Ohio Christmas Tree Association –

Board Meeting Minutes

August 17, 2026

President Gary Hite called the meeting to order at 7:02pm. The Board meeting took place virtually.

ROLL CALL:
Present: Alan Binger, Amy Galehouse, Jeff Greig, Gary Hite, Bev Keener, Roger Koch, and James Stribny (late).
Absent: Joel Berry, Cory D'Amico and Matt Perdulla (excused)
Also Attending: Executive Director, Valerie Graham and Jake Nicholson, OSU Extension.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:
President Hite called for motion to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2026, OCTA board meeting. Roger Koch motioned to approve; Jeff Greig seconded the motion. Motion approved.

TREASURER 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 $12,797.52; National City Checking 3131 $35,179.73; National City Savings 294 $24,773.08; Edward Jones account $12,454.04 for a total of $85,204.37. Fund balances of Operating Fund $43,129.68; Operation Evergreen $13,215.05; Research Fund $10,587.85; Scholarship Fund $5,320.50 and Scholarship Endowment $12,951.29.

- **Operating Fund Balance:** $43,129.68
  - Up approximately $8,100 for the year.
  - Slightly behind the same period last year.
- **Operation Evergreen Fund:** $13,215.05
  - Approximately $7,350 higher than in the same period last year.
- **Endowment Fund:** Approximately $12,951.29
  - Up from $11,362.00

MEMBERSHIP:
- Membership income is up.
- Membership numbers were discussed with slight discrepancies between reports

Summer Meeting Financial Concerns:
- Food costs were discussed.
- Current expenses are approximately $8,000 with an expected food bill estimated near $7,000.
- Concerns were expressed that the meeting may produce the lowest profit margin on record.

Jeff Greig moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. James Stribny seconded the motion. Motion approved.

OLD BUSINESS-

Summer Meeting Recap:

General Feedback

- Attendance exceeded 80 participants.
- Overall evaluations and comments were positive.
- Sessions were well received.

Challenges Discussed

- Agenda development and scheduling delays.
- Several logistical issues were outside organizers' control.
- Vendor placement and timing concerns.
- Food service expenses were significantly higher than expected.

Recommendations for Future Meetings

- Require host farms to submit program ideas earlier.
- Establish clearer planning expectations.
- Improve balance between roundtable discussions and formal presentations.
- Designate specific vendor interaction times.

Concerns

- Some growers attended only to pick up vendor orders without registering for the meeting.

Possible Solutions

- Restrict vendor pickup hours to before or after meeting activities.
- Explore vendor contributions when meetings generate pickup-related sales.
- Continue emphasizing networking, education, and certification value to attendees.

No formal action was taken.

Mid America Christmas Tree (MACT) Meeting Discussion

Board members shared observations:

Positives

- Presentation topics were generally well received.

Concerns

- Limited farm scale and demonstration opportunities.
- Vendor traffic was low.

Ohio State Fair Report

Overview

- 22 trees were displayed.
- Participation increased.
- Approximately **763 People's Choice ballots** were submitted.
- Display quality was considered excellent.

Recognition

- Val received recognition for number of tree entries.
- Board members thanked all volunteers who assisted with setup, staffing, and takedown.

Improvements Discussed

- Refine contest categories.
- Consider separate People's Choice ballot voting for wreath entries.
- Review display layout for future fairs.
- Explore making Canaan Fir its own judging category.

Additional Notes

- The Ohio Department of Agriculture appreciated the association's participation.
- The Ohio Proud kitchen wreath-making demonstrations were successful.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Scholarship Committee:

Roger Koch reported the following:

- Four scholarship applications were received.
- **Campbell Reese** was selected as the scholarship recipient.

Discussion followed regarding scholarship judge rotation.

Consensus

- Continue using current committee process.
- Interested members may volunteer and be considered when openings occur.

Internet Presence/Website Committee:

Chairperson Alan Binger reported the following.

Website Updates

- Membership information.
- Summer meeting information.
- Meeting minutes.
- Scholarship recipient announcement.

Facebook

Since May:

- 26 posts published.

  Content focused on:

  - Summer meeting promotion.
  - Vendor highlights.
  - State Fair activities.
  - Scholarship announcement.

Social Media

- Facebook followers increased from **1,118 to 1,140**.

Operation Evergreen:

Chairperson Amy Galehouse reported the following:

- Contact made with military representatives at Arcent.
- Shipping destinations remain uncertain due to Middle East deployment changes.
- Kuwait and Jordan remain possible destinations.

Tentative Packing Date

November 12

Planning will continue once destination details are finalized.

Meeting/Education Committee:

New Growers Sessions

Three educational sessions are planned:

- September 13
- September 19
- October 11

Topics include:

- Site selection
- Seedlings
- Tree management
- Equipment
- Farm tours

Registration Fee

- $30 per farm

Board members expressed support and approved moving forward with promotion. To promote the new grower sessions, an appealing flyer was designed and is included in the meeting minutes as an attachment.

Winter Meeting:

- Scheduled date: **February 20, 2027**.

Planning

- Initial planning meeting scheduled for the following Thursday.
- Potential speaker: Jim Rockis discussing Canaan Fir research and developments. More information and agenda details will be available at the next board meeting.

2027 Summer Meeting Planning reported by Alan Binger

June 25-27, 2027, at Hidden Pines, Clyde, Ohio

Proposed Activities

- Steinberger Farm open house.
- Farm tours.
- Concurrent educational sessions.
- Equipment demonstrations.
- Potential aerial application demonstration.

Additional Support

- Sandusky County Visitors Bureau has offered assistance with lodging and promotional efforts.

Future Summer Meeting Locations

2028

- Potential host identified in Adams County.

2029

- Additional interest expressed by another potential host location.

Further evaluation will continue

Finance Committee:
Chairperson Alan Binger had nothing else to report.

State Fair Committee:
Chairperson Jeff Greig had nothing else to report.

Hall of Fame Committee:
Valerie reported that Joel has completed Hall of Fame preparations.

Voting

Ballots will be distributed on **January 1**.

OSU Extension Update

Report by Jake Nicholson, OSU Extension

Farm Visits

- More than a dozen troubleshooting visits completed.
- Most issues are traced back to site selection rather than Phytophthora.

Diagnostic Support

- Lab testing services continue to be available.
- Extension support will assist with sample submission and transportation.

Christmas Tree Manual

- Existing manuals are being converted into a free digital publication.
- Accessibility compliance requirements are currently being addressed.
- Long-term goal is to update and release individual chapters separately.

Industry Needs Assessment

- Development underway of a statewide grower survey to identify educational and research priorities.

Board members thanked Jake for his efforts and support.

Board Member Elections

Members up for re-election:

- Matt Perdulla
- Amy Galehouse
- Jeff Greig
- Additional board member seat

Responses

- Amy agreed to continue serving.
- Jeff agreed to continue serving.

One board vacancy remains open.
Potential candidates will be sought.

Membership Dues

Discussion was held regarding membership fees for 2027.

Motion: Maintain membership fees at current levels.
Moved by: Alan
Seconded by: Roger
Vote: Approved unanimously.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 21, 2026, 7:00 pm via Zoom.

Adjourn

Bev Keener motioned to adjourn the meeting. Amy Galehouse seconded the motion. 8:24pm

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Keener

Secretary