PSCTA Summer Meeting Minutes

June 24, 2023

Lochsloy Acres, Lake Stevens

Those in attendance:

Lochsloy Acres, Mike & Sheila Peters

Wilson Hill Tree Farm; Rich McDonald

Good Boy Farms; Chris, Doug Yumen, Josh Hansen

Double Four Tree Farm; Bob Moore

Crystal Creek Tree Farm; Harvey Hawken

Noble Grove Tree Farm; Daniel Hawken

Ohop Ridge Christmas Tree Farm; Denise Roosendaal

Buttonwood Farm; Lyubov Botvina

Serres Farm; Bill Serres

Pfaff’s Old Time Farm; Erik Pfaff

George & Dixie King

Kirk Company; Stacy & Simon

President Bob Moore called the meeting to order.

We recognized new members to the association: George and Dixie King, in the process of purchasing Lochsloy Acres, Chris, Dave and Josh from the Good Boy Farms in Oak Harbor.

Bob’s wife, Jan, passed away this past march. She was the associations secretary; Denise Roosendaal stepped up and will be the secretary.

Minutes from the annual meeting were mailed out to everyone. Bob asked if anyone had any questions on the minutes, which there were none. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as written. Motion passed unanimously.

Sheila had a screen up with the agenda. Lochsloy Acres was purchased in 1989 and they originally farmed cattle. Mike retired and wanted to do something easier than to have cattle, so he started planting Christmas trees in 2003. He made more money in the first year with the trees that he did with the cattle.

Mike made a presentation of some of the bonehead moves he’s made over the years. He figured other people might have gone through the same stuff or for the new people, maybe this information would be helpful.

A copy of those notes are attached with the minutes.

Some highlights – his biggest issue in the beginning was the parking, or lack of. He had 50 spots and he learned that for every parking spot, you could only sell one tree, so 50 spots = 50 trees.

They had an electric train that would go around a ledge inside their barn, and they found that kids loved watching the train so much, that they didn’t want to leave, so no trees were sold. They eliminated the train and focused on selling more trees. The fewer the distractions, the faster customer leave.

Mike figures one parking spot equals $80 an hour, and they focus on good customer service that runs efficiently. He has trained his staff how to tie a Christmas tree to the top of a car. He has taught them how to use a truck knot and a girth knot. He watched as they learned to tie the tree down, so he had the confidence to let them do it without his supervision.

Harvey said he asked his insurance company about the liability issue of this, and his agent asked him who can tie a tree to the top of the car better, the farmer or the customer? Duh, the farmer!

Mike then discussed what species of trees to plant; they plant Fraser Fir, Noble Fir, Grand Fir, Nordmann Fir and Douglas Fir because those are the species that grow the best on his farm.

He started out planting 2000 trees and now he plants as many trees as he thinks he can sell when they are mature.

He plants his seedlings when his ground is ready and plants the trees where they want to be planted.

Mike then talked about chemicals – and he said that Bravo is the most effective, which needs to be sprayed 2-3 years prior to selling, whether you see insects or not. He sprays his Doug Firs for aphids as it is the host plant.

If you get rid of ants, you should get rid of the insects.

Sheila then presented the treasurer’s report. Our expenses versus this years’ budget are falling behind. Farm listings are down, giving us a short of $571 so far this year. A decision needs to be made at the fall meeting on where to affect the expenses.

Sheila asked if there were any questions on the budget, which there was none. A motion was made and to accept the treasurer’s report. Motion passed unanimously.

At the marketing meeting in October, we can discuss a possible 10% reduction to the lobbyist and research and possibly a 10% reduction in dues. Can also look at the website charges, might be able to a reduction of 10% there. If we make these decisions now, we can vote on them at the annual meeting in January.

The Pacific NW meeting was held recently and was hosted by the Kirk Company.

Denise gave a brief report on the Spring Fair at the Puyallup Fair grounds. The spring fair was 2 weekends, and we had a static booth set up with 2 Christmas trees. We also had some information on growing your own Christmas tree and a form to fill out if any one was interested in using what little land, they might have to grow their own.

11 people left their name and phone number. Denise called them all and only 3 were interested in more information and/or help with purchasing seedlings. Mike will follow up with them in the spring.

Mike Peters commented on the fact that we are not in competition with each other, we are all in this together. We learn from each other and help each out when needed.

Mike then introduced Stacy and Simon from the Kirk Company. Simon is the newest member, and he is from New Zealand. He gave a brief history of how he came to the US and ended up with the Kirk Company. Stacy let everyone know that they had product with them so anyone that needed anything, they could get it today.

Our association is able to take advantage of group orders, we are treated as a Co-Op, with 5% off pricing and delivery to our fall meeting, which means we pay no shipping.

Mike invited everyone out to view all the different pieces of equipment he used on the farm, and what they are for.

Everyone enjoyed a potluck and before Bob took the group out into the field to discuss culturing, he went over a handout he created showing before and after pictures of different culturing on different species.

He will be documenting the process further as the summer goes on and sharing with the group at the fall meeting.

After the field work, the meeting was adjourned.

A place for the fall meeting has not been determined yet; but when a farm is committed, the information will be sent out to all the farms.