



## Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council

### REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 11, 2023

10:00 AM

[View Recording Here](#)

**Members Present:** Commissioner Hurlburt, Hilary Criollo, Richard Ruggiero, Jamie Jones, Linda Auger, Cara Sawyer, Washington da Silva, Jon Edwards, Maribel La Luz

**Members Absent:** Indrajeet Chaubey, Amy Harder, George Motel,

**DoAg Staff:** Rebecca Eddy, Ally Hughes, Lindsay Booth

**Guests:** Margaret Ruggiero-Mena

1. Commissioner Hurlburt called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.
2. Motion to approve Regular Meeting Minutes from February 9, 2023, made by Linda Auger, and seconded by Hilary Criollo, no comments. All in favor, minutes approved.
3. No public comment.
4. Reports
  - a. Financial
    - Since the last meeting in February, invoices have been submitted for the mobile app renewal and CT Grown Magazine. Rebecca Eddy indicated she is awaiting quotes on the next segment of the mobile app for the FY24. The increase should be no more than a ten percent increase. Funds for a previously approved guest speaker for event at Agricultural Experiment Station – Spotted Lantern Fly Symposium in the amount of \$700.00 are not currently encumbered, as the guest speaker has not submitted W-9 or vendor form. Rebecca Eddy will follow-up with the guest speaker. Motion to approve the Financial Report was made by Cara Sawyer, and seconded by Jamie Jones. All in favor, motion approved.
  - b. Legislative
    - Jon Edwards noted that Farm Wineries/CVWA were in full support of wine at grocery stores; however, recent bill(s) regarding this were not passed. He also noted that wineries did not have the pull as breweries in the state regarding representation at grocery stores. Jamie Jones echoed the sentiments of Jon Edwards, but did note that legislators do want to help Farm Wineries. He made further notes regarding Farm Investment Tax Credit modeled after what NY State has in place and the perspective of CT Lawmakers. Another bill mentioned was the Doug Dubitsky Bill which would



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allow Farm Wineries to sell wine at additional locations on their already existing farm that may have a different address than their winery. The Package Store Association opposed it. It is still in processing. Jon Edwards asked for clarification regarding the Dubitsky Bill regarding Farm Wineries and 1) Wineries in General, and 2) Properties that are adjacent or on another property owned by the Farm. Commissioner Hurlburt joined the conversation. Discussion regarding the Dubitsky Bill ensued. Commissioner invited further conversation to see what strides can be made. Jon Edwards asked Commissioner Hurlburt about additional legislation for Diesel Tax on trucking and the impacts on agriculture. Commissioner Hurlburt indicated he would follow-up regarding this legislation. Jamie Jones asked Rebecca Eddy for clarification of the registration (e-license) for agriculture for wineries and for sale of fresh produce, as grapes are a fruit and sometimes sold as fresh produce. Rebecca Eddy will follow-up with Produce Safety.

- The link for the bill was dropped into the chat:  
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2023/lcoamd/pdf/2023LCO06810-R00-AMD.pdf>

### c. Big E

- Jon Edwards previously received some updates from Rebecca Eddy.
- For the 2023 Connecticut Building at the Big E, the Big E will take place September 15 – October 1, 2023. 14 applications for Farm Wineries were received, which is the highest number ever received. There were four new applicants. Applicants include: Bishop's Orchard, Brignole (new applicant), Hawk Ridge (new application), Hopkins Vineyard, Jonathon Edwards, Jones, Lost Acres, Maugle Sierra, Priam (new application), Preston Ridge, Staehly, Sharpe Hill, Stonington (new applicant), and Taylor Brooke. Jon Edwards indicated he mentioned this to the CvWA in hopes of bringing the number to 17 in future years. Motion requested to accept applicants who qualify. Motion to accept applications was made by Hilary Criollo, and seconded by Jon Edwards. All in favor, motion passes.
- For the Big E, \$10,000 is allocated that includes permitting, booth fee(s) (booth fee \$2500, West Spring field \$600, Printing \$600), printing, stainless steel coolers (wheeled, counter height, 1-80 quart, 1-100 quart). It was asked if there was money in the budget to purchase a kegorator from Micromatics (estimated cost \$3000-\$3500), which would be advantageous to go green by reducing trash/waste and costs of wine. A kegorator is a self-contained unit and needs only a three-pronged electrical outlet and external nitrogen gas. These elements also help, in combination with wineries, to elevate a press pitch. Rebecca Eddy has begun reaching out to wineries regarding pricing and wholesale pricing to have a good selection of wines at the Big E.

### d. Research and Education



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- Richard Ruggero indicated he did not have reporting for research and education. Due to personal reasons, he indicated he may want to step down as chair of the sub-committee. He invited others to the discussion. He asked to retain his status within the council. Rebecca Eddy invited all members who wished to fill the Research and Education Sub-Committee Chair position to reach out to her or Ally Hughes. Rebecca Eddy thanked Richard Ruggero for his service and commitment to the position. The Ag Experiment Station held their Spotted Lantern Fly Workshop on Monday, April 17, 2023. The council had allocated up to \$700.00 to fund guest speaker expenses. No requests have been submitted to date. Jamie Jones was also a speaker at the event. He noted that it may be beneficial to have additional workshops in the March timeframe to allow farmers to allocate their time to spending time outside. Jamie Jones nominated Washington da Silva to co-chair/ assist with future planning. Rebecca Eddy mentioned she had sent out recordings to all Wineries regarding the SLF Summit held in Pennsylvania and invited individuals to listen. Last week she distributed information on the Farm Credit East 2023 North East Wine Grape Outlook Webinar that was held on Tuesday, May 09, 2023, which had much NY information but had valuable information. Additional conversation ensued and well wishes and thanks were given to Richard Ruggiero.
- e. Passport Program App
  - There are 38 applicants to participate in the program.
    - Last year, 35 applications plus 1 late entry
    - 2 new wineries: Worthington Vineyards (Somers), Kingdom of the Hawk (North Stonington – part of Saltwater Vineyard family)
    - 5 vineyards working on applications/registrations. Ally Hughes will follow up with them to ensure they are completed.
  - Passport Program officially launches on Friday, May 12, 2023, and runs through December 31, 2023. All stamps must be redeemed by December 31, 2023, to be entered into the prize drawing. There will be two notifications sent out. One is the anniversary date for users, which means the date they downloaded the app. Questions were posed and discussion ensued. Linda Auger asked if there could be examples provided.
  - Geolocation Adjustment
    - There is a 300 foot radius for the app; however, some wineries would like a tighter radius to encourage individuals to use tasting rooms. The radius is based upon a coordinate system to the address of the winery, but can be amended to a pin drop on the property. Discussion ensued regarding visiting tasting rooms versus geotagging. If a radius is changed for one winery, it must be changed for all. It was also mentioned that scanning kiosk for phones may be something to visit, but would require investment in



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new technology. The Farm Wine Development Council is making the best effort to minimize the distance in the geotagging to encourage consumer to enter Farm Wineries tasting rooms as part of the Passport Program and will include language in the manual stamp request in the mobile app that participants must be in the tasting room for photos to be approved. Motion was made by Jon Edwards and seconded by Hilary Criollo. All in favor, motion approved.

- Prizes
  - Last year prize levels for stamping were: 12 stamps, 18 stamps and 35 stamps. There are 38 wineries so far this year. The plan was to leave to leave stamping at 12, 18 and 35+. Last year there were 50 commemorative prizes, which were laser engraved cheese boards with the Farm Wine logos for the first 50 to visit all wineries. This would be different from those who previously raced to complete stamping all 35 wineries. The question posed is: do wineries want to give a commemorative gift this year for those who visit all of the wineries, but do it is as a random prize drawing for those that visit all wineries. The plan is to keep prizes at 12 stamps, 18 stamps, and 35+ stamps, and to have a commemorative prize for 50 individuals who visited all wineries that is drawn randomly versus the former for those who were first to complete stamps. Motion was made by Richard Ruggiero and seconded by Jon Edwards. All in favor, motion approved.
  - Statistics on stamp redemptions were reshared.
  - A question was posed that if users of the app were in the same household should both users be allowed to win prizes. Committee members were in agreement that it should be allowable.
  - Prize suggestions were shared and reviewed based upon feasibility and budget. Suggestions range from a wedding at a vineyard, to a trip to Italy, and several other prizes were shared. Accepted suggestions were shared in the chat and read aloud.
  - There are posts scheduled to go out regarding the Passport Program that are available for wineries to share. Rebecca Eddy is also working on a press release going out May 12, 2023 to all media partners. There about 120 media partners throughout the state. The Lt. Governor will be attending an event regarding the Passport Program on Friday, May 19, 2023 to help promote the program. The Commissioner of DECD has also received an invitation.

### 5. Marketing

- a. There is work with DKA, who is the marketing firm the council met in February. They



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are finalizing a survey with passport participants and they will be sharing information with a QR code. This is to gauge awareness of farm wineries and the Passport Program, and to gather baseline demographics of consumer markets. There will also be a follow up survey at the end of the campaign.

- b. Paid digital and social media campaigns are launching. One is download the app for the Passport Program. The other is visit all of the wineries in the state. It isn't just to highlight those in the program, but to benefit all of the wineries in the state. All licensed Farm Wineries in the state have been loaded in the DKA's geolocation system for the digital campaign. This will help with those who use the app and encourage them to visit other wineries as well.
- c. DKA is also working on prize outreach for the Passport Program and working on an e-newsletter for this year.
- d. On the Organic social front, Rebecca Eddy and Ally Hughes will be distributing a Cognito Form asking wineries to answer questions. This form as been helpful with the Dairy Marketing Board. DKA will not be handling organic farm wine social media. A question was posed regarding who monitors and shares on weekends. Further discussion regarding this took place and Rebecca Eddy will follow up.

### 6. Old Business

- a. The group had spoken regarding a Marketing Subcommittee to meet regarding work with DKA during the February meeting. There were no suggested names. In further discussion with the DoAg staff attorney, a subcommittee would still need to post a subcommittee meeting agenda and minutes. It is not as easy as having a quick call. More thoughts on the initial plan of a subcommittee were shared and discussion on the logistics of a subcommittee ensued. The scope of work with DKA indicates they need to send information for review at least two weeks in advance to review and for reviewers to provide final approval. There was follow up regarding the official website and hashtag for sharing. The Facebook page is spelled out fully. The website is CTWineCountry.com.

### 7. New Business

- a. Richard Ruggiero expressed concerns with the timeline for new licensing regarding the DoAg e-license Connecticut grown alcohol, liquor (CGAL) license or Farm Winery, Brewery, Cidery (FWBC) license. This was passed in approximately 2019, and enacted in 2020/2021. It is \$25.00 and is implemented by DoAg. It was enacted to ensure those who are part of the Passport program are in production and growing the product going into their wines. The governing institution is DCP (Department of Consumer Protection). Further discussion ensued regarding previous and current Passport Programs registrations. Questions were posed regarding how many applications were received. Those who have applied for e-license can be seen on the E-License website. Ally Hughes can access the content within an e-license application.



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8. Motion to adjourn by Linda Auger and seconded by Hilary Criollo, all in favor, meeting adjourned at 12:11 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Lindsay Booth, Administrative Assistant, on May 11, 2023.*