

**FINAL**

**Horse Industry Board Meeting**

June 9, 2015

Virginia Department of Forestry, Charlottesville

**I. CALL TO ORDER.**

The Horse Industry Board Meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. on Tuesday, June 9, 2015, at the Virginia Department of Forestry in Charlottesville by Chairman David Lands. Ann Walker, new president of the Virginia Horse Council, and Melissa Ball from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services were welcomed to the meeting.

**PRESENT**

David Lands, Chairman

Nancy Paschall, Vice-Chairman

Beryl Herzog

David Lamb

Bridgett McIntosh

Sue Mullins, *designated proxy for the Virginia Horse Shows Association*

Ann Walker

**ABSENT**

Debbie Easter

Brian Felts

Harold McKenzie

Eleanor Jones

**GUESTS/STAFF**

Jim Ellis, Director of Research, Center for Survey Research, Weldon Cooper Center,  
University of Virginia

Debby Girvan, President, Flair Communication

Melissa Ball, Division of Marketing, Virginia Department of Agriculture  
& Consumer Services

Andrea Heid, Program Manager, Virginia Department of Agriculture  
& Consumer Services

**II. APPROVE MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.** The minutes of the previous meeting {April 7, 2015} were approved without change.

**III. FINANCIAL UPDATE.**

Ms. Heid referred to the financial statement showing the current cash balance in the Virginia Horse Industry Board Promotion and Development Fund (Coggins Test fees) as **\$308,977.69** (as of April 2015). Income through April 2015 totals \$47,136.93.

**Outstanding estimated expenses** are \$21,142, leaving an estimated re-adjusted balance in this account of **\$287,835.69.**

Additionally, over the next 12 months, the monies approved for the University of Virginia Equine Survey{\$126,459.56}, will be deducted from this fund.

The current cash balance in the Equine Feed Checkoff Fund {as of April 2015} is **\$212,901.77.** Revenue collected in this fund as of April 2015 totals **\$157,434.64.** This is higher than last year(**\$141,634.35.**)

Expenditures {all grants} in this fund as of April 2015 total **\$97,620.67.** Outstanding current grant balances amount to \$47,157, and monies approved for grants for fiscal year 2015-2016 equal \$98,269, leaving an estimated adjusted balance of \$67,475.77. {Ms. Heid noted that many of the outstanding grant balances as well as the newly approved grants will carry over to fiscal year 2015-2016.}

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS/UPDATES.**

*Update: Equine Survey.* Jim Ellis, Director of Research at the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia's{UVA} Weldon Cooper Center, provided a brief update on the status of the equine survey UVA is conducting for the Virginia Horse Industry Board as previously approved. Mr. Ellis reported that Phase I is nearly completed with 5 of the 6 Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services{VDACS} Laboratories having already been visited by his team and that a sampling of Coggins Test paper forms has been pulled. Some 3,500 forms have been entered into the database and 35,000 records are also in hand from Global Vet Link-- both representing horses tested in Virginia in 2014. This information should provide the age, breed, and the locality of the horses tested and a list of owners. One issue discussed was the problem of tracing Virginia horses tested out of state. While slightly behind timewise, he commented that a report on Phase I should be provided by the end of July.

Mr. Ellis added that they are also a little behind schedule for Phase II—the Mail Survey of Horse Owners. He hopes to have a draft questionnaire available in the next four weeks. He also mentioned he is working on an economic survey for Loudoun County.

Ms. Heid mentioned that for the previous survey a joint letter of support was mailed to prospective survey participants from the Virginia Horse Industry Board Chairman and the Virginia Horse Council President. Mr. Ellis agreed that would be a good way to promote participation and response to the questionnaire.

The Board thanked Mr. Ellis for his report and a discussion on developing the questionnaire followed. Board members agreed that Harold McKenzie should work with Mr. Ellis to develop a draft questionnaire and then, once available, it should be run by all the Board members for comment.

*Statewide Indirect Cost Allocation Issue.* David Lands provided a brief summary of this issue. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 fiscal year, some monies were deducted from the various commodity boards, including the Horse Industry Board. Agricultural groups including the Virginia Farm Bureau and the Virginia Agribusiness Council have worked over the past year to ensure these monies would be appropriated back to the respective boards.

Such action was approved by the legislature and it is anticipated that the monies deducted from the Virginia Horse Industry Board for the current fiscal year{\$1,202.84} will be restored by June 30, 2015, and such assessments are not anticipated to be taken from the Horse Board or any of the commodity boards in the future.

*Update: Report on the Website.* Debby Girvan, President, Flair Communication, provided a report on the Virginia Horse Industry Board{VHIB} website over the past 10 months. Ms. Girvan's firm was contracted last summer to develop a new website and maintain the site. Ms. Girvan stated that the overall design of the site has been improved including the fact that the site is now mobile compatible, scrolling capability has been enhanced, and high resolution, banner-type photos are now being used on the site to strengthen the VHIB's message.

Ms. Girvan provided a detailed report\* on the site and some of the main highlights are as follows:

- 84% of all visitors are returning visitors, with 16% being new visitors.

- Regarding age demographics, the 35-44 year olds{27.1%} represent the largest age group visiting the site, followed by 25-34 year olds{24.3%}. The third largest group is the 45-54 year olds{21.5%}.

- The top keywords for searches most frequently used are: horse, Virginia, industry, board, and riding{1 through 5}.

- The top internal links{the most frequently linked content within the site} are: vhib.org, national and international horse organizations, advocacy and legislative groups, virginia groups and organizations, and therapeutic riding programs.

- The majority of people use desktop computers{79%} to access the site, with 14% using mobile devices, and 7% using tablets.

- Regarding the geographic locations of website visitors, the top areas are: Virginia, District of Columbia, Maryland, and New York. The top 5 cities representing site visitors are: Richmond, Charlottesville, Blacksburg, Fredericksburg, and New York.

*\*{Data Sources: Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools}*

Ms. Girvan had several recommendations to the Board to improve the website. These included:

- Increase social media activity and

-Increase the number of links from other horse industry websites to the Horse Board site.

She also added that Facebook is still the most widely used “platform” for social media and that the Board could consider “boosts” to promote special news and events. For an additional fee, Ms. Girvan could develop and post these boosts and also re-design the Facebook page.

*Update: Virginia Racing.* A one-page summary of current Virginia racing issues had been submitted by Debbie Easter, executive director of the Virginia Thoroughbred Association. A few key points included in the summary are:

-The Virginia Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association, the Virginia Harness Horse Association, and the Virginia Equine Alliance hope to be recognized by the Virginia Racing Commission at its July 1 meeting when the new racing legislation becomes law.

-The Alliance is focused on creating new revenues for the industry and providing racing opportunities throughout the state. It is anticipated that Morven Park in Leesburg will be the new home for flat turf racing in the state and two weekends of harness racing are being planned at Oak Ridge Estate in Nelson County.

Chairman Lands said he will touch base with Ms. Easter regarding further updates on the status of the racing issue.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS.**

*Annual Report of the Virginia Horse Center Foundation: Review and Approval of 2014-2015 Installment Grant Payment.* The annual report of the Virginia Horse Center Foundation for fiscal year 2014-2015 had been previously forwarded to all the Board members. Board members felt that the Center, under new management, is beginning a new positive phase and that the success of the Center is essential to the Virginia horse industry.

It was moved and passed that the \$15,000 annual grant payment of the Virginia Horse Industry Board be paid for 2014-2015 as part of the Board’s long-term grant commitment. Ms. Heid reported that six payments{of the 10-year commitment} have been made to date to the Virginia Horse Center Foundation for a total of \$90,000.

*Requests for Grant Extensions.* The following requests for grant extensions were reviewed by the Horse Board and voted on individually:

{1} *Can Levamisole Upregulate the Macrophage Dendritic Cell T-Helper T-Cytotoxic Equine Cell-Mediated Immune Response in Vitro-* Dr. Sharon Witonsky, Virginia Tech. This extension was approved by the Board to December 31, 2015.

{2} *Serum Amyloid A as an Aid in the Diagnosis of Septic Arthritis in Horses-* Dr. Linda Dahlgren, Virginia Tech. This extension was approved by the Board to June 30, 2016.

{3} *The VirginiaHorse.com-* Bette Brand, Virginia Horse Council. This extension was approved by the Board to April 30, 2016.

{4} *Living History on Horseback-* Sally Lamb, Virginia Horse Council. This extension was approved by the Board to January 29, 2016.

*Discussion of Potential Marketing Projects for Fiscal Year*

2015-2016. A list of marketing projects that the Board has been involved in over the past several years was presented by Ms. Heid. These projects were discussed and evaluated by the Board members and are listed as follows:

-Advertising. Ms. Heid had prepared a chart listing the total monies the Horse Board has spent over the past several years on advertisements in both the *Virginia Travel Guide* {\$29,990 over the past 4 years} and in *Virginia Agriculture Magazine* {\$20,301 over the past 3 years}. Board members discussed the advertisements, the audiences each publication reaches, reader response or the lack thereof, and the monies spent to date.

It was moved and passed that the Board not advertise in either publication for 2016 and that these monies be used for other promotional efforts to better promote the Board and more effectively reach its target audiences. A lack of horse editorial information should also be brought up to both publications as a reason for why the Board was not advertising.

-Grant to WVPT-TV. Over the past 4 years, the Horse Industry Board has awarded two separate grants of \$2,000 each to WVPT public television based in Harrisonburg. For these grants, the Board has received a 15-second promotion as a sponsor of the weekly "Virginia Farming" television show, approximately 33 times per quarter. It was moved and passed that the Board no longer provide these grants to WVPT-TV primarily because of a lack of information and features on the Virginia horse industry on WVPT. It was also suggested to try and contact RFD-TV to see if possible future financially feasible promotional opportunities would be available.

-Promotional Items. Due to the popularity of the "Virginia Is For Horse Lovers" stickers, it was moved and passed that they be re-printed at the quoted cost of \$670 for 3,000.

-Printed Materials. Ms. Heid commented that the Horse Board coloring books are very popular with 4-H leaders and for distributing at various horse events. She added that the on-hand supply of these is very low. It was moved and passed that the coloring books be re-printed at the quoted cost of \$547.55 for 2,500.

-State Fair of Virginia. Ms. Heid commented that the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is again offering a \$200 "cost share" for those commodity boards who plan to have a booth at the 2015 State Fair of Virginia. Ms. Heid offered that the Horse Board had done this in 2013, but that it was expensive {\$7,157 including the cost share} and that another major issue was securing volunteers to help work the booth over the 10 days of the fair including late at night and on weekends.

She also noted that last year the State Fair offered to have a "Showcase of Breeds" which featured different breeds of horses every day in a very visible paddock area. She added this was very successful and that there was no major financial investment for the Horse Board. It was moved and passed not to have a booth at this year's State Fair but to again

work with the various breed associations and participate in the State Fair's "Showcase of Breeds."

-Website. The renewal of the contract with Flair Communication was discussed by the Board members who were pleased with the re-design of the Board's website and Debby Girvan's earlier presentation. The possibility of including in the contract renewal the option of having her be the administrator of the Board's Facebook page and having her develop periodic "boosts" to promote the Board was discussed.

It was moved and passed that the contract with Flair Communication be renewed at the same rate. It was further moved that a social media component be added to include "boosts," together with Ms. Girvan's becoming the administrator of the Board's Facebook page and her re-designing the page. The agreement for the social media component is not to exceed \$5,000, or the amount allowable under VDACS' procurement guidelines. Ms. Heid will pursue this effort with the VDACS Procurement Director.

#### **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT.**

There was no public comment.

#### **VII. SET NEXT MEETING DATE/SITE.**

It was discussed and recommended that the next meeting of the Virginia Horse Industry Board be held on September 22 or September 23, 2015, at the same location. Ms. Heid will check on the availability of the meeting room and then notify the Horse Board members of the date.

Chairman Lands expressed thanks to Beryl Herzog and Eleanor Jones for their years of service to the Virginia Horse Industry Board. Mrs. Herzog and Mrs. Jones have each served two terms and will going off the Board as of June 19.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT.**

There being no further business, Chairman Lands adjourned the meeting at 2:15 pm.

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