



Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association

P.O. Box 854, Richford VT 05476

Phone: 802-777-2667

www.VermontMaple.org

Draft
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
Zoom Conference Online
July 21, 2022

Board Members present: Arnie Piper; Sam Cutting; Jason Gagne; Ted Young; James Buck; Ed Smith; Jenna Baird; Andy Aldrich; Jeff Disorda; Donna Young; Meg Emmons; Bob Baird; Mike Christian

Members present: Jacques Couture; Dr. Tim Perkins; Pam Greene; Pam Green; Dave Bennion; Don Gilbert; Susan Freeman

Staff present: Allison Hope

Motions

- 1) A motion was made by Ed Smith to approve the 2021 annual meeting minutes. Jacques Couture seconded the motion. The motion was approved by all.
- 2) A motion was made by Ed Smith to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Ted Young. The motion was approved by all.
- 3) A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ted Young. The motion was seconded by Ed Smith. The motion was approved by all.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Arnie Piper at 6:30pm. Before getting into the agenda topics, Arnie shared some comments from Emma Marvin.

Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Ed Smith to approve the 2021 annual meeting minutes. Jacques Couture seconded the motion. The motion was approved by all.

Treasurer's Report

Jason Gagne reviewed the balance sheet through December 2021 which is showing improvement from the prior year. VMSMA is following their budget; cost of goods is higher than budget due to container orders (the cost of which will be covered by dealer payments). All of the PPP Loans were forgiven. James asked if there were any areas of concern or that we're particularly watching. Jason noted that membership is always on that list; with membership continuing to slump, that's a

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downfall. The industry is better off with the statewide association working on containers, marketing and certification. Allison highlighted that she had finished first round interviews for the new Membership Manager position and she's excited by the candidate pool. She is looking forward to having a new staff person on board to add value.

A motion was made by Ed Smith to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Ted Young. The motion was approved by all.

VMSMA Year in Review & Year Ahead

Allison shared highlights for calendar year 2021 including:

- The Certification Program is up and running and we've hosted two Zoom sessions – one in May and one at the December winter conference. We also hosted an open Certification in Randolph in November. Currently there are over a dozen members in the Certification process. The Education Committee continues to work on checklist updates.
- Updated the nutrition facts panel on VMSMA branded containers. Also a benefit of membership as members who private label have access to this updated information.
- New VMSMA clothing options in online store as well as new aluminum "Maple for Sale" signs with the VMSMA logo.
- Our Congressionally Directed Spending application to support the Certification Program and a Grant Program was successful in the amount of \$637,000. This program will be funded through the Small Business Administration. The largest portion of the funding will directly benefit members through a direct grant program to upgrade equipment.
- Withdrew participation in the Big E Booth, but we went down and hung up large banners with information on where to find producers and recipes.
- Winter Conference in December with UVM Extension transitioned from three online days and one in-person day to just an online format due to COVID numbers. We had 9 great sessions over three days and ended with an "Ask Dr. Tim" question on Friday evening. All sessions were recorded and close-captioned.
- In partnership with Vermont Evaporator Company, we created a 1-99 tap count membership. Kate, one of their founders, generously donated the first year of membership (as well as a copy of the Vermont Almanac, Volume 1) to many of these new members!

Forward looking highlights for 2022 and beyond included:

- Continued work on projects funded through Specialty Crop Block Grants with Vermont's Agency of Ag: Maple Marketing, Maple Passport and Container Labeling.
- Certification Grant Program will get rolling once we have the funding and paperwork complete with the Small Business Administration.

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- Planning for the next December winter conference – will most likely be a hybrid event (like the original plan for 2022) with three days of online sessions and one in-person day.
- The Big E Committee has been meeting with new booth managers Kenn Hastings and Cody Devries and managerial and logistical work by Mike Christian (who chairs the Committee).
- We're extending Spring Open House to two weekends and creating a Fall Open House event as well (in conjunction with the state's "Maple 100").
- The Board's Packaging Committee will continue to tackle issues related to long lead times with Hillside and pinpoint some long-term and diversified solutions to benefit members.
- The Board's Education Committee will continue to update the Certification Checklist and are creating a new section for maple confections.

IMSI Update

Pam Green, IMSI Board Chair and VMSMA representative to IMSI, shared some updates on IMSI work.

- IMSI has been offering letters of support for their partners to apply for grants.
- Continue to employ Dr. John Goldberg as their watchdog in DC; he's on the lookout for anything that might be coming down the pike for maple. Current project is to get the US Standard of Identity for maple through. Canada is almost all set and hoping very soon that the US new SOI (which corresponds with the Canadian one) will be done. While waiting for that, decided to start on the codex document for maple. Codex is like an international food code – standards and guidelines and codes of practice for lots of foods. Looks to the areas of consumer health, ensuring foods are safe and good to trade. The definitions in the codex are based in scientific facts; so they're working with Proctor Maple Research Center and Centre Acer.
- IMSI will present at the NAMSC Conference in October in Wisconsin; will include marketing presentation with Helen Thomas from NY. They are sponsoring the grading school that will take place after the conference.
- New IMSI President starting in January will be Martin Désilets from Dominion & Grimm in Quebec.
- Lot of active committees doing important work – including the Sustainable Funding Committee (for the maple industry in the US) and the Environmental Impact Committee (issues related to wastewater, tubing disposal, etc and also highlight the positive impacts of maple).
- Still working closely with NASS to update the maple crop survey.

VMSMA Annual Award Winners

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Sam Cutting IV presented the Annual Maple Awards. He stated that each award has a long, proud heritage associated with them and that every single person who has received one in the past is a legend in the industry, so those joining their ranks tonight should be very proud.

Outstanding Sugar Maker Award: Roy Corse, Whitingham VT

The VMSMA Board selects a Vermont sugar maker, individual, or family who sets a good example for other sugar makers to follow in cleanliness, food safety and production practices. In addition, nominees for this award help the maple industry by participating in county and statewide fairs to promote and educate future sugar makers and the general public on the benefits of pure Vermont maple syrup. This year, the Award was presented to Roy Corse of Whitingham.

Was born into a sugaring operation on the family farm where maple syrup has been produced since 1868. Together with his wife and helpers, they have over 12,000 taps and they are dealers for Lapierre, and Leader/H2O and they've worked at Maplerama.

Vermont Maple Person of the Year: The Purinton Family, Huntington VT

This award is presented to someone whose work benefits the entire maple industry and who may or may not be a sugar maker themselves. Regularly improves promotion and brand awareness. Recognizing the shortage of containers and risk to members, this family picked up the slack. VMSMA is grateful for the Purintons, who worked to ensure that members have consistent access to labeled containers.

Sumner Williams Lifetime Achievement Award: Michael Christian, Orwell VT

This award is presented in memory of Sumner Williams, the Assistant Director of the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center. In honor of him, the VMSMA Board recognizes outstanding service and dedication to the Vermont maple industry.

This year's recipient is Michael Christian. Mike has been a fixture at the Big E for many years and is a valuable resource to the Association and booth volunteers. He's trained volunteers and inspired folks with little to no background in how to make a high-quality product. The industry has benefitted from his expertise and many years of service. Vermont is clearly a leader in promoting maple and Mike has been invaluable in keeping us on that path.

Member Q & A

- Jacques asked some questions about containers and future plans.

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- Pam asked about funding to help replace copper as part of Certification. Arnie said this will be part of the grant program that Allison mentioned in her presentation. Funds will come direct from the Association to the sugar makers who are awarded grant funding. About \$437,500 will be available for grant funding.
- Ed asked about offering an open Certification down south. Allison and Arnie invited Ed to find a date and location that works in his county and talking to them about getting in scheduled and advertised.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ted Young. The motion was seconded by Ed Smith. The motion was approved by all.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.