the prices for our members over the course of the last year, and with inflation we are at a point where we need to adjust pricing. New proposed pricing as follows (this was developed after cost analysis and with input from container vendors, etc):

Case Prices:

Gallon 68.75

Half gallon: 110.65

Quart: 148.75

Pint: 172.50

Half Pint: 158.75

Quarter Pints: 290.00

Motion to accept this new pricing structure and implement as of tomorrow morning by Andy, Seconded by John. All in Favor, None Opposed.

These will go into effect tomorrow.

1. Membership Issues: Kelly and Christa from MAC have been discussing considering what our situation is for the 2023 membership; who is making the renewal cards? Will there be any changes in pricing? Kate notes that Christa excels in planning ahead with these types of issues to stay organized. Andy feels that this process should take place in mid-late October. Membership cards would have usually been sent out by the Secretary; it will likely have to be handled by MAC. As far as the online portion, Kelly was able to coordinate last year with MAC to catalog online renewals. We are planning to do mail-out renewal forms, and there are a few equipment dealers who are willing to “sponsor” this by adding coupons to this.

We are planning on staying the same as far as membership rates this year.

We have discussed in the past adding a “non-producer, supporting member” category to allow people who have an interest in NH Maple to join as well. We are thinking about adding that to our membership renewal form as an option for this year as well. Kelly makes a motion to add a membership category that is a Supporter of Maple, Non-Producer. This should be a half-price membership of $20 annually.

Prior to a vote, further discussion was had. Could these members be on the board? According to the bylaws, the only board member that technically has to be a maple producer is the president.

Alisha notes that this could potentially change the nature of the association significantly for the future. It could spur on some growth, allowing more producer-adjacent family, friends, employees, retirees, etc to consider joining and becoming involved with the association if they have an interest in sugaring, but don’t own a sugar house. Alisha notes this could open a can of worms so to speak in some ways, but it also may encourage growth in the association and open up more opportunities over time for engagement in the association. It would provide an opportunity for retired sugar makers to pay a lower fee to join. Another thing we had discussed was a junior member option, for kids of a certain age under 18, to help spur youth interest in the association and sugaring.

Andy agrees. We all have friends and family that help in our sugaring operations and may be interested in learning more, attending meetings, events and lectures.

Kelly also notes that she knows people that may want to do that at her own sugar house.

Alisha says she is curious to know what Darrell thinks as someone who has been with the association for a long time and knows a lot more of the history.

Darrell notes that you can join other states associations as well, you just don’t have voting rights.

Andy agrees it would make sense to limit voting rights, and limit board seats for supporting members.

Darrell also notes that we would have to consider how we would handle vendors.

Motion made by Andy to offer a supporting member category for membership, this would be a non-producer of maple, for 2023. They would not be able to sit on the board, would not be voting members, but could sit on subcommittees. This would expire in a year after we evaluate how this goes.

All in favor, none opposed.

Accounting for the Association:

Andy makes a motion for Christa Campbell from Morning Ag Clips to be a check-signer representing the association. Seconded by Alisha. All in favor, none opposed.

Misc:

Kelly and Andy thank Alisha for her involvement and for all she has been doing.

Signage: There were some signs printed with some of our promotional budget from the original grant; John Kenney is going to pick these up tomorrow as long as they have been paid for. They have nutritional facts and some good information about Maple for our sugar house visitors to see. These were done by Gem Graphics. They were designed by MAC, and printed by Gem. In the future Gem Graphics could design signs as well. Alisha notes that in the future, the promo subcommittee should discuss things like standing roadside signboards directing people to sugarhouses, or other materials like that, that could be helpful to our members as well. We have a lot of good posters, but we need to start thinking about other materials, and asking our members for ideas and input as to what marketing materials could be helpful for them.

To end the meeting, Andy says we have gotten some really good endorsements from the agencies that have given us these grants. We have a lot of exciting things happening. We need to focus on finding help and increasing engagement.

Next meeting planned for Tuesday Oct 11 at 7pm.

Motion to adjourn by Andy

Seconded by Darrell.

Meeting Adjourned @ 8:31pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Alisha A. Powell, Secretary