

# Michigan Sheep Producers Association

October 25, 2016: Mount Pleasant, Michigan

*Pause – Ponder – Plan – Proceed: Focus on Budget, Membership & Communication*

Attendees (board members highlighted in yellow): Dave Meeuwse, Denise Bartlett, Mike Bronkema, Tyler Martin, Harvey Warrick, Brian Larson, Max Benne, Judy Moore, Sheryl Oswald, Brett Pharo, Joe Leszcz, Dr. Richard Erhardt, Nancy Kaercher and Maury Kaercher. Facilitators: Dr. Ben Bartlett and Elaine Bristol.

Review last year's action item check list for outcomes:

\_\_\_\_\_ = not completed/work in progress

- Create document for board candidate recruitment: *A document was created that listed the responsibilities of being a MSPA board member*
- Define role of committee chairs and each committee: *Identified which committees were "one person" (Purebred, commercial, club lamb, wool, membership, & historian) and which were standing committees, (executive/nominating, symposium, youth, small flock, & communication). Defined role of each committee was NOT done.*
- Check legal issues with name change: *Review done and name organizational name changed to MSPA. (no legal issues but issues with people not using new name on checks). Brian Larson to check into changing Facebook Group name from MSBA to MSPA.*
- Develop reporting form for those who receive funds from MSPA: *Done*
- Contact SHEPHERD magazine for new member "bonus": *Done*
  - Review Mission statement of MSPA: *Done – new version accepted on Oct 2016 board meeting*
- *(Our mission is to provide a unified voice for the Michigan sheep industry and through education and networking, help the Michigan sheep industry and Michigan sheep producers be a profitable part of the dynamic national industry)*
- Create blog schedule: *Work in progress by Elaine Bristol and Mike Bronkema– looking for assistance from Samantha Ludlum*
- Share newsletter deadlines: *Done*
- Create and promote more 'learning to shear' opportunities: *Closest school in Ohio and Richard doubts we can get a Michigan location.*
  - Research options for mass emailing: *Work in progress – Max Benne is working with "Jonathan", tech person, and Maury is monitoring the situation*
- Investigate communication links to Amish communities: *No "one" magazine that reaches all populations and regular farm papers seem to be the best option. Tyler Martin to follow up.*
- Share access to FFA advisor listserv for MSPA updates: *No information from John Schut, Tyler Martin to follow up*

Background information on budgets and membership

- Dues are billed on a calendar year - If dues are received in October, they've typically been applied to the next year's membership. They'd essentially get one free newsletter that way.
- ASI dues not an option - \$12 per member – potential services we get back if we apply for programming (i.e., Wool outreach has to be used for promotion, which comes from ASI)
- In 2016 - 277 paid members, 79 did not renew (email membership billings are effective)
- In 2015 - 299 paid members, 50 did not renew: first year of increased dues to \$30/family
- In 2014 - membership numbers not available - dues were \$20/family
- Membership information – every membership gets one vote and one newsletter, youth dues are 50% of adult/family dues. **ACTION ITEM: Voting membership not defined in bylaws**

#### Check off income:

- Lamb/sheep check-off comes from two sale barns (UPI and Farmers) and Genesee County Fair. Any time there's a public sale, we should but usually don't receive the checkoff of \$.25/hd.
- Wool check-off only comes from Mid-States Wool Growers, not Groenewold. The checkoff fee is \$0.01 per pound of wool **ACTION ITEM Need to investigate if we can collect wool checkoff from Groenewold's**

#### Other income information:

Income from Shepherd's Weekend is mostly attendees (5 x vendor income)

Reminder that of \$30/family dues, \$12 goes to ASI

Newsletter ads generate about \$1,000 per year

#### What does MSPA do and how can it be financed?

- Shepherds Weekend – The major educational and outreach event of the year
  - Explore day-registrations for youth (4-H, FFA, etc.)
  - Emphasis on workshops, keynotes and networking
  - Event possibilities for hands-on learning/ net-working: wine/cheese reception (2018), shearing and sheep-handling demonstrations, cooking demos, (MSU sheep barn tour 2017 – Denise Bartlett), carcass evaluation, vet student components
  - More cross-promotion needed – youth (4-H, FFA, etc.), Michigan Farm News & ASI
  - Sponsorships needed to subsidize event costs
  - **ACTION ITEM – review procedure for selecting producer awards**
- Newsletter and website communications
  - Newsletter advertising: when is a good time to ask for ad sponsorship? Is there a bundle for booth, business card ad, etc.
  - Explore a members-only section of website to facilitate continued networking and increase return-on-investment for members
    - **ACTION ITEM -Should there be an extra fee for listing information publicly, capitalizing on the ease of finding sheep producers who prefer to be found online?**
  - Facebook PAGE management would take extra effort. For now, the association is comfortable with the GROUP. Noted: group members aren't always MSPA members, so more efforts are being made to cross-promote membership advantages.
- Staff
  - **ACTION ITEM Time/task consolidation needed? Evaluate duties & costs of editor, membership, website, etc.**
- Youth: encourage, activities
  - All-American show, scholarships (should MSPA get a percentage? – Discussion suggested that all scholarship raised funds (auction, etc. should go to youth activities) , ASI meeting
- Summer picnics and driving or flying tours did not get a lot of discussion
- Mentoring and other support- it's important but not income or membership? generating
- Webinars – can we promote and offer webinars to our membership?
- Relationship with MSU Extension services and University - Investing in educational facilities (MSU sheep barn), seminars and clinics;
  - What's our return-on-investment?
  - **ACTION ITEM Need a MSPA/Extension liaison to increase communications, increase attendance, and possibility increase MSPA membership**
  - How can we help build stronger programs?
  - How do we earn more credit or recognition?
- Group buying/marketing
- Legislative voice

## Specific ideas for increasing revenue:

(MSPA has been running negative or near negative budgets for several years)

### Membership: (all items in red are action items – black were just ideas/suggestions)

- Consider a UPI mailer insert promoting MSPA and increasing membership
- Newsletter/mass emailing
  - Max Benne will promote a call-to-action for increased membership on website
- Cross-promotion: Discount on MSPA membership or seminar fee discount if MSPA member?
- Cross-promotion: Time to pitch MSPA at educational workshops led by Dr. Richard Erhardt?
- Incentives for members signing up new members? *Decision: passion should outweigh incentives, no incentives*
- If you pay for two years, do you get “something?”
- Outreach to other states through publications – news releases, calendar sections, etc.
- Increase membership through board member solicitation/networking
- Provide Joe Leszcz with membership brochures for MSU barn and other touchpoints **DONE**
- Tyler Martin and Mike Bronkema will propose to the board 10/25/2016 to increase dues by \$10 to be in place beginning 01/2018 (Board action was to increase \$5/yr for each of next three years starting with dues in 2018) **DONE**
- In his newsletter quarterly report, Dave Meeuwse will provide a 4P session report (budget spurring a part of the discussion) to the membership and how each person can help, plus why MSPA is an organization that brings value to each person in the sheep industry

### Symposium:

- Sponsorship: board members have been challenged to get/ identify one sponsorship each
- Vendors – current fee is \$125 for three days – discussion around idea that vendors are both for income and to provide value to people attending and therefore vendor rates should not deter number or diversity of vendors. (challenge is big vendors could pay more but higher rates would deter vendors with less income potential)
- Newsletter advertising – board will decide who’s responsible for leading defined costs
- Sheryl Oswalt & Maury Kaercher will develop a pricing package deal between newsletter ads and vendor participation
- Dave Meeuwse will propose to the board 10/25/2016 a symposium cost increase by \$10 to be implemented in 01/2018 (Board action was to increase \$5/yr for each of next three years starting with symposium in 2018) - **DONE**

### Apparel:

Tyler Martin will follow up with Brenda Reau first, and potentially a personal contact second, regarding MSPA branded sweatshirts, hats, T-shirts, etc.

### Auctions:

- Wisconsin has a used equipment sale and a cut (15%) goes to the state association – Discussion – could this be seen as being competition with some of our symposium vendors?
- Club lamb sale advertising/list
- Bred ewe sale advertising/list
- Fiber festival/event list
- NSIP sale information

## Miscellaneous:

- The Commercial Producer group will develop marketing/product language and/or plan details for tours to foster communication and consistency of our end-use consumer products
- The Executive Committee will clarify job descriptions for: board, committees, executive director, treasurer (new president must be found for 2017), website manager, editor, youth program coordinator, symposium contractor, etc. An update will be provided at the April board meeting.
- Dave Meeuwse, Judy Moore, Tyler Martin and Maury Kaercher will evaluate the merit of establishing a finance committee to develop and maintain a sustainable financial vision (discussion heard about this being a 3-year term for each participant of committee). Board challenge: define if a balanced budget proposal is required of executive director.
- Brian Larson challenged group to keep things in perspective and understand that the Michigan sheep industry, in comparison to other states, is in good shape.

## Communication report

- New webpage! Thought of ways to increase use by members by cross-promoting information on Facebook group and putting Facebook group feed on website.
  - Potential: two free ads per member on website (not newsletter) – capitalizing on what goes on in the Facebook group
- Mass-mailing goals:
  - Any time we want to reach out to members through emails, we need to streamline work rather than copy/paste 20-25 emails at a time.
  - Working off the same list: newsletter distribution list, membership list from Letty Klein, treasurer list, distribution list for Dr. Erhardt's programs, Nancy Kaercher's list for symposium, etc. Making sure there are "owners" to it.
  - Mass mailing challenge: We could explore MailChimp as an option. Right now we're exploring Wordpress, and it's been slow-going.
- Paypal hasn't been working on website lately and will be in working order by the time of symposium registration. We haven't used it for newsletter advertising.

## Comments from Facilitator Ben Bartlett

Given the "key persons" turnover in the next 10 years, the increased variety and complexity of communication platforms, the need to maintain membership, and the need to have a sound fiscal budget, it is critical that the MSPA board accept the responsibility for these challenges. Therefore, I believe it is important that board members role be more than just showing up for meetings and offering an opinion but be a leader and member of a "working" board. I believe it is important that the MSPA have a 3 year budget plan that is monitored by a sub-committee of the board. And, given the duties of "staff" of the MSPA organization and the quantity of funds available to pay staff, and given the size of the organization, it is important to develop a "staffing" plan that gets the important stuff done (serving members, and generating funds) with a mix of volunteers and strategic paid employee(s). Sounds more like work than fun but the payoff is fantastic. A healthy and growing industry served and represented by a dynamic organization.

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### Carryover from 2015:

- Create document for board candidate recruitment: Defined role of each committee was NOT done.
- Check legal issues with name change: Brian Larson to check into changing Facebook Group name from MSBA to MSPA.
- Create blog schedule: Work in progress by Elaine Bristol and Mike Bronkema
- Research options for mass emailing: Work in progress – Max Benne is working with “Jonathan”, tech person, and Maury is monitoring the situation
- Investigate communication links to Amish communities: Tyler Martin to follow up.
- Share access to FFA advisor listserv for MSPA updates: Tyler Martin to follow up with John Schut

### 2016 Action Plan

| Action   | Who  | Timeline  | Status |
|--|--|---|--------|
| Voting membership not defined in bylaws  | Executive Committee                              |   |        |
| Need to investigate if we can collect wool checkoff from Groenewold's  | Dave Meeuwse to check if costs billed to farmers |   |        |
| Review procedure for selecting producer awards   |  |   |        |
| Should there be an extra fee for listing information publicly, capitalizing on the ease of finding sheep producers who prefer to be found online?  | Letty, Sheryl, Maury, Max                        |   |        |
| Time/task consolidation needed? Evaluate duties & costs of editor, membership, website, etc.   | Executive Committee                              |   |        |
| Need a MSPA/Extension liaison to increase communications, increase attendance, and possibility increase MSPA membership  | Board action                                     |   |        |
| Promote a call-to-action for increased membership on website   | Max Benne  |   |        |
| Provide Joe Leszcz with membership brochures for MSU barn and other touchpoints  | Maury  | Ongoing   | Done   |
| Propose to the board 10/25/2016 to increase dues by \$10 to be in place beginning 01/2018  | Dave Meeuwse, Tyler Martin and Mike Bronkema     | Board action was to increase \$5/yr for each of next three years starting with dues in 2018 | Done   |
| In newsletter quarterly report, provide a 4P session report (budget spurring a part of the discussion) to the membership and how each person can help, plus why MSPA is an organization that brings value to each person in the sheep industry | Dave Meeuwse                                     | November 2016   |        |

|   |   |               |  |
|---|---|---------------|--|
| Sponsorship: board members have been challenged to get/identify one sponsorship each  | MSPA board  | November 2016 |  |
| Newsletter advertising – board will decide who’s responsible for leading defined costs  | MSPA board  |               |  |
| Develop a pricing package deal between newsletter ads and vendor participation  | Sheryl Oswald & Maury Kaercher                            |               |  |
| Apparel: Follow up with Brenda Reau first, and potentially a personal contact second, regarding MSPA branded sweatshirts, hats, T-shirts, etc.  | Tyler Martin  |               |  |
| Develop marketing/product language and/or plan details for tours to foster communication and consistency of our end-use consumer products   | The Commercial Producer group                             |               |  |
| Clarify job descriptions for: board, committees, executive director, treasurer (new president must be found for 2017), website manager, editor, youth program coordinator, symposium contractor, etc. An update will be provided at the April board meeting.                                | Executive Committee                                       |               |  |
| Evaluate the merit of establishing a finance committee to develop and maintain a sustainable financial vision (discussion heard about this being a 3-year term for each participant of committee). Board challenge: define if a balanced budget proposal is required of executive director. | Dave Meeuwse, Judy Moore, Tyler Martin and Maury Kaercher |               |  |