



VT/NH Chapter the American Chestnut Foundation

Board of Directors Meeting Squam Lakes Natural Sciences Center, NH

**November 17, 2018
10 am-2 pm**

Final Approved Minutes

Attendance:

Executive Committee: Present - Yuriy Bihun (President), Gary Robertson (Vice-President), and Jim Talbot (Secretary);

Board of Directors: Present – Gary Hawley, James “JP” Powers, Curt Laffin, Doug McLane, William Coder and Terry Gulick; Absent – Daane Crook

Guests: Kendra Collins, NE Regional Science Coordinator; Fred Kelsey (landowner, Plymouth, NH); Maine TACF – Thomas Klak, David Allen-Maine; MA/RI TACF - Mark Meehl; and Steve Gaines, NHTOA.

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1. **Opening Remarks:** provided by Gary Robertson, who served as meeting chairman; followed by introductions by each attendee. A working lunch was agreed to save time.
 2. **Review and Approval of Draft Minutes from August 29, 2018 BOD Teleconference Meeting**

Changes were noted for Kendra’s edits and for funds to be used for attendance at meetings; approved unanimously by Board members present; final minutes will be uploaded to chapter webpage by Janet Robertson for future reference.

3. **Review and Approval Treasurer’s Report and Proposed 2018 Budget (Daane Crook)**

Kendra brought three checks for Daane, two from Bristol Myers Squibb for a total of \$26.06, and another VT Community Foundation Grant (Merkel family) for \$1000. Terry motioned to

approve the Treasurer's Report, Curt seconded, and all members present approved the Treasurer's Report.

2019 Operating Budget was briefly discussed and approved. Pertinent to the discussion: there was some confusion about which draft we were reviewing, however, the Nov 7 draft from Daane should be corrected to indicate this is the 2019 budget not 2018; Orchard expenses should be \$6400 not \$1900; idea was Manton Grant would cover difference for orchard expenses; SPNF will write grant to cover some of their own capital expenses for their orchard; income is more or less correct, including dues and donations; expenses seem correct; expenses for national meetings should be reviewed; insurance coverage expanded; list items such as in-kind contributions in notes to the budget. Gary Robertson recommended that we approved the 2019 budget; motion to accept by Doug, Curt second; all approved.

4. Membership Update and Quarterly Report (Curt Laffin, Yurij Bihun, Doug McLane) –

Membership Report was quickly reviewed. Kudos for Curt for increasing membership up to 217 members; local chestnut events plus Constant Contact are factors contributing to this increase. Kendra noted a discussion at the national meeting that there will be improvements to the membership report so Board should offer comments for improvement to this report. Gary noted it should be more easily understandable.

5. Nomination Committee Report (Doug, Daane, Yurij)

Doug noted that Steve Gaines (NHTOA) was attending today as a possible Board member; discussed that Will Abbott may consider when he retires. Yurij had proposed some names, including retired arborist for Burlington, Warren Spinner, and former BOD member interested, Jeremy Gardiner; and that is a constant issue we need to be aware of to solicit possible new members. The Committee report was accepted as verbally given.

6. Strategic Plan Implementation: Report from the three active committees:

6.1 Membership Committee – Curt provided an advance copy of the Constant Contact (CC) Report with a list of accomplishments to date; his next campaign will be to send out to all members a summary of this Board meeting; Curt asked for ideas for how a make presentations look better or more concise, e.g. use of target distribution lists – allows tools for more efficient communication; current or former Board members, members and non-members.; we have not split Vermont and New Hampshire into two separate lists because we want all members to know what is happening throughout our geographic area. Curt noted that the chapter pays \$168 per year for CC; that our Strategic Plan has a strategy to send at least one CC Campaign/quarter to members. Yurij asked for a county cell, but Curt said this

was difficult to set up. Kendra thought that national could have a cell for county of residence to support Yurij's suggestion, but at present it doesn't. If any Board member is interested in looking at CC further, go the Constant Contact website and login with Curt's email address as account name (calaffin@comcast.net); the password is "chestnuttree." Gary Hawley asked Curt if we tracked the number of expired memberships per year? We've been relatively stable at 190-205. Kendra noted that Judy Antaramian keeps membership in for 3 months after expired then sends a reminder of expiration date and many do renew, but will change this to provide more advanced notice of membership expiration.

6.2 Governance Committee – Nothing to report and no discussion.

6.3 Orchard Committee- There was a written summary report passed out prior to the meeting, to which people referred. Kendra provided a brief summary nonetheless.

Fox Forest - high rodent damage; need seedlings; vegetation mowed short; needs more weeding; need small work party for shelter weeding to decrease nest material for rodents; survival seems fine; orchard management – more to be done, better volunteer corps needed.

Essex seed orchard – good watering, crew helpful, some rodent issues affecting survival; put to bed for winter by tech center; lowest plot lost 40/150 to voles or other rodents.

Lake St Catherine is a mess; originally planted 500 trees but now down to 250; \$6000 budget given for fencing and management but not installed correctly and only fraction of funds used; 2 acres fenced but could be smaller area; only spent \$2000 for fence but needs new one; not taking care of orchard, e.g. goldenrod growth everywhere competing with trees; other maintenance not being done; need better volunteer corps; on state land so work with parks folks to get new fence and insure effective; see table provided by Kendra, actual estimate required to re-fence correctly; because breeding orchard then lifespan is 15 years so don't need Cadillac fence. Action: Must re-sign 5 year agreement with state-if work with state, must renegotiate how to move forward for this breeding orchard; reassess as orchard potential, actual investment required, revisit management plan and determine commitment; state offered to do mowing and seasonal staff for caretaking but high turnover and need liaison from TACF side but not working; Yurij, Kendra, Marshall Case will review and update all at next Board conference call in February.

Old Gurdy Farm – awaiting updated inventory from orchard manager.

Tom Rush Forest – new seed orchard discussion; shaping up to go forward; sites were reviewed in spring and fall 2018, so this forest seems best site; flat, gently sloping, good soil; Gabe Roxby is lead forester, will put shed, water up there; have good volunteer program but they need training for a core group; must identify orchard managers for regular contact; want to get agreement in place, SPNHF is lead so we need agreement with them; Kendra will hand this off to Daane, Yurij, Gary who will get involved but

because this site is on private lands it could be more complicated to orchestrate; will send templates agreements to SPNHF.

Kendra also prepared a summary of the harvest report for the Valley View, VT orchard.

7 Spring Newsletter Articles (Yurij) – With the forthcoming announcement for annual meeting in February Gary Robertson wants to get a head start on this task. Action: Board members should email ideas to Yurij (who will work with Janet Robertson and Kendra); we want a Board member profile to be added; and ask general membership about what they might want to read in future newsletters. We will be making the newsletter available online in the future, although we need to figure out how many paper copies should be printed to send out to members without email addresses.

8 2019 Annual Chapter Meeting, Gary noted that for our April 2019 Annual Meeting we are tentatively looking at the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, in Woodstock, VT. Yurij will contact the appropriate person there to arrange the venue. Several suggestions were made for guest speakers with a recommendation to seek speakers who might attract a wider audience to our annual meeting: For example, Robin Wall Kimmerer (SUNY Professor) a native-American and bryologist, who writes about respect for the land, and who is popular with younger folks; David Carroll, who wrote *Year of the Turtle*, is a naturalist; and/or UVM global climate change project (Tony D’Amato or Pete Smith: Gary Hawley will lead). Speakers are expected to present and answer questions for approximately 45 minutes; and, we have used honoraria in past to entice speakers. Gary Robertson asked Gary Hawley to take the lead to identify a speaker ASAP, although Robertson can contact Dr. Kimmerer.

9 Educational outreach and exhibits (Terry, Curt)

9.1 Prior to this meeting and on several occasions, Terry Gulick asked if anyone on the Board wanted to take over the chestnut display activities after the January 29-31 2019 VT Farm Show. The action will be to find a replacement for Terry in the February-March 2019 time frame.

9.2 Presently, the chapter has two displays, one of which Terry has cared for and which is rather large and unwieldy (6-panel, lighted), the other is more portable which Curt has used frequently. Both displays could benefit from a facelift and update of material. There was also a recommendation to do away with the large permanent display because we move around a lot, replacing it with another more portable one similar to that which Curt uses. Actions: give Curt feedback on the existing portable display as he updates it; Board needs to make a decision on what do with Terry’s large display, and if we get rid of it to purchase a second, new display like one Curt uses; and, finally, we need to identify a point person for displays. Several other items to note on this topic: Kendra suggested we use

CC to request a replacement for Terry, perhaps from general membership; and Gary noted that in the 2019 Operating Budget we have designated \$500 to replace big display and/or purchase another smaller one. The Board accepted these suggestions and will proceed with a replacement for Terry and purchase of a new portable display. We still have the issue of disposing with the large, permanent display; and finding somebody to do what Curt does, only in VT.

10 New Business:

10.1 Germplasm conservation orchards

There was a brief discussion of GCOs led by Kendra. Some Board members asked what are we doing, and what do we budget for these orchards. Doug wants to use his Plymouth site as a possible site. Action – Are we willing to pay for a site, supplies, and management? Value to VT/NH chapter; overarching statement from Kendra – national wants input from each chapter on what they are doing, with Kendra leading and then she will define and pass requirements along to our chapter Board. Goal is to conserve 100 new sources – Kendra wants to get local sources into our portfolio; create at least one GCO in our chapter, with adjustment to budget; Doug offered his Plymouth site as the chapter GCO site (he made the point that this site will exist regardless, so costs would be minimal); Kendra must know what seeds are being used for this site- start with what we have and add to it with new local sources; 10 reps/source; 10x10 tree plot ideal; could be a problem with biotech unsustainability. At next Board meeting we will select a GCO site, causing some adjustment to the budget, if necessary.

10.2 Approval of Chapter policy statement on transgenics

On the table were the selection and approval of two alternative policies on transgenics, one of which was drafted at the November 2017 VT/NH chapter Board meeting, the other was proposed wording submitted by Doug McLane and basically referencing TACF's National statement of November 2016. The language of these two policies follows.

Current Policy Statement – “The VT/NH chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation is fully committed to its ongoing backcross breeding program for resistance of American chestnut to chestnut blight, *Cryptonectria parasitica*, and associated research into blight hypo-virulence and *Phytophthora* spp. resistance. The VT/NH Chapter is not involved in the use of genetic modified organisms (GMOs) also referred to as genetic engineering. The Chapter recognizes the contribution of ongoing research to the effort to restore American chestnut and does not fundamentally oppose any viable tool that, if wisely developed and applied, will help ensure success of restoring American chestnut.”

Proposed Alternative Policy Statement – “The Board of the VT/NH Chapter of The American

Chestnut Foundation endorses the policy of ‘**3BUR Proposal for Integrated Research**’ as adopted on the November 11, 2016 by National Science Oversight Committee. The 3B’s are: **B**reeding (backcross), **B**io-control (hypo-virulence), and **B**iotecnology (transgenics). The ‘U and R’ stand for ‘**U**nited for **R**estoration’, and our chapter is committed to using all viable methodologies for advancing the health and reintroduction of the American chestnut tree.”

Doug motioned to consider his new policy statement instead of the current statement because it reflects and supports TACF’s national policy. Terry seconded to open the discussion. A lively discussion followed at which several alternative viewpoints were presented, but in general we agreed that the 3BUR policy would keep our options open for chestnut restoration. Yurij suggested that we need input from membership but also need a policy statement to start with. To this end, Doug asked if anyone is aware if anyone was aware of any negative blowback from TACF National having adopted a “United for Restoration” backcross and transgenic policy two years ago. No one offered any input one way or the other. Once the discussion ended, Terry moved to vote and Gary Hawley seconded. The final vote was six in favor, one opposed, and two abstentions.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned around approximately 2 pm so that we could tour the SLMCS and potential Plymouth area orchard sites.