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## *Minutes Board Meeting*

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10 a.m., Monday, January 23, 2012  
Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant, Staunton

The meeting was called order at 10:11 a.m. by President Virginia Carroll with the following present: Jocelyn Lampert, Robert O'Keeffe, Dave Thomas, John Carroll, Danny Neel, Charlie Conner, Kyle Peer, Jeff Miller, Donna O'Halloran,

**Approval of Minutes** of previous meeting - a motion was made to approve the minutes of the October 3, 2011 board meeting, seconded and passed.

### **Reports**

**Financial Report** (conveyed prior to the meeting) – Jeff reviewed the highlights of the financial reports which had been emailed prior to the meeting. It was moved, seconded and passed to accept the reports as presented. Jeff gave each board member a copy of the ASAE Volunteer Leadership Magazine which is an annual special addition with articles that would benefit volunteer leaders.

**Membership** update - Jocelyn - 70 paid, 37 not paid, 8 advisors, = 114 members. There has been one new member since the last meeting. Mt. Rogers Christmas Tree Growers: Joe Freeman was to follow up about the possibility of joint dues payment for both organizations. Virginia will contact Earl Deal and Charlie will contact John Rosser. (Sherrie and Della). Jocelyn will work with Fred Shorey to talk to them about benefits and the O'Halloran's will work as mentors. A dues reminder will be emailed out to members who have not paid dues yet for 2012.

**Scholarship** - Robert reported that he was updating the application due date on the website for the 2012 scholarships and was sending letters to VT Horticulture and Forestry Departments to notify students of these scholarships.

**Mt. Rogers Report** - Charlie Conner reported that they plan to start grafting into the new seed orchard and there is still space for additional plantings. He noted that the box stores are taking a larger portion of tree sales and requiring palletized trees. He will provide an article on the spring grafting for Newsletter.

**Extension** – Kyle Peer, Ed Jones and NC reps recently met and agreed that there is a serious need for shared technician for wholesale Christmas tree growers between the states. There is a possibility for a regional agent for several states (VA, NC, SC, GA, etc.) who could provide programing. Kyle may be able to get some travel funding. Kyle noted that the local board of supervisors sets the agenda for extension expertise based on local input. Also, sales seem to be up, but prices are low.

**News Journal** – Virginia noted that there is a need for more technical information (ex. pull out to be saved, i.e. on shearing and other similar topics). Other suggestions were for articles on pruning young small trees, posting YouTube videos on things like this and info tips. Kyle will provide another scouting chart and Jocelyn will solicit another member profile article. Jeff asked for suggestions of advertisers for the News Journal who members do business with.

**Holiday News Promotions/PR** – there has been lots of media attention this year. Negative media with the Tree Checkoff issues; positive with Secretary of Ag and Forestry, Todd Haymore, cutting the first ceremonial tree with photos on a lot of websites, news coverage and good coverage for Trees for Troops with an increase in tree donations. Virginia noted that Jeff Ishee had change jobs, but the programing sponsorship with “Virginia Farming” will be continuing.

**Promotional materials for members** – Jeff reported that all members were shipped a 3'x7' banner and a 18x24" rigid sign to use in their 2011 seasonal marketing.

**National Organization report-** Sherrie Taylor reported that it's not too late to make plans for **CT Plus**. Meet up with fellow tree growers in **San Antonio, TX** on **February 18 and 19th**. We'll look at the results of the 2011 Harris Interactive consumer poll, review legislative successes and challenges for the coming year.

In 2011, **Trees for Troops** delivered more than 19,000 Real Christmas Trees (our biggest year yet). The program also reached an important milestone – 100,000 trees delivered since 2005. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this program a success!

**Nominations are now open for the Christmas SPIRIT Awards**, which recognize exceptional efforts in advancing the Christmas spirit for kids, families and the environment. Awards are available in five categories: Community, Industry, Military and the National Christmas SPIRIT Award. Nominations are **due by April 15, 2012** – download a nomination form at the CSF website ([www.christmasspiritfoundation.org](http://www.christmasspiritfoundation.org)) or call 636/449-5060.

**2012 NCTA Convention** will be held in Sacramento, CA on August 8-11.

There is **no checkoff program in place for 2012**. Although announced as a final rule in November 2011 by USDA, it was quickly iced by an unlikely turn of events. The end result was that it was not in effect for the 2011 season, meaning there will be no assessments due on the crop just sold and there will be no checkoff funds available to market Real Trees for the 2012 season. **BUT THIS ISSUE IS NOT CLOSED**. Many calls and emails have been made on behalf of our industry since December. We believe it has made a difference with the USDA. Stay tuned.

On another note, Danny and Charlie did an excellent job representing the VCTGA at the MANTS Tradeshow. The booth looked great and a lot of attendees are now very aware of the benefits of having a Real Tree from Virginia!

**2012 Annual meeting: Waynesboro** - John Carroll reported that the Program Team: John Carroll, Dave Thomas, Kyle Peer, *Greg Lemmer (ex officio)* and Fred Shorey were working on draft ideas for programing, possibly some speakers from Penn State. The meeting will be at the Best Western in Waynesboro with different venues for the Banquet and for the Thursday night dinner. Greg Lemmer will check out Hunter Hill, horse boarding facility that also does events about 10 miles from Staunton. The Friday night banquet will be at the Waynesboro Country Club. Options for field trip, how to wreath decorating workshops as fund-raisers or at farms and other topics were being considered.

## **Old Business**

**Grant Updates** – Jeff reported that approximately \$13,000 in reimbursements had been requested from the USDA Specialty Crop grants.

**MANTS Report** - Charlie and Danny staffed the VCTGA booth and reported good contacts and a very large positive show. It was moved to reimburse expenses or provide a charitable gift receipt for a product, for members incurring expenses and/or providing materials for the display, seconded and passed. VDACS was able to cover expenses for Danny at MANTS and the Ruritan National meeting in Raleigh. Charlie reported that the MANTS show had grown, there were a lot of grower and dealers in Christmas trees, and lots of interest in wreaths and roping.

**Ruritan Report** – Danny reported that everything had gone well for the VCTGA display at the Ruritan National meeting in Raleigh. Virginia has some potential contacts to follow up on marketing Virginia grown trees.

## **New Business**

**Website Changes** – Greg Lemmer reported that the website upgrade was a priority for 2012 based on the updated for Marketing Plan. He has talked to Todd Markham, Access, in Roanoke, who is relatively familiar with Christmas tree farms since he has worked with the Boys Home website. Jocelyn, Donna and Greg will meet with him in Staunton in a few weeks to review upgrade plans. It was suggested that the VDACS Christmas tree DVD be put on the website.

**Marketing Promotion** - Virginia reported on the corporate tree event that they did for Volkswagen which went real well. The VCTGA needs to do more to promote larger growers and be innovative, as we are marketing a tradition; we need to think out of the box. Donna agreed to answer questions about fundraising, send list of growers, who can sell trees for fundraisers, etc. whenever the VCTGA gets calls for this type of information.

**Winter/Spring Workshops** (per grant) the purpose was to be a marketing event on a real Christmas tree farm closer to NOVA for potential organizations to attend. There was concern with membership understanding of the benefits of the grant.

The consensus was to answer: How does it benefit me? How do you expect me to be part of it? With explanations of the benefit from each other marketing together, brokering trees/wreaths/roping, as well as a members-only marketing luncheon at the annual meeting, the possibly a regional fund-raising organizations, and exhibiting at other events. The goal is to market real trees and explain at annual meeting on how you can make more money and be more profitable.

**Strategic Planning** – There was a brief review of the Plan: Where are we now? *Moving forward!*

**The next VCTGA Board meeting will be April 2, in Staunton.**

**Annual Meeting Planning, August 23-25.**

Adjourn 2 p.m.

*Respectively submitted, Jeff Miller, Sect/Treas.*

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