

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
July 12, 2022**

A meeting of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) Executive Committee was held on Tuesday, July 12, 2022 with the following people present:

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Jason Cole  
Rob Grether  
Jessica Hunter  
Rachael Laenen

**STAFF PRESENT**

Monica Arnett  
April Aymami  
Jan DeLyser  
Stacia Kierulff  
Ken Melban

**GUESTS PRESENT**

Will Carleton

**OFFICIALLY PRESENT**

Victoria Carpenter, *USDA*  
Ben Kardokus, *CDFA*  
George Soares, *Kahn, Soares  
& Conway*

**ITEM #1 CALL TO ORDER**

Roll Call/Quorum – Item 1.a.

Rob Grether, CAC Executive Committee chairman, called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. with a quorum present.

**ITEM # 2 OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**ITEM #3 DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Update on overall administration of the Commission – Item 3.a

Mr. Grether provided an update on the Commission operations since the May 19, 2022 CAC Board Meeting.

Succession

Following the May Board meeting the Succession Task Force was unable to agree on terms with the selected CEO candidate and the employment offer had been withdrawn. John Lamb agreed to continue to serve as Chair of the Succession Task Force and he expected that they would meet soon to reconvene the CEO search.

Commission Administration

Mr. Grether had conducted a meeting with CAC staff on June 2, 2022, following President Tom Bellamore’s retirement and communicated the following:

- The Board’s confidence in the CAC team
- The need to improve communication between the Board/Committees and staff going into 2022-23 planning
- That without a President, Mr. Grether would act in the interim on matters in CAC’s Internal Control Policies and Procedures that would typically be handling by the President

There was discussion among the Committee members about whether Mr. Grether felt empowered to act as interim President based on the direction provided by the Board during their May meeting. Mr. Grether indicated that he did not feel the Board addressed items outside of CAC’s ICPPs, and that to address items outside that scope, he was working through CAC’s committees during this interim period.

Strategic Planning Session

Mr. Grether noted that he had hoped to schedule a strategic planning session once a new CEO was hired, however even without a CEO, there are currently strategic issues that CAC needed to address. With this in mind, he asked for Committee input on whether there was enough of a need to conduct a strategic planning session this fall, even without a CEO. Committee discussion indicated that while it

was important for the CAC Board to conduct a strategic planning session, the timing should be once a new CEO was in place to allow for their input in the process.

#### District Grower Meetings

Mr. Grether reported that John Cornell, CAC district 2 board member, had reached out about scheduling a district grower meeting for District 2. Mr. Grether suggested that instead of one meeting per District, that Districts 1 and 2, and Districts 3 and 4, could conduct joint meetings in September following the August CAC Board meeting. These meetings would be led by the Board member representatives in the corresponding districts, with limited CAC staff attending as a resource to respond to inquiries, as needed. The Committee supported this idea, and it was clarified that the Executive Committee would not be expected to attend both meetings, only the meeting within their district.

#### Board Expenses

Mr. Grether stated that there had been some recent discussion regarding Board member travel expenses, specifically as it relates to members who reside out of the state. Mr. Grether reported that he was not necessarily suggesting changes to the policy at this time, but that he was looking for Committee input on how to proceed. The Committee discussion resulted in agreement that it was an appropriate time to review the policy, along with potential expense submissions, and provide a suggested maximum reimbursement. Mr. Grether stated that he would work with Monica Arnett, CAC vice president of finance and administration, and bring a recommendation back to the Executive Committee at their next meeting.

Ken Melban, CAC vice president industry affairs, reported to the Committee on the following industry-related items.

#### GEM

Mr. Melban provided an overview of the history of a packer led initiative on GEM PLU codes. He noted that while the variety received its own PLU number a few years back, more recently there was interest for additional GEM PLUs to provide differentiation by size (to mirror Hass). CAC helped to facilitate discussion among the handlers in both these instances, and while the result of the latter discussion was to pursue additional PLUs, the handler who had agreed to submit the application had not done so. Mr. Melban stated that CAC was now in the middle, as handlers were reaching out to CAC regarding the status of the additional PLU numbers, but at this point it was in the hands of the handler who had agreed to submit the application. The Committee discussed the situation and agreed that Mr. Melban should send a memo to the packers advising them of what had transpired and the status of the situation.

#### Avocado Festivals

Mr. Melban reported on CAC's prior participation in avocado festivals throughout the growing regions, which included Fallbrook, Morro Bay and Carpinteria. He noted that while growers liked to see CAC at these festivals, he is suggesting a conversation regarding the ROI for these events, and whether it was the best use of staff time and CAC resources. The Committee discussed the various festivals, their audience and timing of the events. Jan DeLyser, CAC vice president marketing, commented that while there had been discussion of selling merchandise at the festivals, it was not possible to do efficiently and effectively. She also noted that the 2021-22 budget did not have funds allocated for festival participation. It was agreed that CAC staff should work with the festival organizers and make materials (i.e., recipe books, avocado scoopers, etc.) available for them to distribute, but that CAC staff would not attend and due to budget limitations, no sponsorship would be provided.

#### World Avocado Congress 2023

Mr. Melban stated that the World Avocado Congress was scheduled to be held in New Zealand in April 2023, and that historically CAC had sent three-to-four representatives. He suggested that the Committee and Board begin to discuss CAC's participation, as the early bird pricing of \$800 would end

October 2022. The Committee agreed that CAC should be represented at the WAC and the Board could discuss and determine which representative to send.

#### Food Safety

Mr. Melban reported that an updated food safety manual would be presented to the CAC Board for approval at their August meeting. The revisions bring the existing CAC manual up to date with the most recent Primus audit standards. He also stated that CAC had been contacted by a few companies regarding food safety apps, some in development (and looking for significant financial investment) and some already in use by industry members. Mr. Melban stated that his position was, in light of multiple platforms available to industry, that CAC shouldn't lead the development of new apps or programs, but that they can serve a role in reviewing what is available and sharing that information with industry. There was no objection to this recommendation.

#### Pine Tree Ranch/Production Research

Mr. Melban announced that CAC was conducting a Pine Tree Ranch field day on Tuesday, July 26 and that the Production Research Committee was meeting on Wednesday, July 27. He stated that CAC's lease for Pine Tree Ranch was set to expire in June 2023 and that the PRC would be reviewing the terms and making a recommendation to the Board on whether CAC should extend the lease. CAC was still under contract with Sierra Pacific for grove management of Pine Tree Ranch, and if the lease is extended, staff would issue a request for proposals for grove management services.

#### 2021-22 Crop Update – Item 3.b

#### 2022-23 Preliminary Crop – Item 3.c

Mr. Grether stated that the CAC board had received the recent crop update email from CAC staff. He briefly summarized that the 2021-22 crop was quickly wrapping up during the month of July and projected to finish at approximately 270 million pounds. Mr. Grether noted that the survey results indicated the 2022-23 crop may be very similar to the current year, in the 250–290-million-pound range.

#### 2022-23 Budget Approach – Item 3.d

Mr. Grether reported that 2022-23 planning was well underway with CAC's marketing department, and that the team was looking at new ways to approach the overall marketing budget. He stated that the Marketing Committee was scheduled to meet in July and would be provided an opportunity to discuss 2022-23 marketing planning and budget.

### **ITEM #4 CLOSED SESSION REGARDING APPOINTMENT, EMPLOYMENT, EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE, OR DISMISSAL OF AN EMPLOYEE PURSUANT TO CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 11126(a)**

#### *The Committee may go into closed session to discuss and make recommendations regarding appointment, employment or dismissal of an employee. – Item 4.a*

Mr. Grether convened a Closed Session of the CAC executive committee members, legal counsel and CDFA representative at 4:14 p.m. Guest attendee, Will Carleton, who serves as CAC District 5 board alternate, also was allowed to join the Closed Session.

#### *Return to open session and announce action taken in closed session, if any. – Item 4.b*

Mr. Grether returned to open session at 5:13 p.m. and announced that the committee had taken no action during closed session.

### **ADJOURN MEETING**

Mr. Grether adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m. He noted that the next Executive Committee meeting would be held August 4, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

California Avocado Commission  
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
July 12, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

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April Aymami, CAC Industry Affairs Director

I certify that the above is a true statement of the minutes of the July 12, 2022 CAC Executive Committee, approved by the CAC Executive Committee on August 3, 2022.

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Jessica Hunter, CAC Board Secretary

**EXHIBITS ATTACHED TO THE PERMANENT COPY OF THESE MINUTES**

None