Annual meeting minutes

January 28, 2017

Grange in Maple Valley

Rich McDonald called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Erick Pfaff referred a gentleman to the association to sell some of his Christmas stockings. He has 93 cases of socks, which he was selling at $11.99. He said he was willing to sell them to the association members for $2 at 24 per case. He brought them with him so we could buy them and take them home today.

Brad Tower shared what was happening in Olympia. He has spent the last 17 years representing our association. The old topic of open agriculture is still being discussed.

Big things:

Supreme Court decision Hirst VS Whatcom County regarding water rights. Whatcom County under growth management has water rights. A lot of discussion going on with this. The County is negligent in duty of management growth; you now have to prove your well doesn’t affect another well.

Building permits have been put on moratorium; legislature is taking this very serious, if you are not on city water but using a well, this could be an issue. Legislature has different proposals to look at.

You can drill the well, but you have no right to the water. Only applies to permit. Water – harvest water, not practical, might have to go to a metered system on wells. Moratorium on all permits in Whatcom County.

HB #1544 – open space, 5-20 acres, how can be considered as open space. Total value of the parcel? Fair market value if less than 20 acres. Classification, land under the house is taxed different.

Brad didn’t stay long; he had several hundred bills to read through!

If you have any questions on this content or any issues you need Brad to address, please contact him directly at [btower@aol.com](mailto:btower@aol.com)

Rich brought up the fall meeting minutes. Everyone received a copy in the mail for review. A motion to accept the minutes as written was made. The motion had a second. No discussion. A vote was taken, the minutes passed as written.

Next up was the treasurer’s report. Sheila discussed all line items of 2016’s budget and the proposed budget for 2017.

A motion to accept the treasurer’s report as written was made. The motion had a second.

One of the line items was the website. Discussion followed. Do we need a website? Is it the best use of our money? Is it worth it? Our website houses our association’s basic information, our meeting minutes, the member roster, etc. Some farms use the web address to refer customers to other farms when theirs are closed.

A vote was taken, the treasurer’s report passed as written.

Nominations were made for president. Bob Moore was nominated, which he accepted. A motion was made to accept Bob Moore as association president. The motion was seconded. No discussion was made, a vote was called, motion passed. New president is Bob Moore.

Nominations were made for secretary. Jan Moore was nominated, which she accepted. A motion was made to accept Jan Moore as association secretary. The motion was seconded. No discussion was made, a vote was called, motion passed. New secretary is Jan Moore.

Nominations were made for treasurer. Sheila McKinnon was nominated for another term, which she accepted. A motion was made to accept Sheila Peters as association treasurer. The motion was seconded. No discussion was made, a vote was called, motion passed. Treasurer remains Sheila McKinnon.

Board members for the north, central and south were also voted upon.

North Board member – nominated to remain in place was Lloyd Dietlin. Lloyd accepted. A motion was made to accept Lloyd Dietlin as North Board member. The motion was seconded. No discussion was made, a vote was called, motion passed. North Board member remains Lloyd Dietlin.

Central Board member – nominated to remain in place was Mark Buckingham. Mark accepted. A motion was made to accept Mark Buckingham as Central Board member. The motion was seconded. No discussion was made, a vote was called, motion passed. Central Board member remains Mark Buckingham.

South Board member – nominated to remain in place was Doug Kingsbury. Doug accepted. A motion was made to accept Doug Kingsbury as South Board member. The motion was seconded. No discussion was made, a vote was called, motion passed. South Board member remains Doug Kingsbury.

Summary of PSCTA 2017 Board Members:

President – Bob Moore

Vice President – Rich McDonald

Secretary – Jan Moore

Treasurer – Sheila McKinnon

North Board Member – Lloyd Dietlin

Central Board Member – Mark Buckingham

South Board Member – Doug Kingsbury

Sheila reported on the website statistics for this past selling season. She compared 2016 selling season with 2015 selling season, November 15th through December 23rd.

15% number of sessions; 16,553 times. 23% new users, 14,000, 85% first timers.

A guest attending today said this was the way he found out about our association. He cautioned us not to lose it.

Page views were up 8%, with 2.7 pages per session. The average session during the time frame was 2.19.

Sheila also tracked statistics for those customers using mobile devices; in 2015 it was at 56% and in 2016 it jumped to 62%. Sheila had available a graph of the sessions per day for review.

Facebook statistics – 5-7 posts per week during the season, which started in mid-November. The Facebook Instagram interface feature of the “Keep It Real” campaign reached 11,000 Facebook users.

Things to do regarding the website: have instructions on how to get the photo to the Facebook person we hired; review the first page of our website – should it be the page that has everything on it? Dates open, time open, directions, etc. Make it a catchy first page. The first page should be the flash page.

Our Facebook account is a closed group, for members of the association only. Liz Gingrich will set it up to get invites out so members can be included.

Washington State Fair information – TV w/rotation of farms. Send us your pictures.

11:45 break for lunch.

Miscellaneous comments from members:

Darrel Westover – after 20 some years of selling Christmas trees, he’s never had the situation come up like the one that did this past season. He planted about 4 holly trees for wreaths; he offered free holly to everyone, so now he is down to 3.

Someone came onto his farm and lopped off some seedlings. The next weekend someone cut the tags off and left them on the ground, these were on trees about 3’.

On a Friday, Darrel was in the store by himself, a father and son were at the farm, they never paid for a tree and they left without one that was the first time this had happened.

Darrell sold 5 trees less this year than last year, his cost was higher so it was a wash.

Darrell has bought wreaths from Snowshoe – very full, he claims they are almost as good as Adele’s! Sold for $30, some decorations, but sold them all. Will do it again next year.

Jan Moore said they made a ”selfie” station at their farm. They decorated a wagon that said Happy Holidays; they received some Christmas cards from some of their customers with their picture on the wagon. It was a good year, a lot of pre-cut trees, ads helped, which allowed prices to be higher.

Monday’s they were closed, brought in 60-80 pre-cut trees on that day.

They had 40 pre-cut trees on the Sunday before Christmas and they sold in 2 hours. Bob brought in another 30 trees, which people waited 2 hours for their tree to get there.

Bob and Jan are using 5 different farms for their pre-cut.

The question was asked if there were any issues with aphids or stink bugs.

Rick McDonald had quite a few trees show bugs on the shaker, but he never saw them during the year. He had a lot of them this year. Gary Chastagner says they are becoming more of a problem. Hoping the freeze will help cut them down a little?

Mike Peters said some customer’s found white aphids on some of his Frasers. He sprays when they show up in the summer. This year he will spray in the middle of September, especially the Frasers and Balsams.

He sprayed everything in the spring because he seem to see them in a lot of his trees. He used Evintol – which is systemic. He did 2 sprays, spring and September.

Mark Buckingham reported this was the first year he used a Square Reader and he loved it.

Darrel suggested not entering cash onto Square. You are charged a % of your total income whether you used Square to record it or not. He just uses it for credit cards only.

Mark Buckingham – he doesn’t have bathroom facilities available, he rented one a couple of years ago and only one person used it. The next year he rented it again, and no one used it. Last year he didn’t have it and 20 people asked for one – so next year he will have one available.

Mike Peters reported on his study of compost. He took some compost yardage and 2 patches of trees. The first patch was seedlings. He added the compost, drilled the hole, mixed the dirt and compost then planted the seedlings. He found it didn’t really make a difference.

The second site, he added the compost, it was still decomposed, left an impression, but water just sat there.

Next, he just put it around the tree. Later he measured the leader growth of 10% but the number of buds did not grow; without a decrease in density.

Mike picked out unhealthy trees, threw on 2 scoops of compost, when he went to plant the next year the ones he was going to cull were sold.

He’s adding compost to older crops versus seedlings.

Square of 25 trees (divided), randomly put 2 shovelfuls to each one; $1,000 of compost netted $2,000 worth of trees sold. This was done 2 years in a row and they will do it another year.

Mike keeps a database of each tree out in the field. He thinks they do grow faster and believes they are doing better.

A question was asked, does anyone use irrigation on new seedlings? Harter does, he uses rain yurts and a sprinkler system. All his seedlings are in one area so it makes it easier to do it.

Bob Moore did irrigation in 2015; he watered only the true firs, but ended up with a water bill of almost $6,000! Hoping for a timely rain again this year. Start early if you are going to water.

If you start watering, you can’t quit, the roots become dependent.

Bob discussed his techniques for planting – he plants January through March, and pushes to be done by mid-March. Cold weather makes a difference as to the time of planting.

Discussion followed about plantings, stump removal, stump flushing, etc.

Christmas tree promotion board, some members got some stickers for his $100. The question was asked - is this best way for them to spend their money?

They have raised over a million dollars so this is the first year they’ve had this money.

Some farmers don’t believe small choose-n-cuts should have to pay this fee; while other farmer’s don’t agree. Discussed the promotion board’s pros and cons; we’re in a wait and see mode.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.