

Ohio Christmas Tree Association – Board Meeting Minutes

May 6, 2024



President Jeff Greig called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The Board meeting took place via Zoom. Vice-President Gary Hite took over the roll of meeting chair later in the meeting when President Greig's wife reported to the board that he was ill.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Joel Berry, Alan Binger, Bill Cackler, Jeff Greig (excused into the meeting due to illness), Gary Hite, Bev Keener, Roger Koch, Matt Perdulla, Robin Saum and James Stribny.

Absent: Amy Galehouse (excused)

Also Attending: Executive Director, Valerie Graham.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

President Greig called for motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, OCTA board meeting. Roger Koch motioned to approve; Gary Hite seconded the motion. Motion approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Alan Binger presented the Treasurer's report. Mr. Binger provided a detailed account breakdown of all accounts. The overview is as follows; Community Bank CD \$11,332.31; National City Checking 3131 \$31,598.09; National City Savings 294 \$24,767.50; Edward Jones account \$10,500.00 for a total of \$78,197.50. Fund balances of General Fund \$42,811.35; Operation Evergreen \$11,936.45; Research Fund \$9,852.85; Scholarship Fund \$5,235.00; and Scholarship Endowment \$8,362.25. He reported that we are on track with last year at this time. He also stated we had a profitable year last year and to be on track with last year is promising. Memberships are at 129 as of April 20, down fifteen from this time last year. Treasurer Binger provided the board with a detailed report which breaks down the membership types. Mr. Binger reported that the Winter meeting profit of \$4,441.75. He also reported the total is on target with the years previous. He also reported that the Executive Director salary is slightly behind last year at this time. This is due to the Winter and Summer meeting bonuses. We now pay the bonuses throughout the year. Mr. Binger provided an update on the status of establishing the Edward Jones investment account. Treasurer Binger reported the investment account was established on April 11, 2024. The rate for the CD is 5.05% and is a Banc of America and will mature on April 11 of 2025. He also reported the investment amounts for the Endowment are in increments of \$1,000.00. Therefore, the amount invested is \$10,000.00 in a CD and the remaining \$500.00 in a US Treasury market mutual fund. There was discussion about donations that came in for the Scholarship fund and endowment fund. There also was discussion as to deciding at our March 2025 meeting as to how to move forward with both the CD and US Treasury accounts. Roger Koch moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. James Stribny seconded the motion. Motion approved.

OLD BUSINESS-

MACT/OCTA Summer Meeting Update:

Bev Keener reported that the summer meeting is on target and moving forward. She also reported that the caterer, entertainment, speakers, and coordination of the meeting were secured. Mrs. Keener also reported that due to pushback, the Canaan Fir Tree Company would be paying for the band during Friday night's dinner. Mrs. Keener discussed that she had been promoting the meeting during the past year by approaching vendors in attendance at other state meeting and inviting them to set up at the summer meeting; providing "save the date" notice to all Canaan Fir Tree Company customers. She also reported, with the assistance of the Executive Director was able to secure a \$1,000.00 sponsorship from Ohio Proud for Friday night's dinner. During the discussion, the following topics were discussed; it was asked if we had a contract. Valerie reported that the contract was signed and returned by the May 1 deadline. Bill Cackler explained that meal menus are provided separately on the registration so those with food allergies can choose to not eat what is on the menu for any meal. Mr. Cackler also reported that the MACT board will arrive on Thursday to assist in setting up the meeting. Mrs. Keener reported that she is working on a meet and greet for Thursday evening for the vendors and others to meet and have dinner. She also stated that she appreciated the offer of assistance from the Board members, and she will have a list of items that she will need assistance with at the next Board meeting.

New Grower Sessions:

Due to President Greig's absence. Vice President, Gary Hite, reported that he was willing to conduct another new grower session at his farm. Valarie requested that he secure a date so she can publicize to the Association.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Scholarship Committee:

Roger Koch reported the committee had received three scholarship applications within the established time limit. The committee members: Robin Saum, Bill Cackler, and himself, using the scoring sheet provided in the scholarship rules and regulations, scored the applications. After completing the scoring process, the committee realized that Bryn Reese was one of the applicants and that she was a recipient of the scholarship last year. After much discussion, the committee agreed to leave Bryn Reese in the pool of eligible applicants. The applicants were as follows: Bryn Reese, Taylor Kuhrt, and John Rhoades. Bryn Reese achieved the top score. Mr. Koch received a call from an anonymous donor wanting to donate \$1,000.00 to enable the committee to provide a scholarship to the second-place winner, Taylor Kuhrt. Chairperson Pro Tem Gary Hite called for a motion approving the issue of a second scholarship. Bill Cackler moved the motion. Matt Mongin seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Social Media Committee:

Chairperson Alan Binger reported a Facebook following of 979, up from 911 in October. There had been five posts since the Winter meeting.

Website Committee:

Mr. Binger reported that he updated the website congratulating Avery Wilcox for his induction into the Hall of Fame. He also reported that he added information regarding the upcoming summer meeting and provided links to take the visitor to the MACT website. He also removed the financial information as requested by the Board at the March meeting. Roger Koch asked if there was anyone interested in heading the website committee to contact him. It was stated that Mikayla Graham is responsible for the technical management of the website.

Education Committee and Research Committee:

Bill Cackler reported that he will be conducting new grower sessions at the upcoming summer meeting. He also stated that part of his discussion will cover the use of bio-chemicals in Christmas tree growing. He also reported that the new grower session will also provide another educational opportunity.

Operation Evergreen:

Due to the absence of Amy Galehouse, no report was provided to the Board. Valarie Graham reported on the call that took place with the Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director, Deborah Ashenhurst. Mrs. Graham stated that she was on the program and presented a 5-minute PowerPoint presentation to the group. She also reported on Saturday, August 3 there will be a one-day conference at the OSU campus where up to five hundred veterans would be in attendance. Valerie has a registration form to set up on behalf of Operation Evergreen. President Pro Tem Mr. Hite asked if the Board would be interested in setting up at the August 3 conference. Mr. Hite will work with Valerie and arrange for workers to staff the booth.

Winter Meeting:

Gary Hite reported that the 2025 Winter meeting date has been set. The meeting will be held on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at the Quest Center in Columbus. The executive director reported that a contract has been signed, and a meeting room reserved at the hotel for the board meeting the evening before.

Summer Meeting:

The 2025 summer meeting will be held at Kaleidoscope Farms, Mt. Cory, Ohio. Kaleidoscope Farms are working on developing seedling plots for the summer meeting.

The 2026 summer meeting to be determined with the offer of Feisley Christmas Tree Farm offering to host in conjunction with their 75th anniversary of the farm.

Finance Committee:

Chairperson Alan Binger had nothing else to report.

NCTA Report:

Chairperson Matt Mongin reported that the topic of climate change will be discussed at the meeting. NCTA meeting location Nova Scotia, Canada in conjunction with the Nova Scotia meeting on August 1 – 4, 2024. Mr. Mongin, Mr. Koch, and Mrs. Keener plan to attend the meeting. Mr. Mongin will provide the board with a full report upon his return.

Membership Committee:

Chairperson Bill Cackler reported a current run down per state regarding number of memberships. He also requested that everyone check their address in the membership area on the website.

Research Committee:

Chairperson Bill Cackler reported that he is conducting a study of the diverse types of seedlings available to plant. Included in the study.

- Peterson's Canaan Fir 2+2
- Canaan Fir Tree Company 80mm EllePots
- Canaan Fir Tree Company 120mm Ellepots
- Canaan Fir Tree Company SP15
- Peterson's Fraser Fir P+2
- Rockus Canaan Fir FP+1

Mr. Cackler is also incorporating nitrogen fixation/bacteria into the study. He also will report later, information regarding his current 7-year and 5-year trials.

State Fair Committee:

Executive Director Graham reported that she has received the contract and will complete it and return. Valerie also reported that she has yet to receive information as to what the booth will look like for this year's fair.

Publications/Public Relations:

Chairperson Gary Hite had nothing to report. Mr. Hite commended Mr. Binger for his work in the social media area. Valerie reported she will send out the newsletter pending receiving an update from MACT. Mrs. Graham also reported that she had spoken with Ty Higgins who does a podcast for Ohio Farm Bureau. She informed him that we would entertain a podcast focusing on the Christmas tree industry.

Hall of Fame Committee:

Chairperson Joel Berry reported the committee is open to receiving applications for new inductees. Valerie to add to the newsletter regarding seeking inductees for the Hall of Fame.

Evaluation Committee:

Chairperson Joel Berry reported that he had a conversation with the Executive Director regarding her most recent contract. Valerie stated that there were no changes necessary to the contract.

NEW BUSINESS-

Switching 501 Status:

Valerie reported she received a letter from the IRS stating we are a 501c5. We were unable to apply for the NASCAR National Give-A-Thon Day. Upon applying for the give-a-thon NASCAR informed her that we were ineligible to apply due to our 501 statuses. She learned that under 501c5 contributions are not tax deductible. Valerie reported that through Operation Evergreen we have been advertising that donations are tax deductible. Discussion by the board on the topic. Robin Saum suggested making Operation Evergreen its own 501c3. Valerie to consult the association tax preparer for guidance. Mr. Binger will also investigate.

Ordering of Sleds:

Bill Cackler questioned if it was time to order sleds again. Discussion by the Board on the topic. Mr. Cackler also mentioned that years ago the association designed signs for Christmas tree farmers to display reading that they were an Ohio Christmas Tree Association member. Chairperson Pro Tem Mr. Hite asked for discussion regarding the possible sled purchase. The Board decided to table the topic and place on Old Business for the Winter meeting. Matt Perdulla to research and report to the Board. On the topic of member signs, discussion by the Board on the topic. Bill Cackler to provide a picture of the sign for reference. Valerie stated that she has a few of the old signs in storage. A poll will be taken at the Winter meeting as to whether the association members are interested.

NEXT MEETING-

The next meeting is scheduled at Timbuk Farms, Saturday, June 29 at 1:00 p.m. Moved by Bill Cackler. Seconded by Matt Mongin. Motion approved.

ADJOURNMENT:

Bill Cackler moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m. Seconded by Matt Mongin. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Keener

Secretary