

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE**  
**HORTICULTURE COMMISSION OF LOUISIANA**

**October 4, 2023, 9:30 A.M.**  
**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY**  
**VETERANS' MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**  
**5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD**  
**BATON ROUGE, LA 70806**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The hearing was called to order by Mr. Parker at 9:30 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by Mrs. Davis

Members present: Chad Danos, Rob Barry, Cole Sims, George Bofinger, Mitch Mayes, Rebekah O'Quin, Dan Johnson, Gary Bullock, Todd Parker, Dr. Ansel Rankins, Dr. Ed Bush.

A quorum was present.

Others present: Assistant Attorney General Alicia Wheeler, Hearing Officer; Lebra Bias, LDAF Legal Counsel; Tabitha Irvin, LDAF Executive Counsel; Tina Peltier, LDAF; Marsha Dugas, LDAF; and Tiara Davis, LDAF.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Mr. Sims made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 29, 2023, hearing. This motion was seconded by Mr. Johnson and passed unanimously.

**SET NEXT HEARING DATE**

The next Horticulture Commission meeting will be February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium.

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

At 9:34 a.m. the meeting was turned over to the hearing officer, Ms. Alicia Wheeler.

**ADJUDICATORY HEARING**

**CONTINUED CASES FROM LAST HEARING**

**Eddie Jones**

d/b/a Eddie's Tractor & Stump Grinding  
20885 E. Railroad Avenue  
Livingston, LA 70754

**Case No. 23-011**

Two violations of R.S. 3:3804(C) for advertising in a regulated profession (arborist) on social media without a proper license. One violation of R.S. 3:3810A (2) for violating a written stop order in a regulated profession (arborist) on social media without a proper license.

Mr. Jones was not present, but the department proceeded because service was effected.

**Motion:** Mr. Mayes made a motion to find Mr. Jones in violation. This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker and passed unanimously. The department recommended a penalty of \$500 per violation for a total fine of \$1,500.

**Motion:** Mr. Mayes made a motion to accept the recommended penalty. This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker and passed unanimously.

**Tristen Hoover**

d/b/a Driven Tree Service  
12508 Legacy Hills Drive  
Geismar, LA 70734

**Case No. 23-015**

One violation of R.S. 3:3804(C) for advertising in a regulated profession (arborist) without a proper license.

Mr. Hoover was not present, but the department proceeded because service was effected.

**Motion:** Dr. Rankins made a motion to find Mr. Hoover in violation. This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker and passed unanimously. The department recommended a penalty of \$1,000 per violation for a total fine of \$1,000.

**Motion:** Dr. Rankins made a motion to accept the recommended penalty. This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker and passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS****Director's Report:**

**Staffing Update:** In September, Tiara Davis was promoted to Assistant Coordinator 4 (position previously held by Marissa Smith). She is tasked with handling all Horticulture Commission related activities. We currently have two vacancies that we will be interviewing for soon.

Four new district inspectors have been hired since our last meeting. In July, Joey Smith joined the Baton Rouge district, Saidi Woods joined the Crowley district and Caroline Deshotel joined the Opelousas district. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, Baton Rouge district supervisor, Alec Sabo, was promoted to the New Orleans district manager position. Alex has been with AES since September of 2015 starting as an AES inspector. On October 2, Devin El-Amin joined the New Orleans district.

Dr. Rankins, Richard Miller and I attended the National Plant Board meeting in Little Rock Arkansas in July. There were updates from USDA, Customs & Border Protection, AmericanHort, PPQ, etc. We visited The Nurseries, which is a local garden center, market, and home delivery business.

Marsha Dugas will be attending the National Plant Board Safeguarding meeting in Cincinnati, OH in late October. The topic this year is Box Tree Moth and there will be visits to an actual BTM and Spotted Lantern Fly positive site. These meetings are beneficial in teaching our staff how to deal with new pest finds in our state.

LDAF has a new website design in the works. Over the last several weeks our staff has been working on the sections that pertain to Horticulture to make sure the information is correct and user friendly.

Dr. Rankins and the AES staff have been working towards omitting exams given in the district office by offering them in offsite testing centers. This will allow more flexibility to exam applicants and will benefit our district staff. Currently, either administrative personnel or an inspector is administering exams in our district offices.

**P. ramorum update:** Fall compliance inspections will be conducted at the end of October for both of our previously positive locations.

**Diaprepes abbreviatus:** Diaprepes abbreviatus (Diaprepes Root Weevil) has been detected at a USDA research station located in Houma. The find was self-reported by a station employee and confirmed by our USDA identifier, Dr. Joshua Jones. DRW is not a federally regulated pest but is a pest of concern in our state. The weevil has been known to infest citrus nursery stock, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, and many ornamental plants. There are approximately 270 potential hosts and can be spread great distances through the movement of infested nursery stock, equipment, and soil.

A delimiting survey is being planned for a ¼ mile area around the research station. This area is made up of mostly residential properties. The inspectors will survey the area for any citrus and ornamental plants and look for the presence of the adult weevil as well as any symptoms of adult or larvae feeding. A compliance agreement is being drafted to help reduce the risk of spreading the pest from the property.

DRW was first detected in Louisiana in 2004 in New Orleans when a single adult weevil was found near the Audubon Zoo. A couple of years later, two adult weevils were detected in the same area. In 2008, DRW damage was detected in citrus trees in Plaquemines parish, but a delimiting survey of the area did not result in any finds. In both cases, compliance agreements were issued restricting the movement of plants and soil from the properties unless treated.

DRW has been detected in Florida, Texas, California, and Puerto Rico.

**Commission Meeting Dates:** In order to streamline the board and commission meetings in AES, Dr. Rankins has created a calendar for scheduling meetings. The Horticulture Commission will meet 3 times a year in February, July, and November. The dates for 2024 have been set for February 29th, July 25<sup>th</sup>, and November 21<sup>st</sup>.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** Dr. Rankins made a motion to adjourn at 10:27 a.m. This motion was seconded by Mr. Sims and passed unanimously.

