

HORTICULTURE COMMISSION MEETING

December 11, 2020

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. Parker at 9:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. Marchand

Members present: Rob Barry, Todd Parker, Gary Bullock, Cole Sims, Steve Hoover, Rusty Ruckstuhl, Mitch Mayes, Dr. Ansel Rankins Sr. and Dr. Ed Bush.

Members absent: Richard Hill, Cole Danos, Dan Johnson and Zefferino Von Kurnatowski.

A quorum was present.

Others present: Amanda LaGroue, LDAF Legal Counsel; Amy Morales, LDAF Legal Counsel; Tina Peltier, LDAF; and Andrea Marchand, LDAF.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Mr. Parker made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 30, 2020 hearing. This motion was seconded by Mr. Hoover and passed unanimously.

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Parker made a motion to amend the agenda to include the appointment of the Director and Assistant Director. This motion was seconded by Mr. Mayes and passed unanimously.

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR & ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Dr. Rankins made a motion to delegate the Commission's authority to the Commissioner, Dr. Strain, to make the appointments. This motion was second by Mr. Sims and passed unanimously.

SET NEXT HEARING DATE

The next Horticulture Commission meeting will be held March 4, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

REINSTATEMENT REQUESTS

Ms. Nancy A. Talbot requested reinstatement of her landscape horticulturist license.

Motion: Mr. Ruckstuhl made a motion to allow reinstatement of Ms. Talbot's landscape horticulturist license. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hoover and passed unanimously.

Mr. Silas S. Holtzclaw requested reinstatement of his arborist license.

Motion: Mr. Mayes made a motion to allow reinstatement of Mr. Holtzclaw's arborist license. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bullock and passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Peltier thanked the Board for their approval of her position as Director of Horticulture. Mr. Parker commented on Mrs. Peltier's excellent and ongoing work for the Department of Agriculture.

Delegation of Authority Regarding Sexual Harassment Policy

Mrs. Peltier explained to the Board that the Sexual Harassment Policy Resolution would give LDAF the authority to keep training records, create policies, and perform investigations, etc. for the Horticulture Commission pertaining to Sexual Harassment. LDAF legal counsel, Amy Morales and Amanda LaGroue were present for questions. There were no questions. Mr. Barry made the motion to approve the Sexual Harassment Policy Resolution. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mayes and passed unanimously.

Director's Report:

Mrs. Peltier gave the following updates:

Phytophthora ramorum Inspections/Trace investigations: On August 26, 2020 USDA-APHIS confirmed a camellia plant positive for Phytophthora ramorum, a water mold pathogen that causes Sudden Oak Death, at a nursery in Louisiana. LDAF inspectors detected this plant during this year's P. ramorum survey. USDA, in cooperation with the LDAF inspectors, implemented the Interstate Confirmed Nursery Protocol. This protocol involves intensive inspections, surveying and sampling. On September 14th through the 16th, five survey teams comprised of three federal employees and ten state employees, established a Quarantine Block around the positive plant and supervised the destruction of 36 Sasanquas/Camellias. They also began conducting delimiting survey activities. All non-regulated and regulated material located in the nursery was inspected and a total of 592 samples were collected according to the protocol. All of the samples were sent to the LSU Plant Diagnostic Center and were found negative for P. ramorum. In November, LDAF completed the first of two inspections in the Quarantine Block and a total of 400 regulated host plants were inspected and found to be healthy. In mid-November, LDAF also completed trace forward investigations on LA nurseries that received regulated plant material from the positive nursery. Most of the plants had been sold and those that were inspected appeared to be healthy. The final inspection on the plants in the Quarantine Block is scheduled to occur on December 15. The nursery will continue to undergo periodic inspections over the next three years, as is required by the federal regulations.

Hurricane Zeta – CNS Approved Facilities: Louisiana citrus nursery growers in Plaquemines Parish were impacted by Hurricane Zeta in October of 2020, with at least three certified interstate producers sustaining catastrophic damage. Because of the federally regulated diseases, Citrus Canker and Citrus Greening, the citrus nursery industry is heavily regulated by the USDA for interstate movement. On November 25 the USDA issued Emergency Action Notifications (EAN) to all three CNS producers on their breached greenhouses at each of the three operations. The EAN prohibits the movement of the citrus plants from these structures outside of the Citrus Canker and Citrus Greening quarantine areas.

Citrus Canker Confirmation in Approved Structure: On December 3, 2020 citrus canker was positively confirmed on four citrus plants (2-lemon, 2-lime) inside a greenhouse structure of one of our citrus producer's facilities in Plaquemines Parish. For an APHIS-approved structure, a CC+ find triggers the requirements in the current CNS protocol (dated December 2012). None of the CNS in the facility where the CC+ plant was found can move interstate. Although the CNS in the facility is not allowed to move across state lines, LDAF will allow the CNS to be sold within the quarantined areas. New plants only can be sold once they are cleaned according to Federal protocol.

Citrus Commodity Survey (Farm Bill): Survey is ongoing, targeting for 13 different citrus pests with 96 inspections completed. 61 samples were sent to LSU (all from our NO district), with 36 being diagnosed with

citrus canker and 20 being diagnosed with citrus greening. All positive samples were collected within the current quarantine areas. All positive citrus greening trees will be placed on our removal list once the consent forms are signed by the tree owners.

Staff updates: Dr. Ansel Rankins Sr. has been promoted to Assistant Commissioner of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Andrea Marchand (previously Administrative Assistant IV) has been promoted to Administrative Program Specialist C, the position previously held by Fran Bellington. Mrs. Bellington retired in September of 2020 with 30 years of service. The Administrative Assistant IV position is currently vacant and we hope to fill it soon. License and permits renewals were mailed out Monday, December 7, 2020. Our Horticulture Division is now utilizing a new online payment system that accepts ACH and credit card payments. The old system only accepted ACH payments. The system automatically updates the database when a payment is processed. Eventually we will be able to accept credit card payments in the LDAF office also.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments but Mr. Parker took a moment to thank the commission members for the good job that they do.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Mr. Parker made a motion to adjourn at 10:07 a.m. This motion was seconded by Mr. Sims and passed unanimously.