

FINAL
VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)
ONLINE MEETING THROUGH WEBEX
3/16/21



CALL TO ORDER: Mike Oesterling called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM. Eight board members were present which represents a quorum. The meeting was held online through WebEx.

The Virginia Marine Products Board, established within the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to Va. Code § 3.2-1200 et seq., is holding an electronic meeting via WebEx on Tuesday, March 16th, 2021 at 1 pm. This meeting is being held during the Governor’s declared state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic making it unsafe for the public body to assemble in a single location.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ann Gallivan
Kim Huskey
Mike Oesterling
Mike Schwarz
J.C. Hudgins
Daniel Knott
Andy Hall
Hannah Kellum

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Wayne France
Rick Barlow
Brian Terry

STAFF PRESENT:

Dylan Mills, VMPB
Mike Hutt, VMPB

GUESTS PRESENT:

Robert Davenport-VDACS- Director of Marketing

MINUTES:

Mike Schwarz moved to approve the minutes from December 8th, 2020 and Ann Gallivan seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

Roll Call:

Ann Gallivan: **yes**
Kim Huskey: **yes**
Mike Oesterling: **yes**
Mike Schwarz: **yes**
J.C. Hudgins: **yes**
Daniel Knott: **yes**

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Andy Hall: **yes**
Hannah Kellum: **yes**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Economic Impact Study: After Mike and Dylan met with the team at VT a question arose on whether not inland aquaculture should be included in the economic impact study. Mike S. provided some more information and elaborated on how this inclusion would help to paint a more complete and beneficial picture of the Virginia Seafood industry as a whole. After discussion Kim H. moved to approve the inclusion of inland aquaculture in the study and Dan K. seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

Roll Call:

Ann Gallivan: **yes**
Kim Huskey: **yes**
Mike Oesterling: **yes**
Mike Schwarz: **yes**
J.C. Hudgins: **yes**
Daniel Knott: **yes**
Andy Hall: **yes**
Hannah Kellum: **yes**

Keith Lanpher Photoshoot: Due to COVID-19 Mike and Dylan are still on travel restrictions so this photoshoot has been postponed indefinitely.

Seafood Expo North America- Boston, MA July 11-13, 2021

This show, originally scheduled for March, was pushed back to July 11-13, 2021. Mike H. spoke about how he has heard of multiple companies and attendees that will not be attending this year, as well as the still significant amount of questions regarding COVID-19 and travel. He then that he thinks it would be more prudent to roll our money over to next year. After discussion, the board agreed that this would be the best course of action and J.C. moved to not exhibit this year and to roll over our booth space to next year, Kim H. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Roll Call:

Ann Gallivan: **yes**
Kim Huskey: **yes**
Mike Oesterling: **yes**
Mike Schwarz: **yes**
J.C. Hudgins: **yes**
Daniel Knott: **yes**
Andy Hall: **yes**
Hannah Kellum: **yes**

Seafood Expo Global- Barcelona, Spain September 7-9, 2021

This is a SUSTA event held in Barcelona for which Mike Hutt is a co-activity manager. Diversified recently announced that they will be postponing the event from April to September 7-9, 2021. SUSTA plans to have a pavilion there and Mike H. and Paul from Florida will be co-activity managers. Mike and Paul have been working to recruit companies for this with one company from the SUSTA region already registered. If this show goes on but Mike and Paul are unable to travel due to COVID restrictions SUSTA will hire a consultant to work the show in his absence. This show is no cost to the board except for product for a display case.

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National Restaurant Association Show 2021- Chicago, IL April 2021

This show was originally scheduled for April of this year however it has been cancelled due to COVID-19.

Oyster Website Update-Stratum

Last meeting Dylan provided visuals of what the new home pages will look like. He has been in continued communication with Jean and she is making steady progress on completion of the website.

Seafood Council FIP Oyster Project

The final contract for the project has been fully signed and executed and reports a cost of \$26,400 which is a big savings from the original committed amount of up to \$80,000. This can be attributed to the preliminary work that has been done by the Seafood Council. Hannah Kellum also gave an update on this from the perspective of the Seafood Council stating the MRAG will post the FIP on fisheries.org which will begin the preliminary phase of the project.

Undercurrent News Advertisement (February 2021)

Dylan gave a report on the ad results from February stating that the ad only received 45 clicks however we had 1,000 visitors to virginiasseafood.org on the first day that the ad ran with an average of 15 more users a day after this. These visitors came from organic searches which Dylan can only attribute to the ads.

VA Aquarium Sensible Seafood Interview Filming: Mike was contacted by the Aquarium regarding a film they are making to be used in the aquarium. There have been some hiccups in the planning on this due to COVID so Mike is unsure when this will take place.

Updating Oyster Growers Directory

The past couple months Mike and Dylan have been working to update the Virginia Oyster Growers Directory. So far they have received around 30 replies from new companies wanting to be included. The next step is to begin calling companies that were already in the directory that have not responded.

2021 Billboard Plans

The board will be doing 2 billboards (one in Richmond and one in Hampton) for the months of April, May, June, October, and November. VIMS will be paying for the month of April and the board will be running an Oyster ad for 2 weeks, as well as a Flounder ad and a Blue Crab ad.

COVID-19 Update

COVID is still having a massive impact on the seafood industry, particularly in the foodservice sector. Mike and Dylan have continued to email updates on the situation and different programs that are available to the industry. They are also encouraging the board to provide any feedback or suggestions they may have for things Mike and Dylan can do to better help the industry.

NEW BUSINESS

Oyster Trail Updates

The Virginia Oyster Trail has begun having monthly meetings open to all members of the industry. Some of these meetings will have keynote speakers to focus on different aspects of the Oyster industry in Virginia. Dylan will send out the invitations as he receives them.

Seafood Expo Asia 2021

The event has been cancelled due to COVID-19.

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NOAA Catfish Task Force

Mike H. sits on this and there has recently been some push from Virginia and other states to try and get inspections changed from USDA back to FDA. Blue Catfish is still selling very well however the USDA inspections have caused many processors to stop processing the Blue Catfish.

Striped Bass/Blue Crab Mass Emails

Over the past 2 weeks Dylan has sent out 2 mass emails to all of the trade leads received from trade shows over the past 2 years. These emails highlighted the Virginia Striped Bass and Blue Crab seasons and urged the recipients to reach out to Virginia watermen, processors, and wholesalers to purchase this product.

H2B Issues

This continues to be an issue in Virginia, Mike is unaware of any crab companies receiving any workers in the new round so far. Some bait and Oyster companies have been hit hard as well with their drawing. Mike has been corresponding with VDACS and the Governor's office about possible solutions for this problem.

INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS

VIMS -_No report.

Virginia Tech -Mike Schwarz spoke on behalf of Virginia Tech saying they have hired a new post-doctorate to work on the VMPB economic impact study. They have also just hired a communications specialist dedicated to the Virginia Seafood AREC starting March 25th. VSAREC recently opened up their first satellite offices in downtown Hampton. The new building should be complete November 19th, 2021. Mike has also just received approval to hire a food traceability and block chain faculty position at VSAREC, this will help address fraud.

VMRC -No report.

Virginia Seafood Council – Hannah Kellum gave an update stating they have been working with Senator Warner's office regarding H2B issues and stated that if anybody has any issue with H2B paperwork Senator Warner's office is a very helpful place to contact.

Virginia Waterman's Association – The public Oyster season has just finished up after receiving a 2 week extension. As far a quantity it was a great Oyster season however it was not a good year in terms of pricing. Dan Knott spoke about a new website that he recently created for the waterman's association (www.vawaterman.weebly.com) and says it has been successful so far and is looking to expand and continue this project in the future.

Shellfish Growers of Virginia – Governor Northam signed into law senate bill 1146, which has to do with taxing PPP loans, RebuildVA loans, and CARES Act money. SGOV are also currently keeping an eye on the process going on with the army core of engineers nationwide permit revision system.

Omega Protein- Andy spoke on behalf of Omega protein saying there season will start the first Monday in May. They did receive a 10% cut on their quota from last year which caused them to fish one less boat.

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Cooperative Programs

VDACS -No report.

Financial Report

We had a carryover balance of \$709,909.59 for FY 2019-2020. With a balance of \$640,240.28 as of December 31, 2020.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mike Hutt
Executive Director

Mike Oesterling
Chair