**MBC Meeting Minutes**

**December 15, 2023**

**RSC, 199 Uptown Drive, Bay City, Michigan**

Those Present:

District #1 Kevin Noffsinger, Chair

District #2 Ted Bauer, Treasurer

District #3 Greg Ackerman

District #4 Clint Stoutenburg

District #5 Allen Bischer

District #6 Chase Voelker

District #7 Jessica Rader

At Large Steve Ewald, Vice-Chair

Shipper Representative Neil French

Executive Secretary Joe Cramer

Those Absent:

District #1

District #2

District #3

District #4

District #5

District #6

District #7

At Large

Shipper Representative

Others Present:

Scott Bales MSU-MBC Dry Bean Specialist

Heather Throne MDARD

Kylie Braun Nietzke & Faupel, PC

Ross Voelker Greenfield Farm, Pigeon, Michigan

Chairman Noffsinger welcomed the guests and called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Cramer asked to add MSU Dry Bean Breeder under Old Business, Item “e.” French moved to approve the agenda including the addition. Bischer supported the motion. ***Motion passed.***

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**: Minutes from the October 16, 2023, Commission meeting were presented and reviewed. A motion was made by French with support from Ewald to approve the minutes as presented. ***Motion passed.***

**AUDITOR’S ANNUAL REPORT: Kylie Braun, Nietzke & Faupel, PC**

Ms. Braun explained the audit process including the type of audit, findings, and recommendations. She also went through the financial statement highlighting any significant changes in practices or balances. Commissioners spent a few minutes discussing fund balance, findings, and recommendations. There were no significant findings or recommendations outside the usual separation of duties.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**: The financial report included a current balance sheet, credit card and check registry and expenses compared to the FY 23-24 budget for both the Commission and for PRAB. Cramer went through the highlights of each.

Following discussion, French moved to accept the auditor’s report, balance sheet update, profit and loss compared to budget report and the expenses for October and November 2023. Bauer supported the motion. ***Motion passed.***

**MDARD UPDATE – Heather Throne**

* The next round of SCBG application period is open. Applications are due February 8, 2024. MDARD will host a training webinar on Thursday, December 21, 2023.
* Rural Development Grant are available. These grants focus on supply chain issues in eligible counties. They are due January 9, 2024
* USDA’s Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSIP) assigned $10,000,000 to MDARD to manage. MDARD is currently conducting surveys and listening sessions to guide them in the awarding process and the size of grants awarded. This is an exciting program for stakeholders in the supply chain.

**MBS UPDATE – Neil French, Shipper Representative**

* MOISTURE – Today’s customers each have their own maximum moisture specification that rarely aligns with the long-standing USDA standards. There is work to be done that could add some uniformity.
* Demand from export markets, especially black beans and small red beans moving south, remains strong.
* French suggested prices have appreciated at least 20% since harvest except for navy beans which have actually softened. Navy bean supply seems to be shrinking.
* French continues to remind growers to engage in contracting.
* Seed supply for 2024 is good. Prices have increased.

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT – Kevin Noffsinger**

* Evaluation - Noffsinger asked Commissioners to consider allowing him and possibly the other officers to work through a management evaluation process that is similar to the process MSU uses. After some discussion, commissioners were supportive of the concept. Noffsinger will work with Cramer during the first quarter of 2024 for discussion at the March Commission meeting.
* Noffsinger reminded commissioners that terms expire in three districts and the shipper representative at the end of 2024. He encouraged those who may not seek or accept nomination for another term proactively solicit candidates they feel would be interested in serving.
* Noffsinger also pointed out that through these changes we will inevitably need to assign new representatives to the USDBC next year. In an effort to ensure a smooth transition, he will have additional Commissioners to attend the 2024 Winter and Summer USDBC Board meetings.

**INSURANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE**

* Cramer had no update on the 2015 Navy Bean Lawsuit
* Ackerman updated Commissioners on recent committee meetings with USDA-RMA and members of the Senate Ag Committee. These meetings focused on data proving flaws when RMA sets the premiums. A recent review which RMA performs every three years confirms premiums need to be adjusted and has taken some steps, but the adjustments aren’t as great as the two committees feel are fair. RMA agree to take another look following next years’ experience.

**USDA PROCURMENT**

* Several members of USDA’s DC, KC and local procurement and inspection teams visited west Michigan on October 18th. Cramer met with the group at Burnette Foods to discuss bean supply, the purchasing process, and some hurdles shippers and canners have experienced. It was a good discussion that will hopefully lead to some more efficient and user-friendly participation.
* A Section 32 request totaling $127,000,000 was submitted last may and updated this past September. Cramer is optimistic that it will include navy beans, pinto beans, and kidney beans at a minimum.
* CCC funds have been allocated through the newly announced Regional Ag Promotion Program (RAPP) totaling 1.2 billion over 5 years. This has a few focuses but addressing hunger is an important part of the total. Cramer feels this will most certainly include nutrient dense beans.
* Cramer is meeting with MITRE who focuses on supply chain dynamics including military feeding programs.

**US DRY BEAN COUNCIL**

* USDBC President Stoutenburg shared a recent communication he received from members. The content has been discussed and will be discussed in more detail when the Committee meets in Minneapolis on December 20th.
* USDBC Central America Trade Mission participant Ackerman shared a few highlights of the recently completed trade mission which included meetings in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica.

**OLD BUSINESS**

* 2024 Dry Bean Research Regional meetings took place earlier in the week. Attendance was good in all three locations. MSU DBS Scott Bales did an excellent job covering the data and findings from his plot work.
* Cramer commented on the November 27th filed trip to Burnett Foods, Gerber/Nestle and Carlson Arbogast Farms.
* The 2024 Dry Bean Canning Evaluation is being planned. The event will be held on January 25th.
* BeanCon24 will take place February 1-3, 2024, in Mexico immediately following the USDBC Winter Board Meeting. The program is strong. MiBeans is the lead sponsor again this year.
* The MSU Dry Bean Breeder Search Committee has narrowed the list of candidates down to three. Interviews will take place in January. Scott Bales is a member of the committee. MSU has asked for $150,000 over three years to help fund this position. The MBC has committed $100,000. The MBS committed $15,000.

**NEW BUSINESS**

* Cramer and Bales will work on submitting SCBG applications due on February 8, 2024. If possible, organic production may be included in the application.
* Bales has developed a work plan to collaborate with MSU’s dry bean breeding program and the USDA breeding program to share labor and equipment as needed. Everyone is challenged with labor. Working together will help address all three partners.
* Bales also explained his much-expanded white mold research and the need for a new sprayer to handle the added work. White mold continues to be the #1 yield limiting factor for Michigan’s growers. After discussing, Commissioners felt this is a worthwhile investment and opted to help fund the purchase. Ewald moved to support the purchase by contributing $20,000 toward the total purchase price. Bischer supported. ***Motion passed.***
* Commissioners went on to compliment Bales for his work and commitment to Michigan’s dry bean growers. Ackerman moved to award Bales a $15,000 “bonus”. Stoutenburg supported. ***Motion passed.***

**CHAIRMAN’S CHOICE CHRISTMAS GIFT**

* For the first time in 70 years, the FFA President is from Michigan! President Amara Jackson plans to travel app. 100,000 miles in 2024 tells the story of agriculture. Certainly, she will talk a lot about Michigan. Therefore, Chairman Noffsinger recommended supporting Amara by choosing Michigan FFA Foundation as this year’s recipient. A brief discussion took place. Commissioners were fully supportive. Cramer will handle the execution.
* Chairman Noffsinger thanked everyone for their time, and commitment. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas, and, with no further business, he adjourned the meeting at 5:57 PM.

Respectfully,

  **Joe Cramer**

Joe Cramer, Executive Secretary