

**MINUTES
COUNCIL MEETING
PA State Council of Farm Organizations
Harrisburg, PA
March 31, 2014**

Meeting was called to order by President B. Snyder at 1:10 p.m. Agenda was accepted per motion by R. Diebold, second, B. Huber.

Minutes were reviewed and approved per motion by E. Richard and second from T. Wentz.

Member Issues. This is a new agenda item designed to give members a forum to present their top issues.

- B. Snyder reported that PASA is working very hard locally and nationally on the FSMA rules response and are also in favor of labeling GMOs in food.
- E. Richard said that mushroom growers issues were the same as in 2013 (energy, transportation, immigration,).
- J. Nogan – Cattlemen – noted that the number of cows have dropped to levels not seen in decades and noted a disease threat from Brazilian cattle imports.
- B. Huber – Young Farmers – stressed the importance of agricultural education for adults.
- L. Stahl –Beekeepers – briefed the Council on the new honey promotional efforts.
- S. Davison – PennVet – described the financial challenges that veterinarians have and the need to attract more vets into food animal practices.
- B. Troxell – PA Vegetable Growers – Labor and immigration are hot issues along with FDA’s revisions to the proposed Food Safety Rules. Funding for Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Research are critical parts of PA’s Budget.
- G. Robertson – PA Landscape & Nursery – said that he did not see immigration reform happening in 2014. He briefed the Council on the success we have had with Tunnel Building legislation to exempt them from being treated as taxable property. Two of three bills were enacted and the third, House Bill 1440, would removed those structures from the Uniform Construction Code.
- H. Smith-Brubaker -Farmers Union –is examining new programs in the Farm Bill and is focusing on getting farmers signed by in the health insurance exchanges under the Patient Protection Affordable Care Act.
- J. Smith was introduced as the new representative from the PA Bar Association Agricultural Law Committee having replaced long-time member Cynthia Boyer Blakeslee. J. Smith reviewed some of the agenda of the recently concluded Ag Law Forum which included a section on local zoning versus agricultural interests.
- H. Reffner –Fairs – said that the 2014 County Fair Directory had been prepared
- M. Wirth –PSU Ag Council – reported that the PSU Ag Council had a number of meetings coming up. Issues are the State Budget, sustainability, and labeling issues.

- M. Brammer – FFA and Ag Educators – said that the State Budget was critical and in education, the concern is that the common core curriculum crowds out discretionary program like agricultural education at the secondary school level.
- K. Rainey – Holstein – said that state funding for the All-American Dairy Show was important as is the issue of cattle exports.
- R. Leidy – Potato Growers Cooperative – thanked the General Assembly and Governor Corbet for enacting a law that lets the marketplace decide what size potato packaging should take place. Also, consumer acceptance of genetically modified seeds is an issue. He also said that oddly, white potatoes are not covered by the federal Women Infants and Children nutrition program (WIC).
- A. Bradford –PennAg – Issues include the FDA proposed Rules, sustainability of agriculture, the State Budget, and animal health issues along with adequate funding for the Animal Health Diagnostic Commission.
- J. Siglow – Dairy Farmers of America – Act 89 transportation funding and bridge repair remain a top issue for PA’s dairy industry. This was echoed by K. Fuchs – MidAtlantic Farm Credit.
- J. Bell – PA Farm Bureau – There is a trinity of EPA regulations that will affect agriculture: Water Rule that would in effect put every stream or body of water under EPA’s authority; Worker protection standards re pesticides; Methane under the federal Clean Air Act. Chesapeake Bay, immigration, state pensions and the State Budget round out a partial list of FB issues.
- T. Wentz said that equipment dealers’ issues include and fair dealer legislation and the State Budget
- G. Wolffe – Act 89 is the first time PA has taken a look at the system of transportation taken as a whole and thanked PSCFO for efforts in support of Act 89. (The Council thanked him in return.) A concern to PA now is the loss of \$1.3 billion of federal highway money if Congress does not pass the necessary legislation..
- R. Diebold – Dairylea – announced to the Council that Dairylea is now part of Dairy Farmers of America.
- D. McManus and T. Dubbs –Hunger-Free PA—said that their focus was on getting PA food products to the needy and support for the commodity supplemental food program and the state food purchasing program.
- R. Maiden –Conservation Districts – expressed thanks for passage of Act 89 and the additional funding in dirt and gravel roads as well as the additional funding going to conservation districts from Act 13 impact fees.
- B. Gruber – Deer Farmers and Showmen – Concerns include hunting ranches and Act 89, H2B immigration.
- B. Snyder – Sustainable Agriculture—recapped some of the work PASA has done in areas such as the FDA proposed Food Safety Rule and said that an emerging issue is coexistence between farmers using organic seeds and genetically modified seeds.

Association Management. V. Phillips reported that membership is at 60 plus with several membership renewals coming in; that PSCFO was attracting attention from legislators and staff. It was announced that a contract between PSCFO and Phillips Associates had been approved by the Board extending through June 2015.

Treasurer's Report. J. Nogan reported total income year date of \$7,055.00 and expenses of \$3,166.00. Not included were additional incoming Cornucopia monies and payment to the caterer for the reception. Bank balance was listed as \$24,565.98 per February 28, 2014 bank statement.

President's Report. President B. Snyder gave a report which said that this has been a banner year for PSCFO as witnessed by the impact the Council was having on meeting with top state officials about the State Budget, Act 89, High Tunnel legislation and the FDA proposed Food Safety Rule. At this time, V. Phillips presented two commemorative pens from the Governor to PSCFO President B. Snyder and the Council to recognize work done on behalf of passage of Tunnel Building and transportation funding legislation.

Committee Reports

Communications: G. Robertson is taking on the task of re-formatting the PSCFO web site.

Nominations: G. Robertson announced a slate of candidates for Board positions including:

- B. Snyder for a second one-year term as President
- E. Richard for a second one-year term as Vice President
- J. Nogan for a second one-year term as Secretary/Treasurer
- G. Robertson for a second three-year term
- C. Meiss for a first three-year term
- H. Brubaker-Smith for a first three-year term

There were no other nominations and the **Council approved this slate unanimously per a motion by R. Diebold, second by K. Fuchs.**

Old Business

- High Tunnel Buildings: (G. Robertson) The Council was warned that farmers should be vigilant when examining their tax bills as some jurisdictions may have printed them before laws were enacted prohibiting High Tunnel buildings from be assessed as taxable property.
- FDA is apparently re-writing the deadlines for compliance with the proposed Food Safety Rules. A. Bradford said that the FDA feed mill and feed industry proposed Rule cannot be overlooked since each "facility" would have to have its own specific food safety plan. PDA Deputy Secretary J. Howes said that FDA will do a second draft.

New Business

- The three candidates for Penn State Trustee made remarks to the group. **The Council voted unanimously per a motion by C. Myers, second by G. Robertson to state that PSCFO found all three to be qualified.** Nominees are past PSCFO President B. Huber, current Trustees' Chairman K. Masser, and former State Representative J. Stairs. Masser and Huber are incumbents.
- G. Robertson reported that the PA Supreme Court decision which invalidated state authority over local zoning decisions regarding Marcellus Shale drilling will have an impact on agriculture if municipalities seek to circumvent the Right to Farm Law. J. Bell said that this court precedent is the latest environmentalists' battle cry in overcoming standing law which protects farmers and their ability to farm.
- PDA Deputy Secretary J. Howes reported on current Department activities including:
 - Regional office locations giving Blair County a full-time PDA employee
 - Promoting fluid milk consumption
 - State Budget – Even though General Operation was increased, it does not match the increase in health benefits for employees
 - Mid-Atlantic Secure Milk Program which could allow some movement of healthy cattle out of a quarantined zone
 - FDA: “The last 15 months and the next 15 months”
 - EPA water regulations
- DEP Regional Agriculture Assessment was presented by DEP's K. Hetherington-Confer as a new program with funding that would work in six PA watersheds (four from Chesapeake and one each from the Ohio River and Delaware Valley watersheds). The strategy is to work with all farmers in the selected areas to assess farming practices and to be helpful in promoting best practices. TA successful prototype was recently concluded in Mifflin County. Projects will be implemented by the PA Association of Conservation Districts. Contact information for K. Hetherington-Confer is 717/705-2693. Discussion included expressions of support for the initiative although J. Bell cautioned that farmers may not be as warm because of federal activities regarding Chesapeake Bay emissions.
- **The Council unanimously passed a resolution commending Michael Pechart for his extraordinary service to Pennsylvania Agriculture** in several Administrations at the PA Department of Agriculture, per a motion by R. Diebold and second by G. Robertson.

The meeting was **adjourned at 2:50 p.m. per a motion by T. Wentz, second by C. Myers.**

Programs

There were two programs. First was a panel moderated by B. Snyder on the status of Agricultural Institutions of Higher Learning. It included Acting Dean of the School of Agricultural Science at Penn State University Dr. Barb Christ and Sherril Davison, BA, DVM, MA, MBA, Associate Dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. Delaware Valley College Dean Russell Redding was unable to make the meeting due to a teaching conflict.

The second panel was moderated by E. Richard and featured Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee staff persons M. Rader (Senate Majority), K. Golden (House Majority) and D. Zeiders (House Minority).

Respectfully submitted, Vince Phillips