

# Mount Rogers Area Christmas Tree Growers Association

PO Box 127  
Whitetop, Virginia 24292

## Minutes – Board of Directors Meeting, January 29, 2011, Log House Restaurant, Volney, VA

The meeting was called to order by President John Rosser at 9:15 am. The following board members and guest were present: President John Rosser, Rodney Richardson, Charlie Conner, Jackie Davis, Earl Deal, Kevin Spurlin and James Haynes.

### General Membership Meetings

The following Dates were set for our 2011 general membership meetings at the Whitetop VFD Hall:

February 27 <sup>th</sup>	Board Meeting 1:00 PM	General Meeting 2:00 PM <b>SPECIAL GYPSY MOTH</b>
June 26 <sup>th</sup>	Board Meeting 1:00 PM	General Meeting 3:00 PM
September 18 <sup>th</sup>	Board Meeting 1:00 PM	General Meeting 3:00 PM w/ Dinner 4:45 PM

These dates are subject to the Fire Hall being available for our meetings.

### Warehouse

The Board again stated that we need some type of alarm on our freezer. Jackie Davis reported that we could obtain a temperature alarm system for about \$100 and then we would need to install telephone service and pay approximately \$35 per month for service. The board voted to do this and Jackie volunteered to contact all the necessary parties. Based on John Carroll's suggestion of last year, the board voted to contact Jim Rockis about storing some of our higher germination – more valuable seed at his facility as insurance against losing all of our seed to a fire or malfunctioning freezer. Charlie and Earl volunteered to make these arrangements.

The board noted that there are leaks in the roof of the warehouse. Rodney agreed to contact someone capable of tightening the screws and inspecting other parts of the roof to determine if something else needed to be done to eliminate the problems. Problems with the side door were also noted and Rodney also said that he would try to get it repaired and install better security measures. Note that Charlie, Earl and Rodney have also found that heavy snow/ice on the roof had slide off and damaged the gutters. Repair of them will also be needed.

### Public Relations

The Growers Association Ads in the Independence Declaration was discussed. The general consensus was that this was good use of our money. Note the copy of the Christmas ad attached to these minutes. Jackie Davis reported that the Trees for Troops program went very well this year with some great exposure in the local newspapers. Two different locations were set up – One at the warehouse and the other in Elk Creek. No one was sure if the radio and TV stations had much on our loading and shipping with FEDEX. Some folks did see reports on the delivery of trees to the bases on national news programs.

### Old Flat Orchard Establishment

The land transfer paperwork between the Virginia Park Service and Virginia Forestry Division has been completed and the Association should receive a bill for our part of funding the survey work for the site. It was noted by the directors that the Association needs to complete the long term agreement (99 year) with the Division of Forestry.

Jackie Davis reported on his contacts with the American Chestnut Foundation. They have indicated that they would like to establish Chestnut plantings to evaluate their cultivars on a high elevation site. Jackie indicated that he would continue in the coordination of these efforts between all parties.

The general consensus of the board was that every effort needed to be made to obtain another grant to help in the establishment of the new orchard. Earl, Charlie, Jackie, Rodney, John and Danny all agreed to work on the development of a grant proposal. Earl will contact the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission about submitting a proposal. This proposal would also include work on marketing Mount Rogers Area Christmas trees. Jackie and John both agreed to contact local and state public officials about developing support for some kind of grant.

Della submitted the following report on her work on both the Old Flat Orchard and Grayson Highland orchard. She made 44 preliminary selections of Mount Rogers seed source Fraser firs that have potential for grafting in the Old Flat orchard. 17 of the selected trees are from the Mount Rogers Progeny study at Rodney Richardson's farm on Highway 58 were tested for needle retention by Dr. John Frampton at NCSU. The results of these test have not been analyzed at this time. It should be noted that Dr. Frampton normally charges between \$100 and \$150 per tree for this type of needle retention test. We should plan to send a letter thanking John for his hard work at no charge in 2010.

Members of the Mount Rogers Christmas Tree Growers Association need to identify at least 65 more trees that have the potential for grafting into the Old Flat Seed Orchard. We are looking for "Bully Trees" that grow faster and denser than the trees surrounding them. Please look for these trees in your fields so that we can reach our goal of 100 potentials and begin grafting in 2012.

There are several management needs for the Old Flat Orchard for 2011. In order to reduce wind damage a Red spruce border needs to be planted around the orchard. Ranger Harvey Thompson at Mount Rogers State Park has agreed to let us pull the wild Red spruce seedlings from a designated area within the park to use on the border. Several area Scout Troops are willing to take this own as a project. This will help to fulfill the youth component of our mission with the Park and grants for developing the orchard. If money does not allow us to complete the border in 2011 then we can work on the border in stages over several years. Other management needs for the Old Flats Orchard are as follows:

- Evaluate Bud break of selection trees – we need to pick a date around bud break where the selection trees can be evaluated for bud break as compared to the surrounding trees
- Pre-grafting removal of the existing tops in the trees in mid April in order to increase the number of "graftable" tops in the trees
- Soil Sample
- Fertilizer
- Deep Phosphate Incorporation

- Weed Control
- Evaluate needle retention of selections late autumn 2011

### **Grayson Highlands Seed Orchard**

Dr. Jill Sidebottom and Della placed a research study for the control of the Balsam Woolly Adelgid in the Grayson Highlands seed orchard in 2010. Mistletoe Meadows and Laurel Branch Contracting removed many of the damaged trees from the orchard before the treatment was implemented. A new chemical treatment using a basal or truck spray of Safari at various rates and a foliar spray with Safari was tried. Other pesticides were used in the research study as controls. The results are unclear at this time. Dr. Sidebottom and Della will be reevaluating the site in the spring. A detail report will be given after the evaluation is completed.

### **Financial Report and 2010/2011 Budget**

Attached to these minutes is the proposed budget beginning September 1, 2010 and ending August 31, 2011. It includes the 09/10 budget and actual expenditures for that period.

Dues were assumed to remain about the same. No transplant sales are expected. However, seed sales are expected to increase based sales year to date. An additional \$22,000 in revenue from the Seed Orchard grant will be available and will help cover the surveying cost due the Division of Forestry.

Most other expenses will be close to those of the past year, with the exception of the Old Flat Orchard establishment and payment for surveying.

The Board voted to present the 10/11 budget as contained in these minutes to the membership for approval. It should be noted that the planned expenditures will be greater than the income to the Association. Additional grants will be needed to complete this major investment in the Associations future.

### **National Marketing and Research Check-off**

The board discussed the USDA's proposed Marketing and Research Check-off program. All comments were positive and President John was asked to submit the Association's positive comments on the USDA Web site by the Board.

### **Gypsy Moths in Grayson County**

Gypsy Moths have been found in Grayson County and we may be made a part of a quarantine in the near future. This means that growers may not be able to sell their trees without certification of Gypsy Moth Free trees. However, with a short training session (1 hour and 45 minutes) a grower will be able to certify their own trees. The board voted to ask Jim Zinck of the Virginia Department of Agriculture (VDACS) to conduct a training program for the membership at the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. The plans are to start the member's meeting at 2 PM and thus eliminate a late ending time.

### **Other Program Ideas**

Other program ideas for meetings included asking Jill Sidebottom to present the results of her work at the Grayson Highlands Seed Orchard and give the membership an update on new pesticides that may be available to replace Thionex and Di-syston that are being eliminated from use.

President John also mentioned the possibility of having Carl Garrison of the Virginia Division of Forestry give a talk to the members in June or September. Vice President Rodney said that a talk by the folks from BSAF on "Frefanol" would be interesting. They put out a test plot on his Highway 58 trees with excellent results. Both John and Rodney said that they would make contacts.

### **Seed Sales and Inventory**

Charlie Conner reports that the Association has sold 99 pounds of the 2008 – 57% germination rate seed and 8 pounds of the 2005-1 – 25% germination rate seed thus far this year. The Association's seed inventory is as follows:

2003	23 pounds	53% germination rate seed	belonging to Sanford Fishel (payment for cone collection work)
2008	330 pounds	57% germination rate seed	
2008	27 pounds	39% germination rate seed	
2005-1	985 pounds	25% germination rate seed	
2006-1	300 pounds	32% germination rate seed	

A motion was made that the meeting adjourn and was unanimously accepted by the Board.