

Draft Minutes
Virginia Apple Board
Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant – Staunton, VA
December 12, 2016

Call to Order

Chairman Graves called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM and welcomed the Board and guests

Present

Lynn Graves
Dudley Rinker
Bethany Hill

Stephen Ginn
Marshall Saunders
Tommy Williams

Absent

None

Guests

Melissa Ball
David Robishaw

Liz White

Approval of the minutes from December 14, 2015

Prior to the meeting, David Robishaw sent the Board the minutes. After a brief discussion, Stephen Ginn moved to accept the minutes as presented, Bethany Hill seconded, and the motion passed.

Financials

Prior to the meeting, David Robishaw sent the Board the financials for both the Virginia Apple Growers Association and the Virginia Apple Board. David Robishaw reviewed the numbers for both organizations. The Board asked when the tax bills for the current crop will be mailed out, and David will email the Department of Taxation and find out.

Changes to Apple Code

During the last General Assembly session, Virginia Agribusiness Council, Farm Bureau, and VDACS worked together to have all the Commodity Boards operate in a similar fashion. The Apple Board also changed from having 9 members (3 per district) to 6 members (2 per district) partially because the Board only meets 1 time per year, plus it is more difficult to find qualified growers willing to serve. The Board did not need to take any action on this.

Apple Board Annual Report

Prior to the meeting, David Robishaw sent the Board a copy of the annual report. The Annual Report is required by the Code of Virginia as a way of informing the tax paying growers on the activities of the Apple Board as well as detailing how the tax money is being spent. The Annual Report is posted on the VDACS web site as well as the industry web site.

U. S. Apple Export Council

Prior to the meeting, David Robishaw sent the Board a copy of the dues for the upcoming year.

David Robishaw is the new Chairman of the US Apple Export Council and he reviewed some the marketing activities conducted by the Council. After discussion, Dudley Rinker moved to remain a part of the US Apple Export Council and pay the dues of \$13,614 for the next season. Tommy Williams seconded the motion, and with no further discussion, the motion passed.

Distribution of the Tax Revenue from the 2016 Crop

Every year, the Board has to decide how to allocate the tax collections. According to the Code, up to 40% may go to US Apple Association, 20% to the Virginia State Horticultural Society, 20% to the Virginia Agricultural Research Program (VARP), 10% to administration, and 10% to the reserve fund. This year, since the reserve fund is capped at \$125,000, that money will not be allocated but remain in cost code 646 for distribution the following year.

After discussion, Marshall Saunders moved to give US Apple Association 30%, Virginia State Horticultural Society and VARP 20% each, and 10% to administration. Dudley Rinker seconded, and with no further discussion, the motion passed.

Web Site and Social Media

Prior to the meeting, David Robishaw sent the Board statistics from the web site as well as the proposal from Flair Communication for FY 18 for web site and social media work.

During the December 2015 meeting, the Board voted to spend up to \$4500 for the remainder of FY 15 and all of FY 16 for web site development. The actual project is going to cost \$4662, slightly over allowable amount. Bethany Hill moved to approve spending to cover the additional charges, not to exceed \$300. Tommy Williams seconded, and with no further discussion, the motion passed.

The Flair Communication proposal for FY 18 (July 1 2017 to June 30, 2018) includes the web site but also a 5 month active Facebook effort. The Facebook work will focus on July through November, the peak season for consumers to visit orchards and for fresh apples in retail stores. The actual breakdown is \$2500 for web site maintenance, hosting, and other related activities, \$1975 for 5 months Facebook, and \$500 if additional marketing activities are identified. This extra money can only be spent with the approval of the Chairman. With no further discussion, Bethany Hill moved to accept the proposal from Flair Communication for \$4975, Marshall Saunders seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Old Business

At the last meeting, the Board discussed the potential impact of new Federal legislation, commonly referred to as the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). At the time of the meeting, the FSMA had not been fully implemented, but the industry was anticipating that it would become operational in the very near future. Virginia Tech has offered some introductory classes to deal with the new regulations, and this will be an ongoing effort.

New Business

Prior to the meeting, David Robishaw sent the Board a request for funding from Agriculture in the Classroom (AIRC). The Board funded a request from AIRC in 2014 and felt it was important to support efforts to teach children the importance of agriculture, especially in Virginia as it is the single largest component of the state economy. Stephen Ginn moved to approve funding for AIRC for \$2500, Tommy Williams seconded, and the motion passed.

Additional Comments

Liz White from the Virginia State Horticultural Society discussed the history of the VARP program. This was started in the late 1980's as a joint effort between the processors in the state and farmers who grew mainly processing apples. The money collected was spent on research to improve the quality of processing apples. There are no records left on when or exactly how the program was started, and there is interest in trying to put an actual program together in writing.

Virginia Tech is in the final stages of interviewing for a new state Horticulturalist and hopes to extend a job offer to a new candidate soon.

Murray's Cider in Roanoke has gone out of business. There is no indication they tried to sell the business to anyone else.

David Robishaw reviewed the membership list, and this is the last meeting for Tommy Williams and Stephen Ginn. They have served 2 consecutive terms and are not eligible to serve again. The Board thanked them for their service to the industry.

Next meeting and Adjourn

The next meeting date was not set, but it is always in December. With no further business, Chairman Graves adjourned the meeting at 12:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Graves, Chairman

David Robishaw, Secretary