**Minutes of the Annual PSCTA Meeting**

**January 28, 2023**

**Meridian Grange**

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Association president, Bob Moore, greeted our members and guests.  This was a large gathering of old friends, but also lots of new, young faces to our gathering.  We had new members who had purchased an existing farm, new farms and also guests interested in getting into the business.  We spent time going around the room to introduce everyone and Bob took some time to introduce our offices of the association and some background of the association for our new members.  Welcome to all!

**General Membership Meeting:**

**Minutes from the fall meeting were approved.**

**Treasurer’s report:**Sheila McKinnon reviewed the results of the past year.  In spite of a lower membership number our budget came within a small deficit which is covered by our investment income.  The proposed budget for 2023 was presented showing that we are able to cover all expenses for the year.  Sheila had notes that because our website update had been completed our maintenance fees dropped substantially.  Additionally, it is assumed that we will not be participating in the Puyallup Fair for 2023, however, we may want to do some other promotional activities for the association during the year.  The proposed budget was approved as presented.

We had some discussion about promotion activities for the association and it was suggested to establish a marketing committee to explore strategies to re-engage old farm members to re-join the group.  One of our new members also talked about some social media avenues like Instragram and Tik Tok.  We will need these younger members to help us out with what is trending for today’s market.

**Reminders:**For those who are required to pay fees for the National Promotion Board and the PISCES State of Washington requirement, these fees are due soon.  As farmers we all benefit from this fees because tree farmers receive a considerable amount in research funding from these offices.

**Legislative Report—Brad Tower**

With so many new in attendance, Brad gave some background information about his work with association which dated back to 2001.  We are so lucky to have Brad as our advocate in Olympia!

The Legislature is now back in session, in person, after a long time of virtual meetings that hadn’t been all that productive.  He indicated that it was a “mello playing field” in Ag at this time.  Last year the Tribes made lots of waves for the legislature, but didn’t cause much of a divide.  The tribes have a large financial/political influence with the legislature and are seen as one of the most powerful groups in Olympia.  Other items:  expand voluntary stewardship programs, pesticides not so combative this year, and the farm internship program passed providing internship opportunities for those interested in getting into the farming business.  The legislature is focusing this year on housing development and in order to achieve the goals of affordable housing the Governor needs considerable funds to meet the need—maybe that Capital Gains Tax or the looming State Income tax?  Finally, we should be keeping close track of our farm fuel usage because of the additional tax being put on our fuel .  As farmers were are not obligated to pay this extra refinery charge and this may be refunded with proper documentation.   Brad invited all members to send him a message to be added to his e-mail distribution lists to get updates on new legislation that was being proposed or accepted. (btower@phillipsburgessgr.com)

**Tree Research from Gary Chastagner:**

Gary has been a lead researcher at WSU Extension in Puyallup for many years.  He first got started in Christmas tree research in 1978 studying Swiss needle cast.  The years have passed and Gary has been involved in many research projects mostly funded by grant proposals.   Needle retention, root rot and many of the root rot diseases were discussed.  Gary answered many questions from the members.  Several members were wondering about the Turkish fir and Trojan Fir.  These seedlings and seed sources are still difficult to obtain.  The Trojan was particularly of interest because it breaks bud early, but is not hurt by our NW late frost.  Gary stayed on through the lunch hour and balance of the meeting to answer specific questions.  Gary did announce that he would be retiring at the end of the year.  Dr Molly Darr will be our contact for bugs and things and will be invited to our Summer Farm Tour meeting.

**Election of Officers:**

Following the potluck lunch the next order of business was the election of officers.  There were no nominations and the membership voted to retain the existing officers for the following year.

**Season Re-cap**

Members reported that the season was once again quick.  There were increases in tree prices, but customers did not back off from the increase.  More of the farmers had begun some pre-sales for customers to insure that their regular clientele could continue the tradition of cutting their own tree.  More farmers were supplementing their sales with pre-cut trees as well.  Two farms to note were a new farm, Shine Farm and Helping Hearts Farm which has just recently begun selling trees.  Both of these farms are so important to our industry because their mission is to build around the community.  The Shine Farm is new and has lots of activities including a flower business.  The farm is in a smaller community and their location has been a gathering place for people to learn skills like wreath making and crafts.  In a few years their trees will be at the right height for cutting.  From it’s beginning the Helping Hearts Farm was established to provide a welcoming place for cancer patients and their families.  They arrange all sorts of fun family activities and now that they have been able to harvest trees and have pre-cut trees for sale.  They have committed the proceeds from the trees sales to build a scholarship fund for cancer patients.  We have to be so proud that these farms are working for the good of the community.

**Summer Meeting and Farm Tour:**

The Summer Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, June 24, 2023 at Lochsloy Acres in Lake Stevens.