



NHMPA Meeting Minutes Monday, June 19, 2023 ▪ 7 pm via Zoom

Board members present: Doug Byam, Kelly Byam, Charlie Hunt, Dave Kemp, John Kenney, Kate Stanley, Will Streeter, Stephanie Kelly (MAC), and Kate Ziehm (MAC)

Board members absent: Chris Olsen

Guests present: Marianna Chapman, FEAST Global

Interim President John Kenney called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Old Business

- a. Marianna Chapman from FEAST Global: Marianna said she was happy to meet everyone in person and is sorry this is the first time they met. She and Andy did fly up to New Hampshire to see how maple is made about a month ago. Their firm is based in Mississippi, working in business development since 1989, working specifically with food for the last 13 years. They have worked with Georgia Pecans and other premium products. Several years ago, they were working with the State of Virginia and it was recommended that if they could ever work with maple, they have to do it. They researched maple and were very interested and waited about 5 years before finally getting the chance to help write this Acer grant with the State of New Hampshire. They have had good conversations with Adam about how the State of NH administers its USDA grants - it is different in every state. If everyone does their jobs, the whole industry will benefit. Marianna said, "the grant is USDA's way of saying we know you have something and ROI is possible but it is scary to try to do the international work." Every dollar invested in FEAST Global last year returned

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\$121 into the economy. These grants are like an incubator to help reach into these new markets. Kelly said she spent most of the day reading through all of the documentation she could find, but she doesn't think the Board has all of the documentation dealing with the grant. There was a lot of discussion about marketing on the domestic side but not as much on the international side; is FEAST covering domestic work too? Marianna said they started hyperlocal, then went regional, then went global only about 5 or 6 years ago. Andy is a chef. They did virtual trade missions during Covid and no one else was doing them, so it really skyrocketed their reach. The Acer grant program leans global, but it does domestic too. FEAST will support both domestic and international programming - whatever is the sweet spot for NHMPA. Marianna thinks the Association will do very well in the international market and in the deep South, where this is a significant culinary market. There are opportunities for smaller and growing producers. FEAST matches opportunities to the amount of product available to be sold. Doug asked when FEAST represents a group, is there a guarantee of exclusivity? Marianna said absolutely - they will work exclusively with NH. Will asked about the discrepancy between the grant and the FEAST contract. Marianna said the Acer grant is \$388,080, and the FEAST contract was actually for \$285,000 - the contract was very vague to comply with USDA requirements. There are some specific required amounts that stay with the state of New Hampshire for auditing. The original contract may need to be updated since it was written with Andrew Chisholm. Debra Locke asked if the contract is for just syrup or all value-added products? Marianna said it is all products; "if you can make it, we can sell it." John confirmed the contract would get revamped if the Association decided to move forward; Marianna said yes. Also the way the grant is written, there is a phase of market research/planning; FEAST could

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include NHMPA to the extent the Association wants to be included. The strategy really has to match the producers' personality and work plan. Stephanie clarified the differences between the USDA grant from the State of NH and the FEAST contract and the budget that FEAST provided. Will asked about shipping costs on an order; Marianna explained how an order would actually be processed. She discussed export credit insurance, payment options (upfront, terms, etc.), shipping (or trade) terms, fees (customs, logistics), etc. Marianna said FEAST will "babysit you through ... until you do one or two" - then the producers will be up to speed on how it works. They use reputable freight forwarders. Chris Hicks asked if this is all done through the individual producer or the Association. Marianna said most commonly the leads are compiled and sent to everyone, and people can bid; buyers can pick who they like. Don't play price games; price your product fairly and let buyers decide. Buyers can give specific info about packaging or color, and producers know their inventory to know if they can bid. Don't overcomplicate it [by having the Association manage incoming orders]; individual producers can just respond - everyone is treated the same. This becomes a benefit of membership. Chris asked how large are typical orders? Marianna said foreign orders are usually a pallet; domestic orders can be as small as you're comfortable selling. Will said this is where small producers can have an opportunity with value-added products like maple cream or nuts. Barb asked if the grant is for large producers; Stephanie reiterated the different discussions that have been had over the past few weeks. Marianna confirmed Acer grants are written for the entire industry. USDA awards the grants to benefit everyone; they are not against producers of a certain scale, but they are trying to have "the high tide raise all the ships" and give smaller producers some benefits. Large producers will benefit by default, but the grant is for the industry - no one is excluded. Marianna said there

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was concern about the Seal of Quality program excluding people from participating; again, the funds are to benefit the entire industry in New Hampshire. Will said the Association requires SOQ certification for the Fairs to put out the best product; the Board will need to determine if the Association wants to require SOQ certification to participate in the grant, but USDA will not. Marianna said trust your buyers; they will have to taste the product. Dave asked about a producer selling non-NH syrup. Marianna said USDA wants to see that sales opportunities were created, and international buyers make it a priority for single source to be a marketing angle. Kate S thanked Marianna for clearing up many misconceptions; the Board felt they were misled. Kelly asked about lead time and pricing for researching. Marianna said the first order usually takes a little bit; they could have orders this fall for the next sugaring season. Some other products have had orders take 60-90 days to ship. For market research, Marianna said they will get pricing in the markets where products will be sold. Debra Locke, said it “Isn’t about just selling NH maple worldwide. This is about selling NH maple to tourist destinations that make them buy it at home.” Marianna said they would love to do the project, and it does not have to be very complicated. She wants clear communication regardless of who administers the grant. The Board needs to confirm who is going to receive the money, who is going to do the reporting. FEAST is really good at keeping USDA happy. It’s an important thing to report well, show results, and be compliant. Marianna also asked that the Association shoot straight with her, and she will be really honest in return. Marianna left the meeting.

- b. John said he feels more comfortable now that the Board has more information. He asked how other Board members feel. Will asked if there is anyone to administer the grant. Stephanie said Morning Ag Clips can do it in partnership with FEAST Global,



and FEAST would do the reporting. Will said that Andrew Chisholm said that Commissioner Jasper said the State of NH would just deposit all of the grant funds into the Association's account - no reimbursement. Will said he would be more comfortable if the Association had a separate account for the grant. Kelly said she thought something was missing; Stephanie reviewed the documents that were sent from Adam's office. Barb said she used to work for the state and helped walk through the documents that Adam sent. Kate Z said it seems now that the Board is closer to coming to agreement; Stephanie will reach out to Adam on Monday for one more meeting to finalize a few more questions. Kate Z asked if the group could meet at 5 pm instead of 7 on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday for Adam; all confirmed the earlier meeting time. Barb looked up what USDA considers a "large" producer - she doesn't think there would be very many based on USDA's definition - just Bascom's and Ben's.

- c. Discuss/determine USDA grant administrator and next steps - TBD following meeting with Adam next week
- d. Booths at the Big E and Deerfield Fair/Response to Commissioner Jasper's emails - John said in one of Commissioner Jasper's emails, the Commissioner was very apprehensive about the Association having product at the Big E - John will respond to him again since the Commissioner did not respond to the message John already sent him. Kate Z suggested a couple of committees - maybe get some people at the Summer Meeting - Deerfield Fair Committee and Big E Committee with a Board member heading up each committee. That way, no one person is doing everything and there is buy-in from membership. John said he would like there to be committees with follow-through. Dave said there are lots of people who would like to sell their product at the Fairs, but the Bylaws seem to have held the Association



back. Stephanie read through the section of the Bylaws related to Conflict of Interest, which does not prohibit the transactions; it just requires disclosure and a vote in the minutes. John said he would like to limit the committees to a maximum of 5 or 6 people, and there should be a Board member as Chair of each committee. John will head up the Big E committee. Will said he knows Sunnyside has the boxes for candy sales at the Big E. Dave said Andrew was going to work on Rice Packaging making all three sizes of boxes. Kate S is willing to talk with Mike Moore about coming back as Container Chair and to ask about boxes. John will confirm with Alisha that she is still managing the Cheshire Fair. Will said producers who sell syrup at Deerfield can be on the committee - at the next meeting, we will finalize the Chairs for Deerfield and the Big E. John is willing to take Deerfield if someone else wants the Big E. Kelly and Doug are willing to help but not comfortable chairing a committee. Will said Andrew had committed the Association to providing a Point-of-sale machine (Square terminal) for the Fair - the Association has iPads.

- e. Will confirmed that Dave Kemp was re-elected to a regular Board term at the January meeting so he is permitted to vote.
- f. Kate mentioned a website committee - will include her and Kelly as well as maybe one or two other members who have been responsive/vocal but not just complainers.
- g. Reschedule July 24 Board Meeting - John would like the group to meet in-person every so often. Move to Monday July 10 - Stephanie will send an updated meeting invitation.

Motion to adjourn by Will with a second by Kelly; motion carried.

Meeting adjourned 9:07 pm.