

HORTICULTURE COMMISSION MEETING

September 24, 2015

9:30 a.m.

Veterans' Memorial Auditorium

5825 Florida Boulevard

Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The hearing was called to order by Mr. Bass at 9:38 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Mrs. Bellington.

Members present: Todd Parker, Fred Bass, Steven Hoover, Rob Barry, Jack Hopper, Chad Danos, Cole Sims, Dr. Allen Owings and Rusty Ruckstuhl.

Members absent: Mitch Mayes, Harold Tani, Gary Bullock and Zefferino Von Kurnatowski.

A quorum was present.

Others present: Michael Vallan, Hearing Officer; Lindsey Hunter, LDAF Legal Counsel; Tad Hardy, LDAF; Ansel Rankins, LDAF; Ashley Champagne, LDAF; and Fran Bellington, LDAF.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Mr. Ruckstuhl made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 25, 2015 hearing. This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker and passed unanimously.

SET NEXT HEARING DATE

The next Horticulture Commission meeting will be Thursday, December 10, 2015 at 9:30 a.m. in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

REINSTATEMENT REQUEST

There were two individuals that requested to be placed on the agenda for reinstatement of their licenses, Rene LeBlanc (arborist) and Deborah Hagan (retail florist), but neither of them appeared.

At 9:41 a.m. the meeting was turned over to the hearing officer, Michael Vallan.

ADJUDICATORY HEARING

NEW CASES

Michael Coates

d/b/a Green Keepers

P O Box 83856

Baton Rouge, LA 70884

Case No.: 15-014

One violation of L.R.S. 3:3804 (C) for advertising in a regulated profession (landscape irrigation contractor), without a proper license.

Stipulation received. The department recommended a penalty of \$250.00. **Motion:** Mr. Ruckstuhl made a motion to accept the stipulation and the recommended penalty. This motion was seconded by Mr. Sims and passed unanimously.

Samuel Rodriguez
d/b/a LA Tree Service
340 Alderman Rd.
Doyline, LA 71023

Case No.: 15-016

One violation of L.R.S. 3:3804 (C) for advertising in a regulated profession (arborist), without a proper license. One violation of L.R.S. 3:3810 A (2) for violating a notice of non-compliance.

Stipulation received. Recommended penalty of \$250.00 per violation for a total fine of \$500.00. **Motion:** Mr. Parker made a motion to accept the stipulation and the recommended penalty. This motion was seconded by Mr. Hopper and passed unanimously.

Matthew Hammock
d/b/a Fleur De Lis Flowers and Gifts
603 Absinthe Court Suite D
Shreveport, LA 71115

Case No.: 15-015

One violation of L.R.S. 3:3804 (C) for engaging in a regulated profession (retail florist), without a proper license.

Mr. Hammock was not present but the department proceeded because service was effected. **Motion:** Mr. Ruckstuhl made a motion to find Mr. Hammock in violation. This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker and passed unanimously. The department recommended a penalty of \$250.00. **Motion:** Mr. Parker made a motion to accept the recommended penalty. This motion was seconded by Mr. Ruckstuhl and passed unanimously.

The meeting was turned over to Mr. Bass at 9:51 to allow time for Mr. Michael Vassallo to appear because he was stuck in traffic. Mr. Vassallo arrived at 10:14 and the meeting was turned back over to the hearing officer.

Michael Vassallo
d/b/a Tony's Tree Service
2400 Whitney Avenue
Metairie, LA 70055

Case No.: 15-017

Two violations of L.R.S. 3:3804 (C) for advertising and engaging in a regulated profession (arborist), without a proper license. One violation of L.R.S. 3:3810 (A) (2) for violating a notice of non-compliance.

Mr. Vassallo was present. **Motion:** Mr. Parker made a motion to find Mr. Vassallo in violation. This motion was seconded by Mr. Hopper and passed unanimously. The department recommended a penalty of \$250.00 per violation for a total fine of \$750.00. **Motion:** Mr. Hoover made a motion to suspend \$500.00, contingent upon no further violations, for a total payable fine of \$250.00. This motion was seconded by Mr. Barry and passed unanimously.

The meeting was turned back over to Mr. Bass at 10:37 a.m.

NEW BUSINESS

Director's Report

There was a discussion of proposed fee increases that are currently in the rule making process. Under the proposals, the horticulture licensing exam (except for the landscape architect exam) fees will increase from \$50 to \$114 per exam. Also, the horticulture license fees for the upcoming year are proposed to increase from \$75 to \$100; cut flower dealer permit fees from \$70 to \$90; and nursery stock dealer permit fees from \$130 to \$150. The increased fees cover LDAF expenses and reduce reliance on state general funds.

Three parishes are now under formal quarantine for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB): Webster, Claiborne and Bossier parishes. Parasitoid releases are underway in an attempt to slow the spread of this pest. The trapping season has ended but will resume in early spring. Nurseries and Nursery Stock Dealers in quarantined parishes cannot ship ash trees out of the quarantined areas.

LDAF has extended the citrus canker quarantine to include two small areas in south Plaquemines Parish and south Lafourche Parish. We anticipate that citrus canker will continue to spread over time and we will continue to survey.

Mr. Hardy and Mr. Rankins participated in the 2015 annual CLARB meeting in New Orleans last week, serving as local host representatives. Chad Danos, Landscape Architect Commission member, gave the group a welcome address.

The Horticulture Division is in the process of remodeling, adding office space for fee payments.

Ashley Champagne has joined our Horticulture Division family as the new Administrative Assistant to Ansel Rankins, Assistant Director. Ashley replaces Katie Farlow who recently accepted a position in LDAF HR.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments, but Mr. Bass took a moment to thank everyone for the good job that they do.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Mr. Parker made a motion to adjourn at 10:38 a.m. This motion was seconded by Mr. Hopper and passed unanimously.

