**Minutes of the January 2022**

**PSCTA Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by PSCTA president, Bob Moore at the Meridian Grange on January 29, 2022.  We had a great turnout for our annual meeting!  Guests and new members were introduced.

**Secretary’s Report:**Jan Moore asked if there were any corrections or revisions needed for the minutes of the October meeting.  There being no corrections, the minutes were accepted.

**Treasurer’s Report:**Sheila McKinnon reviewed the final 2021 financial report with the group.  Due to the reduction in membership dues and marketing dues we fell a little short of our proposed budget.  That loss was nearly cut in half by the savings resulting from not having Puyallup Fair and the Facebook expenses.  As of 12/31/2021 the association’s Checking and Money Market accounts total $14,257.  The final budget report for 2021 was accepted.  Sheila presented the proposed budget for 2022.  Our expenses for 2022 are holding steady, but we are encouraged to help recruit more members and include our farms on the website.  Although our farms have had no problem selling their trees each year it is important to be included on the website to promote the association and give the public looking for farms a place for “one stop shopping.”  The 2022 budget proposal was accepted.

A question came up about research funding and the Christmas Tree Promotion Board.  Gary Chastagner gave a brief review of funding sources for research.  State funding has nearly disappeared and so research has depended on federal grants prepared by his office and also grants from the Christmas Tree Promotion Board.  Support from the Christmas tree associations has been helpful in providing the leverage to obtain this outside funding.

**Website Report:**Sheila talked about the updates that were made on our website.  Our website needed a total overall and the designers completed the work for our season.  After negotiating with our designers, the fees were reduced and allowed for two payments and a reduction in the maintenance fee.  Thank you, Sheila for making this happen!  For 2021 the website activity generated 12,000 users with 14,000 sessions.  This was a 30-50% increase.

**Reminders:**Farms that sell 400 trees or more are required to complete the Washington State PISCES form.  The fees are based on your farm acreage.  Funds from our PISCES fees help support research.  Farms that sell 500 or more trees are required to pay the National Christmas Tree Promotion Board 15 cents per tree cut/sold from your farm.  Pre-cut trees that you purchase for sale are not included in this fee.

**Legislative Report:**Our lobbyist Brad Tower provided the latest from Olympia.  Brad reported that the upcoming elections are setting the tone down in Olympia and that there has been a lot of back peddling to address important issues.  Lobbyists are still not allowed in the buildings and zoom meetings are the norm.  The good news is that the community can join in the zoom meetings for input.  The buffer bill is dead and a number of people in the ag community did submit opinions on the proposal.  There are studies being held about renaming different programs including those for pesticides.  Brad took questions from the group on several topics including insurance and credit scoring for rates.  Brad encouraged us to get on his e-mail list for the latest news from Olympia.  Many thanks to Brad for staying on for the meeting for informal conversations with the group.

**Research:**Gary Chastagner from WSU joined the meeting and stayed on for additional conversations over the lunch hour.  Gary reviewed several studies that began in the late 70s and 80s regarding needle cast which was the hot topic of the time.  Noble Firs became very popular, so he reviewed many of the studies related to root rot which the nobles are very susceptible to due to poor drainage.  He went on to discuss the mid 1990’s research that focused on Nordmann and Turkish firs.

Some of the best research is coming out of Michigan State University and their webinars are very valuable.  He suggested participating in these sessions.  Gary let the group know that we can check the WSU website for more information and that if farmers have questions about a problem with trees they can submit samples for analysis to the center.  Because of our timing Gary was not able to address the drought issues we all have been facing for the past couple of years.  Perhaps we can talk about this at our summer meeting.

**Potluck Lunch was delicious!**

**New Business:**

**Election of Officers:**Members voted to retain the current slate of officers for another year.

**Puyallup Fair:**The association has long been a supporter of the fair with our booth.  The fair committee has not met (usually an April meeting), but the consensus is that we continue to participate to some degree.  We would probably have an unmanned booth, but more trees should be displayed.  We talked about having some new information boards produced to encourage more farmers to join our association.  We may want to hold some clinics to provide information about planting and sheering of trees.  In addition to the fair as a way to promote our product, Keith Stocker said that he had joined the Washington Farm Bureau and this has been a good way to be in touch with farmers of all products.  The message is to get involved.  (Note: since the meeting Bob and Jan Moore joined the Farm Bureau—very easy to sign up on-line and the fee is $130/annually.)  We will continue to discuss the Puyallup Fair booth at our summer meeting.

**Other Business:**

So how did the season go?  We all seemed to have another great season with lots of customers and an early sell out for all farms.  Most farms continued to keep the protocols for covid in mind for the season, but it was more relaxed.  Many of the farms didn’t serve that hot apple cider and cocoa, but customers didn’t seem to miss these extras.  Again, families just wanted the U-cut experiences with their families.  Keith Stocker mentioned that he had cider, coffee and cocoa for his customers and had a donation pot for the local food bank.  What a great idea to serve the local community!

**Summer Meeting:**Jim Ulrich will check on his availability to host the summer meeting.  When we have a confirmed date and place Jan will send out a message to the membership.  The meeting will be held in June 2022.

**Meeting Adjourned**