

Audio visual meeting was called to order by Chair Will Brandau. He welcomed the members and asked for secretary, Judy Box to take roll. There were 21 out of 23 participating,

The minutes of the August 3, 2016 meeting were read and approved.

Wesley Ramsey presented the treasurer's report. Several deposits have been made and there are a few checks to go for deposit. There are two bills outstanding. Will explained the dues schedule.

Old Business:

501 (C)(3) nonprofit status: Will stated that he had an appointment with an attorney to determine what needed to be done and pricing. Will is also considering online filing. Sarah Wurzbacher suggested that Small Business Center may be able to offer advice. We are connected to RC&D Council so it is not crucial to get 501 (C)(3) status.

Our website was discussed. We have steady attendance, but we are not getting regular internet traffic. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is needed. Will will be taking a seminar to learn more about SEO and will apply it our site. Facebook is linked to our website with moderate activity.

Branding/logo – Sarah has checked with the graphics department and they are pricey. She has a woman in the office with graphics design background and is interested in working on the logo. Larry Hartpence suggested that this might be the time to change our name to include “associates” because our new members are more diversified. A discussion followed with many points being brought up which led to a vote which upheld the current name.

PA Farm Show Dan Arnett, Mike Palko, and Will Brandau each spoke of their time at the show and the consensus was it was a good turnout, many signed up for the newsletters, some interested in membership and an interest from poultry producers. Will thanked Penn State for letting us share their space. A discussion followed on Keystone Farm Show which is mostly farmers. Penn State does not show here, but Sarah is going to check with other organizations to find out if table space is available.

Poultry Workshop: Several people attended and there was interest in the email newsletters and in membership. It was a very good event.

Grant Applications:

VAPG: Dan Arnett reported that it is successful, but not much to update now. They are working with equipment manufacturers.

SARE - Education and marketing \$15,000.00 grant Mike Palko stated that he hasn't heard anything yet, but hopes to by Feb. 20, 2017

SARE – Farmer Grant discussed by Will is for \$15,000.00 is for farmers with 5 to 10 acres to be processed for poultry bedding.

New Business:

Lititz Poultry House Trails were discussed by Amy Blarkley. They had just finished a trial Jan. 20, 2017 and switchgrass had a good performance. There were several questions asked and additional trials are needed in the future. Amy also will make contacts available.

Ontario Biomass Producers Co-Op A welcome was given to Norm Richardson and Urs Eggimann, so glad they could join us. A wonderful overview was given on what they are accomplishing and where they want to take it to in the future. They concluded with a suggestion some people from both groups to get together face to face for a meeting. We are very glad to keep the lines of communication open with our friends in Ontario.

Travis Hendrick was with us to discuss Thrivez Soft and Natural bagged bedding for retail sale. They are based in North Carolina and are producing in eight states. The bedding has been well received and sales are doing very well.

Pankash Kuhar a Penn State grad student joined us to discuss his work on the study of dust levels during harvest. His main points were dust concentration and is it harmful to humans. He will send an email of what his research project details.

RC&D Grass Energy Project was presented by George Kaufman. He explained the workshops that were held over this past summer, with Will giving a presentation and Larry and his sons doing demonstrations of making pellets. It was very successful with six pelletizers purchased and a couple of stoves bought for testing. If the grant comes through RC&D propose doing Environmental Protection Seminars throughout the state.

Bio-Char Production was discussed by mechanical engineer Len Reggie. He explained biochar, its benefits and the equipment he is developing. He will continue testing in March.

Grass pellet production update: Larry Hartpence purchased a complete pellet operation from upstate New York. It is currently stored in trailers waiting to be reassembled in the spring.

International Bio-Mass Conference: Will Brandau will be speaking at the conference on Monday, April 10, 2017

Open membership event to be hosted by Will Brandau. Activities include about a ten acre burn off, networking, and BBQ. The event to be held in early spring.

Other New Business:

Election of officers: Sarah has the means to conduct an electronic election. Will will solicit nominations from the general membership. Anyone wishing to take an office please let Will know. The question was posed, who has the right to vote? Members who have their dues paid or everyone including those who receive newsletters.

Motion to adjourn was made by Larry Hartpence.

Respectfully submitted, Judy Box, Secretary