**Meeting Minutes**

**Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society**

Board Meeting, September 12, 2019, 10:00am-3:00pm

Robert D. Johnson Recreation Center, Fargo, ND.

**Mission:** Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society promotes sustainable food systems through education, advocacy, and research.

**Consent Agenda:**

**Attendance:** Curt Petrich, Krysti Mikkonen, Mike Jorgenson, Lynn Brakke, Gretchen Harvey (phone), Sean Hyatt (phone), Verna Kragnes & Kayla Pridmore; **Absent:** Annie Carlson & Roger TeSlaa. **Members:** Steve Zwinger, Theresa Podoll & Owen Trangsrud

Curt called the meeting to order and asked if there were any requests for additions to the agenda.

**Action:** Motion made and approved to accept the minutes of August 8, 2019 as presented.

**Executive Director’s report:** See written report submitted via email.

Verna asked if there were any questions related to her written report. One question involved actual membership totals and how different kinds of members are counted—business, families, students, etc. Also discussed was the idea of establishing membership goals and to consider incentives to become members, especially with respect to conference attendance. Staff will continue to research other membership organizations and think about how we might improve our membership categories.

Verna summarized her conference call participation at a recent meeting of the National Sustainable Agriculture Association. She provided the board with a 2-page summary and wanted to draw our attention to an 80-page position paper that can be accessed on the NSAA’s website. The position paper advocates for large increases to SARE and on-farm research and is an aspect of preparing for the next farm bill. NPSAS is one of the voting members on the policy council that approves such position papers. Verna was very encouraged by the support this organization’s position can lend to NPSAS efforts to seek grant funding and for finding ways to encourage a renewal of Farm Breeder Club research.

Verna also reported on a one-day training she attended yesterday sponsored by Farm Commons. She noted that Farm Commons will offer a pre-workshop at the winter conference and will be funded by SARE. FC is a nonprofit trying to provide education and assistance with respect to the myriad legal issues faced by farmers. It was suggested to put an article about FC work in the next *Germinator* to generate interest in the help they have to offer.

This led to a robust discussion about periodical deadlines, advertising expectations, and why the summer issue of the *Germinator* has been delayed until September. Board members made it clear that they expect deadlines to be met in the future.

**Committee reports:**

**Finance Committee Report:**

1. Budget review and fundraising update/plans. Verna provided a verbal expansion of her written report and walked board members through the green section of the budget pdf titled: Grants under consideration.
2. Financial audit is on track and will likely be wrapping up in October. Tracking down necessary documents has taken some extra time.
3. Verna would like the Board to consider proposing a change to the organization’s fiscal year. It is currently based on the calendar year, but there are good financial reasons for adopting a September to August FY. Doing so would require a bylaws change. The Finance Committee will come back with a proposal for the October board meeting.
4. Fundraising efforts were summarized to date and various ideas for same were discussed and offered. It was also noted that grant funding cannot be pursued until the audit is complete.

**Personnel Committee Report:** See emailed supporting documents

1. Board members discussed the adoption of a sexual harassment policy and set of procedures that staff and board members would follow. Adopting such a policy would enable NPSAS to continue to provide a “family-friendly” experience at its events for members and guests. Board members agreed it would be wise to seek legal counsel review once we have a policy drafted.

**Action:** Motion made and approved to accept Roger’s resignation from the Board of Directors.

**Old Business:** Verna reminded the board of a request to be involved with an educational event featuring Sandra Steingraber in Fargo in November. Discussion followed. Verna will continue to talk to different stake holders interested in facilitating this event.

Conference planning was summarized to date and some questions re: keynote speakers and workshops were asked by Verna to gather board member feedback.

**New Business:** Discussion of Farm Breeder Club and efforts to renew activity.

Steve Zwinger, Theresa Podoll, and Owen Trangsrud accepted an invitation to help the board brain-storm ways to revive and sustain the important work that has been done by the Farm Breeder Club.

NPSAS members are facing new challenges in the 21st century and the leadership wants to discuss how the important work FBC does to meet those challenges can be supported. Besides developing seeds for the northern plains, one of the most important values of previous FBC work was the effort to enable farmers to be actively involved in seed development and the preservation of variety.

In addition to seed development, farmers are more interested than ever in cover crops, soil health, carbon sequestration, and nutrient density. FBC can participate in measuring the value of these practices through good collaborative arrangements with universities and, in particular, with Carrington research station. One concern is the time it will take to both ramp up funding (prepare grants) and re-build collaborative relationships with a new generation of scientists and farmers. Additionally, discussions focused on the self-funding mechanisms and reporting structures that need to be adopted so that the FBC model can be renewed and improved upon. All agree this is important work and that we should keep working on ways it can be encouraged and supported.

**Adjourn:** 3:45pm **\*until a conference call can be arranged** in the next few days to finish discussing agenda items.

**\*Board meeting reopened:** Monday, September 16, 2019 at 8:00-9:30am via conference call:

**Roll:** Krysti Mikkonen, Lynn Brakke, Annie Carlson, Curt Petrich, Mike Jorgenson, Sean Hyatt, Kayla Pridmore & Verna Kragnes. Absent: Gretchen Harvey

Board members discussed the following topics:

* a recent letter from members expressing concerns about NPSAS planning and procedures
* new member welcome plan
* the cutter bee donation from Hugh Dufner and the idea of having a conference workshop devoted to this topic
* mentorship program development and what mentorship could look like
* a support request from Food Freedom

**Action:** Motion made and approved to provide $200 to Food Freedom effort to encourage public input and transparent policy making with respect to cottage food rules in North Dakota.

**Next Meeting: October 10, 2019, 8-10am via conference call**

Respectfully submitted, Gretchen Harvey