

## HORTICULTURE COMMISSION MEETING

June 29, 2023

9:30 a.m.

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. Smith

Members present: Chad Danos, Rob Barry, Cole Sims, George Bofinger, Richard Hill, Rebekah O'Quin, Gary Bullock, Todd Parker, Dr. Ansel Rankins, and Dr. Ed Bush.

A quorum was present.

Others present: Assistant Attorney General Alicia Wheeler, Hearing Officer; Baleigh Olah, LDAF Legal Counsel; Jade Saunders, LDAF Legal Counsel; Tabitha Irvin, LDAF Executive Counsel; Tina Peltier, LDAF; Marsha Dugas, LDAF; and Marissa Smith, LDAF.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Mr. Sims made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 23, 2023 meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Danos and passed unanimously.

### **REINSTATEMENT REQUEST**

Charles Mullin Jr. requested to have his landscape irrigation contractor license reinstated.

**Motion:** Mr. Danos made a motion to allow reinstatement of Mr. Mullin's license. This motion was seconded by Mr. Bofinger and passed unanimously.

Dustin Mince requested to have his landscape horticulturist license reinstated.

**Motion:** Dr. Rankins made a motion to allow reinstatement of Mr. Mince's license. This motion was seconded by Mr. Sims and passed unanimously.

Christopher Dickson requested to have his landscape irrigation contractor license reinstated.

**Motion:** Mr. Danos made a motion to allow reinstatement of Mr. Dickson's license. This motion was seconded by Dr. Rankins and passed unanimously.

Chris Culotta requested to have his arborist license reinstated.

**Motion:** Mr. Sims made a motion to allow reinstatement of Mr. Culotta's license. This motion was seconded by Mr. Bullock and passed unanimously.

At 9:50 a.m. the meeting was turned over to the hearing officer, Ms. Alicia Wheeler.

### **ADJUDICATORY HEARING**

## **CONTINUED CASES:**

### **Eddie Jones**

20885 E. Railroad Ave.  
Livingston, LA 70754

Case No.: 23-HORT-011

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

This case was continued to the next hearing date as requested by Mr. Jones.

## **STIPULATIONS**

### **Samual Armenio**

d/b/a Armenio Enterprises  
1803 Lee Street  
Bossier City, LA 71112

Case No.: 23-HORT-005

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

The stipulation was presented by Baleigh Olah.

Respondent admits to the violations and agrees to pay the penalty of \$1,500.00.

**Motion:** Mr. Parker made a motion to accept the stipulation and penalty.

This motion was seconded by Mr. Danos and passed unanimously.

### **Donald Thomas**

d/b/a Thomas Construction  
6802 Pine Point Road  
Ville Plate, LA 70586

Case No.: 23-HORT-007

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

The stipulation was presented by Jade Saunders.

Respondent admits to the violations and agrees to pay the penalty of \$1,500.00.

**Motion:** Dr. Rankins made a motion to accept the stipulation and penalty.

This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker and passed unanimously.

### **Lorenzo Gonzalez**

1108 Highway 71 S.  
LeCompte, LA 71346

Case No.: 23-HORT-013

Two violations of La. R.S. 3:3804(C) for advertising and engaging in a regulated profession (landscape horticulturist) without a proper license. One violation of La. R.S. 3:3810 (2)(A) for violating a written stop order.

The stipulation was presented by Jade Saunders.

Respondent admits to the violations and agrees to pay the penalty of \$1,500.00.

**Motion:** Mr. Parker made a motion to accept the stipulation and penalty.

This motion was seconded by Mr. Sims and passed unanimously.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Director's Report:**

Ms. Peltier gave the following updates:

**Staffing Update:** In April, Cindy Abbott joined our Horticulture staff. She is tasked with answering the LDAF main line, collecting and distributing mail, and collecting payments in AES. In May, Marissa Smith was promoted to an Administrative Program Specialist A, a position formerly held by Andrea Marchand who retired late last year. Her new duties include payroll, property inventory, records retention, scheduling exams, reporting exam results, and making sure our office runs smoothly. We are currently seeking a replacement for her previous position.

Four new district inspectors were recently hired. Stephanie Richmond joined the staff of the Alexandria district in March. Austin Gray joined our staff in April in the Opelousas district and in June Randy Parish joined the Alexandria district and Harold Cotton joined the Shreveport district.

On May 19th, Paeton Burkett, AES attorney, resigned from her position with LDAF. We are in the process of hiring a replacement. A big thanks to Tabitha Irvin, Jade Saunders, and Baleigh Olah for stepping in and taking on additional duties in Paeton's absence.

On May 25th, Milton Schleismann, New Orleans district manager, retired after 39 years of service with LDAF. We hope to fill his position very soon along with a vacant inspector position in the district.

**P. ramorum update:** A spring compliance inspection took place on April 28th at the previously positive P. ramorum nursery located in Forest Hill. There were 332 samples taken and one was reported positive. A delimiting inspection was performed on May 31st and an additional 255 samples were taken (249 taken from the positive block). A total of 3 plants were destroyed, and 3 plants are being held in the quarantine radii for a least 90 days. An additional positive sample has been reported from the May 31st delimiting inspection. The positive sample is located outside of the current quarantine radii. Our inspectors will perform a second delimiting inspection this week.

On June 12th, a P. ramorum sample was confirmed positive at a retail location in Baton Rouge. The sample was taken from a viburnum on May 11th as part of the 2023 Sudden Oak Death survey. On June 15th, a delimiting survey was performed. A total of 59 plants were destroyed and 60 plants are being quarantined for at least 90 days. An additional 25 samples were taken from the quarantine radii and throughout the nursery. All samples have been reported negative. A sample was also taken at another location of the same retail store that received plants from the same shipment and it was reported negative. The plants were sourced from a nursery in Cypress, Texas but no additional information has been provided to us at this time.

**USDA Survey:** LDAF will be part of a multi-state federal cooperative agreement in 2023 to survey for Cotton Seed Bug (CSB). CSB is considered a high-risk pest that can pose significant economic impacts on cotton, hiscus, and okra. In cotton, it can affect the seeds and will stain the lint if the bugs are crushed. Hitchhikers on nursery stock is also a concern. CSB has been detected in the following counties in California: Riverside, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Orange. Currently, it has not been detected near any commercial cotton production or in any nursery settings in CA. LDAF will receive \$49,987 in funds to survey cotton fields and nurseries selling high risk host materials for this pest. High risk nursery stock includes plants of the Malvaceae family. AES inspectors and Boll Weevil Eradication Program employees will participate.

**Emerald Ash Borer:** Updated EAB regulations are being drafted to include the new parishes where EAB has been detected. Currently, 10 parishes are under quarantine. Six new parishes have been confirmed since 2021 and we are waiting for the final confirmation of recent detections in 5 additional parishes. Also included in the new regulations are the treatment requirements for moving regulated articles from a quarantined area to a nonquarantined area.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Scott Courtright: Mr. Courtright brought up concerns to the commission about requiring workers' compensation for licensed arborists. There was a discussion by the commission members, but no recommendations were made to peruse this matter further.

Grant Estrade: Mr. Estrade was not present.

### **SET NEXT HEARING DATE**

The next Horticulture Commission meeting will be October 4, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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