

MINUTES
MICHIGAN ASPARGUS ADVISORY BOARD
July 27, 2021
MSUE – Conference Room #144
209 E Apple Ave
Muskegon, Michigan

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Greiner, Jordon Walsworth, Dwight Fuehring, John Williams, Kevin Burmeister, Bill Schwass and Scott Hassle

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nick Oomen, Kyle Weber

OTHERS PRESENT: Jamie Clover Adams – Executive Director, Joy McDevitt – Executive Assistant, Norm Myers-MACMA, John Kran- MI Farm Bureau, Jodie Gruner-MDARD

Chairman, Dwight Fuehring called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm.

It was noted that the Officers were established at the March 9, 2021 meeting.

Motion Motion by Bill Schwass supported by Jordon Walsworth to reaffirm the
No. 1 officers set out below. All Ayes, motion passed.

Chairman – Dwight Fuehring
Vice Chairman- Jordon Walsworth
Sec-Treasurer – Sarah Greiner

MINUTES

The minutes from the last two meetings of 03-9-21 and 4-21-21 were sent to the Board for review prior to the meeting.

Motion Motion by Sarah Greiner supported by John Williams to approve the
No. 2 minutes of the March 9, 2021 and the April 21, 2021 meeting as presented. All
Ayes, motion passed.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Joy McDevitt reviewed the June 30, 2021 preliminary financial statements reporting income currently of \$472,250 and expenses to date of \$422,585 resulting in a positive addition to the fund balance (net income) of \$49,665 for the unaudited fiscal year ended June 30, 2021. (ATTACHMENT "A") This added to the beginning Fund Balance of \$503,889 results in an ending Fund Balance of \$553,554. A question was asked about the \$37,550 payable to CMI; this was the June expense, which was received later than usual.

Motion Motion by John Williams, supported by Bill Schwass to accept the
No. 3 June 30, 2021 financial report as presented, subject to audit. All ayes, motion
passed.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT

Management recommends retaining Maner Costerisan for the FYE 6-30-21 financial audit of the Michigan Asparagus Industry Development Program at a cost of approximately \$3,600.

Motion No. 4 Motion by Sarah Greiner supported by Jordon Walsworth to retain Maner Costerisan to conduct the June 30, 2021 fiscal year end audit. All Ayes, motion passed.

MDARD

Jodie Gruner gave an update on the following grants.

Rural Development Grants - Expected to be announced October 1, 2021. The maximum amount is \$100,000 with a 30% match.

SCBG – Have not heard back from USDA on the SCBGs submitted in 2021. For 2022 there are two pots of monies – Farm Bill funding of approximately \$1.8-2 million and COVID19 funding of approximately \$1 million. Jodie further explained that the additional COVID19 funding for SCBG is for COVID19 related needs like marketing or research needs related to COVID19, an industry feasibility study or other needs related to the impacts of COVID19.

Value Added Grants – Anticipate a March 2022 due date.

Jodie spoke about an upcoming export trip to ANUGA, a global trade show in Germany, in October 2021. There is also a trade mission to Montreal coming up.

MSUE

Ben Werling reported that MSU is back to a pre-COVID operating posture and able to meet in person again. There will be a research tour in September likely September 9; he anticipates stopping at the Asparagus Research farm. Ben shared that the Great Lakes Expo anticipates an in-person event in December 2021.

He stated the MSUE Vegetable team is traditionally four people and is currently down to two. MSU is working on a replacement for the southwest position. He continued that if growers have suggestions regarding what they'd like to see in research, now is the time to express any concerns.

Dr. Randy Beaudry is working on controlled atmosphere storage asparagus research as a follow up on the study Ben and John Bakker did in crop year 2019. He was able to collect asparagus at the beginning, middle and end of the 2021 season to study. This may help with the Millennium harvest spike; Ben anticipates a report to be given at the Great Lakes Expo.

Pigweed is a big problem, there is research on using Alion (used by the fruit growers); when used in the spring it causes asparagus damage but there is still the ongoing question as to whether the use in the fall would help.

Dr. Zsofia Szendrei along with her grad student has finished up the research on the asparagus beetle and the habitats for overwintering. She plans to start a new project to evaluate the roll of stalks as habitat for overwintering. Youngsuk Dong and Ben installed low-cost real-time sensor monitoring systems in asparagus fields that make data available on the web. Next year they anticipate testing them when Dr. Hausbeck sprays. Dr. Brainard had been working on a model

on asparagus emergence, but this year was a different warm up pattern that wasn't conducive to his research.

MACMA ASPARAGUS REPORT

Total processed US asparagus was 8,294,419 pounds. This is higher than 2020 but still less than the 5-year average.

Norm stated there is a MACMA season review meeting on September 14, 2021 in the Oceana County Annex Building from 3-5 pm. John Ritchie from Michigan Asparagus Growers Inc. will attend to discuss the fresh crop.

A question was asked on how close Michigan processors came to filling the USDA purchase. Norm responded that we did fill the USDA bid but the USDA purchase may be crowding out private business.

MFB REPORT

John Kran was present to report for MI Farm Bureau. He said it was moving slow in DC and there are many issues to be dealt with -- budgets, debt ceiling, and infrastructure among others. Congress is in session this week and then will be out until the end of September. He continued there is a window to get things done but there is a lot of distrust between the political parties. There are several issues Farm Bureau is tracking -- taxes and step-up in basis, trade issues with China, Buy American efforts, and Child Nutrition Reauthorization changes to utilize only US produce.

John reminded that the next Farm Bill will be in 2023; need to look at what worked and what didn't.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Jamie Clover Adams shared that there are two appointments up in November 2021 -- Kyle Weber and Dwight Fuehring. Jamie will work to get names submitted to the Governor.

MAAB FRESH ASPARAGUS PROMOTION

Jen Velasquez from Full Tilt was present on the telephone and went over a power point presentation on the 2021 season marketing program. **(Attachment B)**.

The MAAB 2021 marketing campaign included a short feature story for newspapers that had 453 placements and more than 40 million impressions. The story was amplified on social media for an additional 86,000 impressions.

The campaign also included ads in trade journals like the Packer and Produce News to reach retail buyers. She presented current cooking trends that guided social influencers MAAB decided to partner with to develop ten recipes.

The campaign reinforced four Michigan messages -- (1) thicker spears greater texture, more flavor; (2) easy to prepare and healthy; (3) fresh and local; (4) buy now, save for later.

Two retail chains were successfully recruited to feature Michigan asparagus this season. One used the bronto spears promotion materials.

Discussion followed the presentation. The marketing grant continues in CY 2022 but does not pay for giveaways like t-shirts, wooden spoon sets, drink tumblers etc. that are in the campaign. MAAB covers these costs. A question was asked about measuring success. We can utilize impressions, ad placements, promotion sales but there is no one definitive measure. There were comments about retailers not being excited about the "bronto spear" promotion program since it meant they (the retailers) were pushing a product that is only available for 6-8 weeks and they are still selling asparagus the rest of the year.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Seed Sales:

Sales were up; total sales were approx. \$842,000 showing an income of \$88,000.

PMA Fresh Summit

The Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit is being held in New Orleans, Oct 28-30. MAAB will attend to promote Michigan asparagus. MDARD provided a grant which will pay for our booth, so it will only be the travel expenses and the cost for the booth display and promotional items. She shared that MI Apple attends annually and they think it is well worth it.

SCBG Tentative Awards

Previously discussed. Still waiting to hear about the 2021 proposed grants.

Media Update

Jamie shared a media packet with articles from the 2021 season as an indication of how/when/where asparagus was discussed during the season.

AEWR Update

Discussion occurred on how best to address the employment survey that is used to determine AEWR. Jamie reported that she spoke with staff at the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association to determine why Florida's wage rates were less volatile and consistently lower than Michigan's rates. There appears to be no silver bullet. Comments were made as to who even receives these surveys and how best to conduct a training session on properly completing the form. Jamie proposed an education session in the winter; it would have to include Minnesota and Wisconsin, since all three states are in the same region.

SET MAAB FY Priorities

Part 2 Fresh Promotion Program

There will be approximately \$60,000 left in the \$125,000 SCBG for CY 2022. MAAB will pursue a new grant in 2022.

Buyer Tasting Event

Jamie proposed an event to take place in Chicago or Indianapolis at which domestic produce buyers can sample fresh asparagus recipes. (see **Attachment C**) It would need to be scheduled at the beginning of asparagus season to have product available. She would like to partner with other commodities to keep the cost down. She anticipates the event would cost about \$5,000, but with other commodities joining in, it could be closer to \$1,500.

Processed Product Promotion

Jamie proposed having influencers prepare some recipes from processed asparagus in the period before next year's harvest to drive interest in asparagus as well as show how to utilize frozen/canned asparagus (**see Attachment D**). Norm Myers, MACMA, said this would be the type of project to present to MACMA for funding since it ties in with the processing side.

Farmer page on michiganasparagus.org

Jamie proposed development of a "grower page" for the website. It would contain research findings, current happenings, minutes to the meetings etc. to make information more readily available to producers (**see Attachment E**). Other commodities like apples and potatoes do this. She anticipates a one-time cost of approximately \$1,750 and then she would maintain the page on an ongoing basis.

As part of this she anticipates doing a grower survey this fall which would also serve as a way to collect email addresses to tie into an electronic communication system with growers.

MAAB FY 21-22 Budget

Jamie Clover Adams put together a proposed budget as a starting point for discussion. The proposed assessments for the 2021 crop year are estimated at \$123,000 based on fresh pounds of 8.2 million pounds and \$105,750 based on 7.05 processed pounds totaling 15.25 million pounds. The 2020 crop was 19,742,289 lbs. Other budget items pointed out: there are two new SCBGs and the 2nd year of the marketing grant in next year's budget, the \$7,500 in income we receive from Carrot and a new income item of \$26,000 for Joy McDevitt's time billed to Cherry Industry Administrative Board (CIAB), since she is now a full-time employee of MAAB billing hours back to CIAB.

The Budgeted income is \$509,325 and expenses of \$580,934, resulting in a loss of (\$71,609) coming out of reserves. Jamie pointed out that the decrease in revenue is due to the lowering of the assessment rate to .015/ pound (down from .0175 in CY 2020) and the small 2021 crop. Line-item expenses have been discussed previously in the Executive Report and MAAB FY priorities, e.g. PMA Fresh Summit, asparagus grower page etc.

Motion Motion by Bill Schwass, supported by Jordon Walsworth to approve the Budget
No. 5 with revenue of \$509,325 and expenses of \$580,934 and the resulting loss of
\$71,609 would decrease the fund balance. All Ayes, motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Joy McDevitt reminded the board about John Bakker's Retirement Open House on Friday, July 31, 2021 at the Earl and Linda Peterson Research Station. The question was asked if there was any recognition, e.g. a plaque, planned at the Great Lakes Expo. The answer is yes, but will need to follow up with Greg Bird, to get a better understanding of exactly what.

Joy also reminded all, that since the Great Lakes Expo was in person this year, to obtain your hotel room for the Monday night of the Expo; which MAAB will cover. She continued that she had 3 rooms reserved for the new board members.

Dwight Fuehring asked if there was any other business to be taken up at this time, nothing was proposed.

Motion No 6. Hearing none, a motion was made by John Williams, supported by Sarah Greiner to adjourn the meeting. All Ayes, meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Clover Adams
Executive Director