



Minutes VCTGA Board Meeting

*Monday, October 3, 2011
Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant, Staunton, VA*

Call to Order was made by President Virginia Carroll at 10:06 a.m. with the following present: Greg Lemmer, Derick Proctor, Robert O'Keeffe, Jocelyn Lampert, Dave Thomas, Donna O'Halloran, Fred Shorey, Sherrie Taylor, Danny Neel, David Robishaw, Kyle Peer and Jeff Miller.

Minutes of the August 3, 2011 VCTGA Board Meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes as emailed to board, seconded and passed.

Reports

Financial Reports - these were conveyed prior to the meeting by email. Jeff reviewed the current Balance Sheet and noted that the Accounts Receivable included the first reimbursement request on the VDACS/USDA grant. The income and expenses were generally in line with the budget and the annual meeting and generated positive revenue.

Membership update - Jocelyn noted that there had not been any new members since the annual meeting in August. Fred suggested the possibility of sending non-members copies of our new current brochures to show what the VCTGA is doing. Virginia will compose letter.

Scholarships- Robert - nothing to report at this time.

Mt. Rogers Report - Charlie (absent due to death in the family) ; Danny Neel reported that Dr. Ed Jones, VA Tech Director of Extension, was in attendance at the fall Mt. Rogers meeting. Mt. Rogers is moving ahead with their grant for upgrading facilities and possibly applying for a Tobacco Commission grant. Growers are considered with new marketing season, and getting gypsy moth certification before gypsy moth moves further south. Larger wholesale growers concerned about the availability seasonal workforce. This was also the general consensus to the VCTGA Board.

Publications: Newsletter- What do we think of the changes, etc.? Jeff reported that Dr. Eric Hensley & Earl Deal are working on a shearing article for the Newsletter. Virginia noted that we need more technical information and asked for suggestions and more advertisers. Jocelyn noted that she will be following up on featuring a farm in each Newsletter.

Promotions/PR marketing prices - Jeff presented a draft of costs and suggested pricing for the new marketing materials which was reviewed by the board and will be published in the Newsletter, added to the website and sent to members with brochure samples.

Interview upcoming with Jeff Ishee for Virginia Farming - Virginia reported that plans were coming together for an on-farm interview about Christmas trees on November 16. The VCTGA is a sponsor of his program for the next two years through funding from the VDACS/USDA grant.

Governor's Mansion Tree/Wreath Presentations in Richmond will be made by Claybrooke Farms (John and Virginia Carroll) of the Christmas tree for the Governor's mansion and wreaths will be presented by Crazy Joe's Trees (Jocelyn Lampert) in late November.

A Ceremonial Cutting of First Tree by Secretary Todd Haymore is being worked on and a "Christmas Tree Month" Proclamation request has been sent to the governor's office.

National Organization report- Sherrie Taylor

Labor issues, H2A and H2B worker issues was discussed by Sherrie Taylor. H2B employers are facing major increases in minimum wage rates and there is still a major problem getting season workers. Some growers are using H2B workers which requires housing, transportation and a minimum wage of \$9.30 per hour.

2011 Trees for Troops: FedEx is officially on board again! This year, the Christmas Spirit Foundation's goal is to reach 100,000 Christmas Trees since 2005. But in order to do this, they need our help. What a great program we have the opportunity to be associated with.

Christmas Tree Check-off: We expect USDA to publish their final ruling before the year's end. During this rulemaking period, USDA is not allowed to talk to the industry. Once the Check-Off is published in the Federal Register, it could move forward within 30 days. There will be a board created that will then create a promotion and research plan and budget for its first fiscal year, August 1, 2012 – July 31, 2013.

DATES TO REMEMBER: CT PLUS will be held in San Antonio, TX on February 17-19, 2012 and the National Convention will be held in Sacramento, CA on August 8-11, 2012.

Trees for Troops - John Carroll reported that this program will continue again this year in conjunction with FedEx with a goal to reach the 100,000th tree. Virginia has been averaging 1,000 trees per year and is #3 in national donations. FedEx trailer loading sites will be at Willow Springs Tree Farms, Radford; Claybrooke Farm, Louisa; Valley Star Farms, Luray; Severt's Tree Farm, Elk Creek; and at White Top, VA. Donna O'Halloran note that growers in the Culpeper area donate trees directly to Quantico Marine Base.

2012 Annual meeting: Waynesboro- John Carroll reported that the Best Western Hotel in Waynesboro has been reserved as the site for the 2012 VCTGA Summer Membership Meeting for August 22-25. The Program Team will be John Carroll, Dave Thomas, Greg Lemmer (ex officio).

Extension Report - Kyle Peer reported that the re-organization plan will not be carried forward. The Extension Service will be hiring 25 new agents and are following a regional model for extension specialist.

Business

Grant Updates - Jeff reported that about \$11,000 had been used of the current VDACS/USDA grant on preparation of marketing materials. There hasn't been any announcement of the second grant application.

MANTS Report- The VCTGA had been on the waiting list to get a space at the MANTS show and we were notified in September that we had been awarded a space. Charlie Conner and Danny Neel will be attending, but also need some growers to help staff the booth.

Ruritan Report- Danny has been in contact with the Executive Director of the Ruritan Clubs national office in Dublin, VA and they are interested in meeting and having the VCTGA participate in their 2012 national meeting in Raleigh.

Website Changes- Priority - Update for Marketing & new design 2012 - Jeff reported that Steve Francis had made recent updates to the website and would be incorporating the new marketing materials. It was the consensus of the board to hire a web design company through our marketing grant for the overall design of the website and then we would be able to hire individuals to update and maintain the website.

VDACS updates- A proclamation is in the works to designate December as "Virginia Christmas Tree Month".

Strategic Planning - Revisiting the Plan- Where are we now? Moving forward! This will be a key topic at the winter board meeting.

Jeff presented a video presentation on "Board Orientation 101".

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectively submitted, Jeff Miller, Secretary/Treasurer