**Puget Sound Christmas Tree Association**

**Summer Meeting, June 26, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by Association president Bob Moore. Hosted by Dan and Lori Fishburn of Traditions Tree Farm in Maple Valley our members found a cool spot under a big tree to weather the very high temperatures of the day! We welcomed new members to our group: Ruth Heft introduced Hollie Delvecchio the new owner of her tree farm and back in our membership is Joe Larsen from Helping Hearts Tree farm. It is great to add new voices to our group.

Sadly, we had the announcement that Marv Reiner had passed away the end of May. Prayers to his family; he was a wonderful man.

**Farm Overview with Dan and Lori Fishburn:** Dan and Lori purchased the old Westover farm in Maple Valley a couple of years ago. In a relatively short period of time the Fishburn’s have transformed the old farm and are well on their way to making the farm a true family tradition! Previously the farm had promoted the unsheared tree and had done a large amount of interplanting of trees making general maintenance of the farm difficult. Both Dan and Lori have full time jobs and are new to the Christmas tree business, but for those of us who remember what the farm looked like in the past it has been an amazing transformation of the property. Although they didn’t sell a lot of trees during the 2020 season the farm was definitely a draw for families offering a gift shop, weaths, hot cider, a fire pit, fun activities for kids (a scavenger hunt to find reindeer), and many locations for family photo shoots. For 2021 they hope to add some pre-cut trees for sale along with the trees that are ready to harvest.

**Minutes of the January meeting:** The minutes were accepted.

**Treasurer’s report:** Sheila presented the treasurer’s report with a current membership count of 42 full members and 1 associate member. Research and lobby donations have been paid and all other expenses have been covered on the financial report presented. There are changes listed for the web site maintenance and updates. Our current website needed an overhaul and Sheila negotiated a good price for the updates (thank you Sheila for wheeling and dealing so well). The report was accepted as presented to the membership. **Reminder:** By fall make sure that your website information has been updated!

**Lobbyist Report:** Our lobbyist, Brad Tower was in attendance for our meeting. During Covid, work for a lobbyist was not business as usual. Certainly, working remotely is difficult at best when meeting in hallways is always the ideal. Nevertheless, work got done and our lobbyist reported on 3 bills that impacted farmers:

**Bill 5172:** This bill had to do with dairy workers overtime pay and others impacted by seasonal employment where the 40 hour work week was concerned. The bill protected farmers from retroactive phase out of overtime. The exemption was from 1960 forward.

**Bill 5096:** Capital gains tax, fortunately this tax will not affect those in the sale of timber which our Christmas tree sales fall under.

**Bill 5126:** Low-carbon fuel standard and cap and trade bills will likely impact the wholesalers of trees adding to their fuel costs.

**Puyallup Fair:** Unfortunately, Mike Roosendaal was unable to attend the meeting, however, it was reported that he had some communication with the fair committee and was sent a questionnaire regarding our participation in the fair. Mike has responded to this questionnaire and let the committee know that our association would be discussing the fair at our summer meeting. In our meeting we did talk about the fair and that if we participated, we would recommend limited involvement, i.e., not to have a manned booth and the display of trees would be limited to one tree. With our limited membership it is difficult for the association to commit any other resources for the fair. Bob Moore will communicate this information to Mike for his next meeting with the fair committee.

**Kirk Company:** Our representative Mike Hepler attended the meeting with new catalogs and special pricing for our association. We are all encouraged to place our orders with Mike as soon as possible.

**Season 2021?** Members shared their plans for the season as it relates to the uncertainty of Covid. In general, many farms will continue to have staff wear masks and other precautions will be taken to ensure customer safety. Since most of our farms have all the hand sanitizer available already that is a first step. Many of the farms who had served drinks, had a Santa, etc. in the past will not go back to those attractions. Families seemed to appreciate being on the farm and getting a tree last year and these extras don’t seem to be a necessity. Again, with uncertainty about the health of our state we may continue to offer the basics for our customers.

Following lunch, Bob had some demonstration of culturing techniques and work that should be started after the heat goes below 100!

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. No October meeting has been scheduled at this time, but members will be notified of our next gathering.

Respectfully,

Jan Moore, Secretary