

MINUTES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2015
LOUISIANA STRAWBERRY MARKETING BOARD MEETING
47076 NORTH MORRISON BOULEVARD
HAMMOND, LA

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman William Fletcher called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Strawberry Marketing Board Director Rebecca Riecke called the roll.

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

The presence of a quorum was declared by Mrs. Riecke.

MEMBERS PRESENT

DAVID ATKINS
EDDIE FAUST
WILLIAM FLETCHER
KEVIN LIUZZA
MARK LIUZZA (JOINED MEETING AFTER ROLL CALL)
ERIC MORROW
HEATHER ROBERTSON (JOINED MEETING AFTER ROLL CALL)
REBECCA RIECKE (COMMISSIONER MIKE STRAIN DVM'S DESIGNEE)

MEMBERS ABSENT

DR. REGINA BRACY

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

Mr. Fletcher opened the floor for nominations for chairman.

Eric Morrow nominated and Heather Robertson seconded William Fletcher for chairman. With no further nominations coming forward, Mr. Fletcher closed the nominations for chairman. William Fletcher was elected chairman with a unanimous vote.

Mr. Fletcher opened the floor for nominations for vice-chairman.

Heather Robertson nominated Eric Morrow for vice-chairman. With no further nominations coming forward, Mr. Fletcher closed the nominations for vice-chairman. Eric Morrow was elected vice-chairman with five yeas, one nay and one abstention.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion made by Heather Robertson and second by David Atkins to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2015, meeting. The motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Mrs. Riecke read the fiscal year 2015 and July 2015 financial reports, copies of which were distributed to each member.

A motion made by Heather Robertson and second by Eddie Faust to approve the fiscal year 2015 and July 2015 financial reports. The motion carried.

FY 2016 PROPOSED BUDGET

Mrs. Riecke explained the fiscal year 2016 proposed budget with the estimated income being \$30,000.00 in strawberry assessments and \$27,151.66 in miscellaneous income from the Specialty Crop Block Grant (year three) for a total of \$57,151.66. She reviewed the budget categories for expenses which include \$55,000.00 for advertising (Garrison Advertising), \$940.00 for the House and Senate egg breakfasts tent rental (payable to Doug Olinde, LLC), \$500.00 for the Louisiana FFA Association – State Proficiency Award and \$350.00 for a compilation of the board's annual financial statements (payable to Griffin & Company, LLC) for a total of \$56,790.00.

A motion made by Heather Robertson and second by Mark Liuzza to approve the fiscal year 2016 proposed budget. The motion carried.

GARRISON ADVERTISING REPORT

Steve Helmke of Garrison Advertising presented the advertising report including a PowerPoint presentation and handout. He reviewed the 2015 overview and results which included the campaign strategic guidelines; creative design; results – website traffic analysis; and media and budget consisting of television (\$17,592.00), radio (\$5,120.00), billboards (\$22,500.00), updating LSMB website (\$2,020.00), point-of-purchase (\$1,250.00), and website monitoring, meetings, planning and other hourly (\$1,518.00) for a total of \$50,000.00. Mr. Helmke stated that the marketing plan was fully executed and \$1,930.00 under budget.

Mr. Helmke then discussed the 2016 campaign planning. He requested board members' feedback on the plan. Mr. Fletcher inquired about the amount of point-of-purchase signs left over from last year. Mrs. Riecke informed the Board that approximately half of the signs are left, about 250. Board members agreed that this amount should be plenty for this year so no additional ones would need to be purchased.

Mr. Faust requested that Mr. Helmke explain the benefit of the billboards. Mr. Helmke stated that the billboards were placed in the southern portion of Louisiana where most Louisiana strawberries are sold based on information provided by board members. He said that all billboards were placed in premium locations in big suburban markets where there is a great deal of traffic and exposure. Mr. Faust stated that he thought the billboards were too close together. Mr. Helmke explained that the billboards can be moved, but suggested not spending money in areas where there are not many Louisiana berries available.

Kevin Liuzza suggested that the advertising begin in early February. Mr. Fletcher informed board members that once the budget is set, Mrs. Riecke will touch base with the farmers regarding weather conditions to let Mr. Helmke know exactly when the ads should start. Mr. Helmke explained that his agency has to sign contracts for the advertising, but they have been with Lamar Advertising and the television stations for a long time so they have some flexibility in moving the advertising.

Mr. Atkins suggested putting the “Pick Louisiana Strawberries” logo on strawberry packaging so consumers can easily identify Louisiana berries. Mr. Helmke stated that he proposed the idea of clamshell stickers to the Board in the past, but board members decided on the point-of-purchase signs instead. Mr. Fletcher said the stickers would have to go through the company that farmers buy their clamshells from which is mainly Southland. Mr. Helmke said that the stickers are inexpensive, and he will price them again. Mrs. Robertson stated that Southland gets the clamshells from Highland, and they have a machine that can put the stickers on them. Mr. Fletcher explained that the stickers would need to be available to every strawberry farmer.

Mr. Fletcher asked Mr. Helmke about the status of the Board’s website. Mr. Helmke explained that they cleaned up some outdated material on the website last year, but there was no budget to change the content. He reminded the Board that there is not much being done to push the website. He advised board members that if they want to update the website, they would need to include money in the budget to promote it since it is currently an informative website, not interactive.

2016 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT

Michelle Estay of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF) informed the Board that funding would be available again in 2016 to solely benefit specialty crops through the USDA’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program administered by LDAF. She explained that this annual grant opportunity is competitive, and the Board has received Specialty Crop Grant funding in the past that constitutes a substantial portion of the budget, but runs out in 2016. She stated that applications for this grant are usually opened in March and the deadline is in May.

Mrs. Estay advised board members that they need to have an idea of what they would like to apply for and can apply to continue advertising projects, but they would have to be built upon. She provided project examples such as adding more billboards than the previous number to branch out further in the state, producing stickers and having the packaging company apply them to clamshells, having in-store product demos with signage, and paying a chef to cook strawberry

recipes on morning shows. Mrs. Estay said that the grant can be for up to three years so the Board could have funding for the 2017, 2018 and 2019 seasons if secured. She informed board members that the total annual Specialty Crop Block Grant for the state is generally \$350,000.00, and there are a different number of grants awarded each year depending on the amounts of each. Mrs. Estay stated that applying for \$80,000.00 seems to be average, but any projects requesting more than \$100,000.00 would be requesting a large portion of the total grant. She said that the Board applying for \$90,000.00 could allow \$30,000.00 for three years or \$45,000.00 for two.

Mrs. Riecke informed the Board that the current grant is for three years totaling \$86,713.98; \$38,542.49 was spent in year one and \$21,019.83 in year two, leaving \$27,151.66 for year three. Mrs. Estay advised board members that a resolution is required to apply for the grant funding. Mrs. Riecke explained that the Board can pass the resolution at the current meeting and then decide what to specifically apply for at the next meeting in January. Mrs. Robertson said that she would like to continue with the billboards and also likes the stickers. Board members were in favor of in-store demos. Mrs. Riecke stated that she will work with Mr. Helmke of Garrison Advertising to research these ideas and get information on pricing.

Mr. Fletcher read a resolution which would allow Mrs. Riecke to apply for the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant on behalf of the Board.

A motion made by Heather Robertson and second by Mark Liuzza to pass the resolution authorizing Director Rebecca Riecke to prepare and execute any proposals and contracts necessary to seek funding from the LDAF through the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant for promotion of Louisiana strawberries and for that authority to continue until revocation from the Board. The motion carried.

Mrs. Estay advised board members to contact Mrs. Riecke if they think of other ideas for the grant. She reminded them that grant projects must benefit the industry as a whole and not just a handful of producers. She stated that any income received from a project must be put back into it. Mrs. Estay gave the example of the Dairy Promotion Board producing t-shirts that are sold at the Washington Parish Fair. Mrs. Robertson said that she liked the t-shirt idea, and Mrs. Riecke suggested possibly selling them at the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival. Mr. Atkins, Chairman of the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival, informed board members that a non-profit produces all the souvenirs for the festival and other t-shirts could not be sold there. Mrs. Estay said that another idea for the grant project is renting a booth at the Louisiana Restaurant Association (LRA) Expo to assist strawberry farmers with getting business and sales through restaurants. She said that the LDAF gets a booth at the LRA Expo every year to promote all Louisiana specialty crops, and Mrs. Riecke attended this year promoting Louisiana strawberries with a list of producers and a product demo since the mushroom company that has done the product demos in the past was unable to attend.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs. Riecke informed board members that she promoted Louisiana strawberries at the Louisiana Restaurant Association Expo and the House and Senate Egg breakfasts and pictures of these events were included in their packets. She said that surveys were sent to strawberry

producers to gauge the success of this year's Specialty Crop Block Grant project and encouraged producers to complete their surveys and send them in if they have not done so already to increase the chance of obtaining grant funding in the future by showing the effectiveness of prior campaigns. She stated that the Market Bulletin included a Louisiana strawberry story in March that featured Liuzza Produce Farm. Mrs. Riecke reminded farmers to send in pictures of their farms and berries for the Board's Facebook page.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Steve Helmke of Garrison Advertising introduced employee Brian Edgeworth to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

No further comments were made. A motion made by Mark Liuzza and second by Heather Robertson to adjourn. The motion carried.