



Minutes Board Meeting

**10 a.m., Monday, April 2, 2012
Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant, Staunton**

Call to Order by Virginia Carroll, VCTGA President, with the following board members present: Greg Lemmer, Jeff Miller, Derick Proctor, Robert O'Keeffe, Jocelyn Lampert, Dave Thomas, Donna O'Halloran, Fred Shorey, and Danny Neel (absent: Sherrie Taylor (sick) Charlie Conner, Tim Williams, Kyle Peer).

10-11 a.m. **Website Design presentation:** Greg Lemmer introduced Todd Marcum, President of ACCESS in Roanoke, who gave a review of the new draft of the VCTGA website for 2012. Some additional suggestions:

- Establish a closed Facebook page for member discussions of pest, disease, production problems, sourcing materials and supplies, listing equipment wanted or for sale.
- Consider Pinterest as another form of social media – would work well for holiday marketing.
- Database with farm addresses

The website committee will meet at the ACCESS office in Roanoke in early June to review the website changes.

Approval of Minutes of previous meeting – It was moved that the minutes of the January 23, 2012 VCTGA Board meeting be approved with the correction of the addition of Fred Shorey and Greg Lemmer as being in attendance, seconded and passed.

Reports

Financial Report (conveyed prior to the meeting) Jeff Miller reviewed the reports and noted that he had established the 2012 Budget based on the 2011 budget/actual and known/estimated changes for 2012 income and expenses. The Scholarship funds have been listed under "Other Current Assets" but should be added to the SunTrust Bank balance for the total cash available balance. It was moved to approve the reports as submitted, seconded and passed.

Current Grants: Jeff also presented a summary of the two current grant expenses/reimbursements to date. (attached to the financial reports).

A motion was made to research the use of several billboards, not to exceed \$10,000 from current grant funds, for this Christmas season and report back to the board for final approval, seconded and passed. Fred Shorey volunteered to help and Jeff with check with Tom Kegley about layout suggestions and ideas.

2012 Grant Application: Greg Lemmer reported that a third grant proposal had just been submitted to VDACS for a USDA Specialty Crop Grant for \$30,000 for expansion of the marketing promotion started with the first two grants. It will cover representation at more agri-tourism events in July-October, provide consumer promotional items and sustain winter meetings in 2013 in the Waynesboro area and then repeated in the Wytheville area.

Membership update: Jocelyn Lampert presented a chart tracking membership history from 2/13/10 through 4/2/12. The membership has remained relatively steady with a few dropped memberships and a few new members. A list of 2011 members who have not paid dues for 2012 was distributed and board members volunteered to call these past due members.

Scholarship - Robert O'Keeffe reported that applications were due today (4/2/12). He had only received one application, but was expecting another. Information had been sent out to all the schools.

Mt. Rogers Report - Charlie Conner (absent) Virginia Carroll noted that she had been unable to attend some of the MRCTGA meetings, since they were often held on Sunday afternoons. She will check on the dates of future meetings and see if another board member can attend along with Charlie. The VCTGA needs to be working more closely with the Mt. Rogers growers on marketing issues. VCTGA is the consumer “face” of Christmas Trees in Virginia.

Virginia Farmers Direct Marketing – Donna O’Halloran recommended that the VCTGA become a member of this organization for \$35/year. This will provide additional exposure for the “Real Trees” marketing. She will follow up with Kathy Belcher and send info to Virginia and Jeff.

News Journal – Jeff noted that he needed more technical information for News Journal and more advertisers. Robert will contact some of the exhibitor/sponsors and ask about article input and ads.

Holiday News Promotions/PR – Virginia reported that the VCTGA had very good news coverage this past season and we need to help members be ready for media interviews on their farms. The *Virginia Farming* program is continuing but it is being revised some since the departure of Jeff Ishee.

National Organization report - Sherrie Taylor (absent) John Carroll reported that the Trees 4 Troops program set an new record of donations this year and the program went over the 100,000th tree donation since the program started.

- **2012 National Meeting** will be in Sacramento, California on August 8-11, 2012.
- **Check-off Program** – is still viable, but there probably won’t be any forward movement until 2013.

2012 Annual meeting: Waynesboro - John Carroll reported that speakers and plans were coming together for the VCTGA Annual Meeting at the Best Western Inn & Suites in Waynesboro on August 23-25. Room rates will be \$84.95.

Next VCTGA Board Meeting will be a conference call in early June to review feedback on the website, review plans for the annual meeting and to have a consensus on current issues so the board speaks as one voice at the annual meeting.

Plan of Action for 2012

Strategic Planning- Revisiting the Plan- Where are we now? *Moving forward!* Many of the objectives and strategies have been completed.

Listed below are ongoing:

- Target previous membership for renewal by Jocelyn Lampert, Membership Chair
- Hold grower workshops – Jocelyn and Donna will work with Kyle Peer to continue 3 workshops annually on planting, shearing and fall sales preparation.
- Launch the mentor program – this should now involve the entire association – Donna will contact Tim Williams about continuing and expanding this program.
- Website – improve the *Members Only* section, which is in progress by Greg Lemmer
- Notify membership of tree production practices and timing – Kyle Peer, more technical support info in the News Journal
- Timely seasonal press releases and communications with media outlets – Virginia Carroll will be the main contact. Also provide member training in effective communication (content and delivery) at the annual meeting.
- Have all growers use Virginia Grown and Virginia’s Finest marketing opportunities – provide info in the Newsletter and website
- Promote effective and efficient tree growing practices to reduce cost and increase profit – winter workshop
- Provide membership with an updated marketing manual on the website

- Build a seasonal VCTGA Facebook interface with the website – Greg Lemmer
- Pursue corporate sponsorships (i.e. chemical companies, suppliers, financial institutes, etc) – Robert O’Keeffe
- Research the endorsements of services or products at the annual meeting – John Carroll
- Develop a fact sheet (FAQ) – talking points for members or volunteers and keep updated – Sue Bostic
- Designate official media contact strategy and incorporate local and regional ambassadors for the organization and list board members on the website as contacts – The Board
- Identify volunteers – By Board members.
- Foster better relationship with Mt. Rogers for wholesale growers at the annual meeting for joint marketing. Have a joint meeting with Mt. Rogers. Virginia Carroll will contact them.
- Virginia Green Industry Council – continue representation at the VGIC. Have a VCTGA representative at the Virginia Agribusiness Banquet and possibly supply Christmas trees for decorations.
- Better relationship with agri media, Farm Bureau, Rural Electric co-ops – send promotion materials.
- Schedule a new strategic planning meeting for 2013.

Adjourn – Being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.