

## **National Honey Board Meeting Minutes**

PRESIDING: Mindy Ryan Tharp Gehring, Chairperson

LOCATION: Marriott Downtown Austin

DATE: April 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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**National Honey Board Members Present:** MindyRyan Tharp Gehring, Christopher Olney, Alan Turanski, Tom Sargeantson, Bjorn Anderson, Dustin Livermore, Dan Winter, Greg Olsen, Joan Gunter, Matt Halbgewachs

**National Honey Board Members Absent:** None

**National Honey Board Alternates Present** Jeff Caley, Nancy Seaquist, Sarah Neves, Maren Martin, Arlen Penner, David Coy, Patricia Sundberg, Blake Shook, Darren Cox

**National Honey Board Absent:** Missy Foott

**National Honey Board Staff Present:** Margaret Lombard, Kelly Werning, Catherine Barry, Jessica Schindler, Jocelyn Martinez, Melissa Boone-Hall, Andrea Brening, Darren Brown

**Present:** Katie Cook (USDA/AMS), Sam Mareno, Keith Seiz (Brightly Creative), Don Ladhoff (Fresh Smart Solutions), Barbara Lyle, (Porter Novelli), Jess Buchanan (Porter Novelli), Danielle Downey (Project Apis m), Amy Shipley (Sterling Rice Group), Laurie Demeritt (The Hartman Group), Laurel Muir (Sterling Rice Group), Nancy Burnett (Local Hive Honey), Taylor Laitsch (Sterling Rice Group)

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**THURSDAY, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Thursday session of the National Honey Board (NHB) meeting was convened at 8:35 a.m. by Margaret Lombard and Andrea Brening called roll. All the guests then introduced themselves.

## **AMS UPDATE**

Katie Cook, Marketing Specialist with United States Department of Agriculture welcomed all the new board members and preceded to swear in the new board members present.

- Alan Turanski, First Handler Member
- Missy Foott, First Handler Alternate
- Bjorn Anderson, Importer Member
- Maren Martin, Importer Alternate
- Dan Winter, Producer Member
- Patricia Sundberg, Producer Alternate
- Dustin Livermore, Marketing Cooperative Representative Member
- David Coy, Marketing Cooperative Representative Alternate
- Sarah Neves, Importer Alternate (Two-year term)

Cook briefly touched on the appointments by the Secretary of State and the responsibilities and guidelines of serving on the board.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The process of electing officers began, and ballots were handed out. The following Board Members were elected unanimously:

- MindyRyan Tharp Gehring for Chairperson
- Joan Gunter for Vice Chairperson
- Alan Turanski for Secretary-Treasurer

### **ACTION ITEM I: TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**

Motion by Joan Gunter, seconded by Dan Winter and carried to approve the minutes.

### **ACTION ITEM II: TO ACCEPT THE AGENDA**

Motion by AlanTuranski, seconded by Matt Halbgewachs and carried to approve the consent agenda.

## **FINANCIAL**

National Honey Board's CFO, Kelly Werning, began by introducing herself. She then reviewed briefly what will be discussed and noted that the Board will be voting the next morning to approve the budget.

Highlights from the March 2023 balance sheet include cash in bank of \$2.9 million, \$20,000 for prepaid insurance, \$26,000 net property and equipment and \$8,700 other assets, which is NHB's rental deposit for office space. Additionally, NHB carries a Right of Use Asset of \$218,143 on the building lease, for a total of about \$3.2 million in assets. The balance sheet also includes approximately \$ 7,000 of outstanding current liabilities, which is made up of NHB's FSA & 401K program accruals, and a Lease Liability of \$228,000. These liabilities combined with NHB's net assets of \$3 million total approximately \$3.2 million.

Werning discussed in detail how the new lease standard has changed the accounting surrounding operating leases, and how this accounting will be handled on the NHB financial statements going forward. The new standard requires that a Right of Use Asset and offsetting Lease Liability are shown on the balance sheet for any leases with terms over 12 months. Under the new standard, a Right of Use Asset and a Lease Liability must be recorded on the balance sheet for the present value of the lease. A Right of Use Asset is the lessee's right to occupy, operate, or hold a leased asset during the rental period, and the Lease Liability pertains to the obligation to make the rental payments.

For NHB, the impact of this new standard is calculating and recording the Right of Use Asset & Lease Liability and updating the financial statement footnote presentation. These amounts will be amortized down each month for the life of the lease, and recalculated when NHB decides to renew the current office lease, or if NHB decides to move to a new office space.

The Income statement shows total assessments, less assessment refunds, are at \$1,48 million. The mix of those assessments is 77% from imports and 23% domestic. Offsetting assessment revenues are the assessment refunds. At the end of the quarter, NHB had issued \$358K in assessment refunds, 99% of which were organic refunds. Program expenditures are \$1.75 million. Total expenditures are \$1.9 million, leaving NHB an excess of expense over revenue of approximately \$440,000. This excess of expense over revenue means NHB is using all the assessment funds received in the current year on programming that promotes the honey industry, in addition to utilizing carryover funds from 2022.

The 2023 budget amendment was reviewed next, with the 2023 original budget shown for comparison purposes. NHB still anticipates much more normal assessments for 2023, with a budgeted net revenue of \$7.1 million. Actual carryover from 2022 was \$3.8M, which gives NHB an additional \$1.5M to work with in 2023. Werning then highlighted how NHB proposes to use these funds, beginning with a total of \$26K for research programs. \$1.4 million will be allocated to marketing programs, and the remaining \$111,000 will be utilized for cyber security and development projects.

Tom Sargeantson asked, "What prompted our cyber security review?" Werning shared that it was based on other larger boards that have had a couple of issues. This creates more security for the NHB by investing in our security with some of the cash overflow.

## **COMPLIANCE**

Werning began by explaining that it is a requirement of the Order that NHB have a review program for domestic assessment payers. These reviews ensure that the assessments reported to NHB are accurate and supported by purchasing and production information. Domestic payers are on a rotating schedule to receive a review every three to four years. In the Spring, NHB reviews the domestic payer list to determine the year's reviews, and whether the review can be conducted via a virtual method, or if an in-person review is needed. Results of the reviews are shared at the fall Board meeting.

It was asked, "How a business would know that they are required to pay assessments?" Werning noted that this information is shared through the questionnaire we send out annually or by word of mouth.

## **2022 AUDIT PRESENTATION**

Alan Holmberg with Anderson & Whitney reviewed the 2022 Audited Financial Statements.

Holmberg briefly noted that it is the auditor's opinion that the NHB Audited Financial Statements are represented fairly with no issues or adjustments.

Holmberg explained the Modified Accrual Basis of accounting used for government entities, and what the differences are from an Accrual Basis.

Holmberg spoke on financials, discussing assessments and carryovers from 2021 and cash and expenses in 2022. Holmberg then provided further explanation on the presentation of the new Right of Use Asset and Lease Liability in the financials.

Holmberg shared with the board that the NHB is in a sound financial situation and is well able to meet all obligations and expenses. The NHB is spending slightly under budget, and not above what has been approved.

Holmberg stated that administrative costs are very reasonable, and necessary to be compliant with the administrative requirements.

The auditors discovered no material weaknesses and stated that the NHB are following and complying with internal controls.

## **NHB INDUSTRY OVERVIEW**

Margaret Lombard, Chief Executive Officer for the NHB, gave a quick look back at 2022 by showing the Annual Review video to the board.

### TALLOW HONEY

The NHB has completed the Tallow Honey Survey which provides data that shows what the economic impact is to beekeepers as a source of forage. This was a joint effort between the NHB and the American Honey Producers Association (AHPA) and was conducted by UC Davis. This information will be shared with APIS to help them understand the impact of Tallow forage on honey bees before any decisions are made. The NHB asks that Board Members and others in the honey industry share any feedback on this by May 5<sup>th</sup>.

### LAWS GOVERNING LOCAL PRODUCTS

Also, completed is the draft Research for Laws Governing Local Products. There are no federal laws that govern products labeled as “Local” honey. We would also appreciate your feedback on this report, before continuing to the next draft.

### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The NHB now has a draft of the Country-of-Origin labeling guidelines and would like your thoughts on this before moving forward. The idea is to be transparent to consumers. Chris Olney asked about the definition of substantial transformation and whether this document is trying to address this as well. Lombard stated that these are all just best practices and guidelines. The law is that if the honey is a U.S. Grade A honey it does have to have the Country of Origin this also applies to any imported honey. These guidelines we are providing are best practices but aren't law.

## CYBER AUDIT

This will be a yearlong comprehensive engagement to ensure that the NHB has no security concerns and to do what is necessary to safeguard all our data and programs.

## ECONOMIC STUDY ROI MEASUREMENT

The NHB is required to have an Economic ROI Measurement study done every five years, it was last done in 2018 by Ron Ward. This year the study is being conducted by Tim Richards, Arizona State University of Business, and should be completed by the Fall meeting. We hope to have great news on what the NHB's ROI is at that time.

## IMPROVED INDUSTRY OUTREACH

The NHB has worked hard on this to meet the desire of the stakeholders. The Strategic Plan is to improve industry communications. One of the new features recently launched was the Hive Sessions. We will also be forming subcommittees to brainstorm further solutions.

## APIMONDIA

The NHB will be attending and manning a booth at Apimondia with the goal of expanding our Celebrating Beekeeping campaign around the world. Having spent the last 4 years featuring the great work of US beekeepers. The NHB now wants to show the international craft of beekeeping shining a positive light on beekeeping around the world and Imported honey.

## BOARD NOMINATIONS

Lombard addressed the board asking for the board's help to get nominations for the upcoming nominations which are due June 1st.

## LAB-MADE, BIO FERMENTED SYNTHETIC HONEY

With an eye toward emerging technology, the NHB will be sharing more about synthetic honey over the next couple of days. MeliBio, Bee IO and other companies are making syrups and labeling them as honey. The NHB is working hard to understand this technology with research, focus groups and commitments seeking pledges from honey lovers to use only real honey.

## **MARKETING PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### NHB STRATEGIC PLAN

Catherine Barry, Vice President of Marketing for the NHB, began by stating that the Strategic Plan is the foundation of all the NHB's marketing programs. This plan has been newly updated to reflect the Board's current goals. It is the guiding light directing the teams and ensuring the programs meet the established mission and goals of the Strategic Plan. The top priorities from the Strategic Plan were:

- **Increase Consumption:** Driving demand and preference for honey should be the #1 objective
- **Demonstrate Value:** With increasing honey prices and inflation, showcase the value of honey
- **Synthetic Honey:** Be proactive and at the forefront of this emerging category
- **Good For Me & Good For The Planet:** Critical that initiatives tie back to honey consumption and purchase
- **Global Story:** Important to protect the purity and reputation of global honey
- **Next Generation:** Start educating the next generation of honey consumers now

### INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS

Industry Communications is of utmost importance and provides an avenue to bring the industry together. Based on the recommendation of stakeholders during the strategic planning process, the NHB has made industry outreach a priority for the year and years ahead. The NHB will be looking for opportunities to reach out to underrepresented parts of the industry to leverage their voices to help communicate the NHB's messages to their audiences. The NHB will continue to deliver value to the industry by providing more resources, tools and fact-based information to be used to support their business.

### STRATEGIC MARKETING PLATFORM

Barry then went on to review the NHB's strategic marketing platform: *Good For Me & Good For The Planet*. It focuses on a balanced approach of educating consumers about the benefits and nutritional properties of honey, while also educating about the importance of honey bees and their impact on the global food supply through pollination. Today's consumers care not only about the foods they are consuming, but they also care about how those choices impact the planet.

- **Good For Me:** Leverage honey's health attributes and lean into the positive perceptions of being all-natural, as well as differentiate honey by showcasing how real honey is produced compared to other sweeteners.
- **Good For The Planet:** Showcase the craft of beekeeping and the natural creation of honey, highlight the pollination impact honey bees have on the global food supply, and build a linkage between using honey, supporting beekeepers and bees, and an abundant food supply

## SUSTAINABILITY

When looking for opportunities to demonstrate the value of honey, the NHB's research has shown that when we educate people on bee health and the link to beekeepers, it makes honey more valuable. In order to bring this educational opportunity to life, the NHB launched the ***Celebrating Beekeeping*** video series.

This video series continues to be a great way for the NHB to share the positive story of honey and showcase the craft of beekeeping and honey production. This allows the NHB to educate consumers on what they can do to help with honey bee health and how they can support communities and beekeepers around the world.

The Celebrating Beekeeping storytelling has evolved over the last few years and it's important to look back at the stories that have been told, as well as what is to come.

- **2019:** Showcased the craft nature of honey production & bee health challenges
- **2020:** Highlighted how beekeeping helps support communities & the environment
- **2021 & 2022:** Featured the impact of pollination on the global food supply
- **2023:** Spotlight on beekeeping and honey production around the world (Vietnam)

Barry then shared a highlight reel video from the latest Celebrating Beekeeping video series featuring beekeepers from the Đắk Lắk province of Vietnam.

## GOODNESS SEEKERS

The NHB's target audience continues to be the Goodness Seeker. They currently represent about 19% of the US adult population at around 49 million people. Goodness seekers are female skewing, with a significant portion of them falling into the millennial age group. They are college educated and are very food involved. These consumers often read labels, but are looking to balance health, flavor and sustainability. Goodness Seekers are a powerful group of influencers and the NHB can extend our reach and impact potential by leveraging their voices and circle of influence. Goodness seekers are very



active on social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, so the NHB has geared many of the programs to meet our target where they are looking for information.

## HIVE OF PARTNERS

The NHB has established relationships with several agencies to help execute strategy-based programs in each of the NHB's key focus areas: consumer, retail, foodservice, and F&B manufacturing. Barry went on to explain what each of our marketing agency partners focus on and specialize in:

- **Sterling-Rice Group (SRG):** Strategy & Brand Management, Nutrition Professionals Outreach and Foodservice Marketing & Media Relations
- **Porter Novelli:** Consumer Media Relations, Influencer Management, Nutrition Research, Reputation Management and Industry Communication
- **Brightly Creative:** F&B Ingredient Marketing, Technical Research and Industry Summit
- **\*New Partner\* Hartman Group:** Consumer Research & Insights and Strategic Consulting
- **FreshSmartSolutions:** Retail & Shopper Marketing Promotions

## HONEY INDUSTRY SUMMIT

Due to the pandemic, the NHB has not held the Honey Industry Summit in person for several years. However, in 2023, the NHB plans to hold this year's Summit in person to coincide with the fall board meeting in Boulder, CO. The summit is designed to arm the industry with valuable market info to help sell more honey. It provides an opportunity to network, while learning about trends and factors impacting honey's use in retail, foodservice, and F&B manufacturing. The NHB is also planning a unique, interactive food experience around Boulder to help demonstrate the learnings in a real-world setting. Registration is open at [www.honeysummit.com/industry](http://www.honeysummit.com/industry).

## HIVE SESSIONS

The NHB identified an opportunity to elevate the collective knowledge of the honey industry outside of just the annual Honey Industry Summit. Therefore, the NHB recently launched Hive Sessions, a news update which will be sent out on a quarterly basis. These quarterly video sessions will empower the honey industry with valuable insights and strategies for selling and marketing honey to consumers, foodservice operators and food manufacturers.

## **CONSUMER RESEARCH UPDATE**

Laurie Demeritt, The Hartman Group, briefly covered the capabilities of her organization. She then presented highlights from The Hartman Group's recent report, *Food and Technology 2023*. Topic areas included:

- Consumers' attitudes toward technological innovation in food reflect deep-seated cultural tensions between *nature* and *science/technology*, expressed in competing narratives between food that comes from *fields and kitchens* and food made in *factories and labs*. Consumers celebrate scientific and technological progress while at the same time seeing them as culprits behind many of the problems facing the food system. However, the growing awareness of and urgency around issues such as climate change, population growth, and food insecurity is helping to soften resistance to science and technology. Consumers idealize "natural" foods and methods but are also coming to understand that these may not be sufficient to address broader environmental and societal challenges.
- Consumers need to see that new technologies offer meaningful, relevant benefits to them and to the planet. While ethics (e.g., environmental sustainability, animal welfare, labor practices) are foundational benefits, health and nutrition are the strongest, most personally relevant drivers. Experience (e.g., taste, performance) and price will also be key to mainstreaming tech-forward foods, but in these early stages are not as crucial as ethics and health.
- Occasion and category relevance will also play roles in acceptance and adoption of food technology. Consumers may be more open to trying these foods in low-risk occasions such as samples or at food service, where the culinary frame may help assuage fears and reassure on taste. Lower-risk categories such as snacks and beverages may also be points of entry.

## **INGREDIENT MARKETING**

Keith Seiz with Brightly Creative spoke to who they are targeting when they reach out to everyone. It ranges from larger companies to smaller more unique companies. Smaller companies although it might not move a lot of honey volume wise, they can inspire the larger company.

Seiz provided a State of the Industry Report detailing how the food, beverage and alcohol industries have ramped up product development efforts after three years of minimal developments due to COVID-19.

- In the food industry, most brands are content to follow the innovative leaders.

- In the beverage industry, innovation is rampant as ecommerce has eliminated retail barriers.
- In the alcohol category, consumers are focused on premium products, especially tequila.

These trends bode well for the honey industry, as its appeal is widespread with consumers and food manufacturers. However, there is growing competition from traditional and emerging sweeteners.

To maintain honey's competitive edge, the 2023 Ingredient Marketing program is centered around three core messages:

- Honey is good for me
- Honey is good for the planet
- Honey production and beekeepers are good for bees

These messages will be used throughout the ingredient marketing program to accomplish goals outlined in the National Honey Board's Strategic Plan. As for tactics, the Ingredient Marketing program has developed a variety of new programs designed to expand its reach.

One new program, Hive Side Chats, is a weekly series of one-minute videos posted on the Honey4Pros social media outlets. Each topic will address an area of interest on honey, or feature food manufacturers talking about why they love honey. So far, the program has been very successful.

The NHB also invested more in advertising than it traditionally does to reinforce honey's core messages amid increasing competition. Also expanding this year our Honey R&D Summits. These virtual events are attended by 20-25 product developers in the food and beverage category. There will be eight this year. The program already has had success with manufacturer engagement and education through Direct Outreach efforts that have netted meetings with Winland Foods, Bimbo Bakeries, Second Nature and two sold out webinars with the Bread Bakers Guild of America.

Seiz went on to explain how the NHB will also ramp up its trade show engagement by hosting happy hours and apiary tours at upcoming events. The popular Honey Spirits Summit and Honey Beer Summit have been combined into one event to maximize budget and increase collaboration. Returning this year will be the Honey Spirits Competition and Honey Baking Summit, both which were postponed during COVID.

Alan Turanski asked, “What the status is with competition between honey and other sweeteners?” Seiz stated that this is always a concern and Monk Fruit is currently his biggest concern. However, honey’s positive messaging helps to showcase it as a unique and desired sweetener.

## **CONSUMER PR UPDATE**

Jess Buchanan, Porter Novelli, walked through trends in consumer and media behavior followed by consumer PR program specifics. Current trends include a re-focus on holistic wellness, consumer interest in short-form video and a return to in-person media events.

Buchanan then shared the Honey Saves Hives program updates. After evolving Honey Saves Hives into an educational platform, in its fourth year, Honey Saves Hives will lean on influencer partnerships, earned media outreach, paid media tactics and in-person events to carry forth the NHB’s key messaging and drive sales of honey by showcasing the relationship between purchasing of honey and supporting beekeepers and honey bees.

Other consumer PR programs that Buchanan discussed included an ongoing partnership with a new media-friendly RD to provide commentary, social media content and potentially in-person event attendance, ongoing relationship-building tactics with other influential RDs and partnerships with Retail RD networks to help disseminate nutrition research updates and results and keep honey top of mind among consumers.

Lastly, Buchanan provided an overview of the sweetener landscape and a snapshot of honey mentions in the media.

## **SWEETENER LANDSCAPE**

Laurel Muir, Sterling-Rice Group, presented a final recap report detailing the output of a sweetener landscape strategy workshop that all agency partners participated in during the early part of April. The report summarized potential threats to the honey industry and recommended mitigation strategies. Muir shared that the proposed messaging strategies uncovered during the workshop ensure that all NHB staff, agency partners, and industry, are speaking the same language and talking about honey’s benefits in the same way.

## **FOODSERVICE**

Amy Shipley, Sterling-Rice Group, began with the fact that the Foodservice industry is back and thriving. She discussed some of the new concepts and opportunities.

This industry is expected to hit a trillion dollars this year. The major volume is in the top 500 chains and the NHB is focusing on restaurant segments where we see the most volume growth potential (casual, and fast casual restaurants).

Shipleigh walked the group through the evolution of NHB's brand at foodservice, and how it has shifted slightly to reach our audience of chefs and operators more effectively. She then shared examples of recent advertisements in industry publications where the new branding has been implemented. Board members received a copy of the latest Flavor & The Menu magazine where NHB has a prominent placement. Shipleigh also shared a two-minute recipe demo video where a recent innovation recipe, Honey Gochujang Wings, was demo'd. This video will be highlighted on Flavor & The Menu's website and used in social media efforts.

Shipleigh finished her presentation with what is to come next. The goal of the strategic platforms is to drive awareness and education and then drive value and volume. We do this by looking for innovative ideas that use honey and that make the dishes taste good.

Included in this is the rollout of the Honey Saves Hives Foodservice Pledge, and an upcoming collaboration with media company Chef's Roll. The Chef's Roll project will showcase two different beekeepers and two different chefs in Colorado & Texas, painting a picture of the "lifecycle" of honey. Finally, NHB will have participation in several upcoming industry events that target chefs & operators, including National Restaurant Association, Menus of Change, and Flavor Experience.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:32.

## **FRIDAY, APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup>, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 8:35

### **INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH**

Laurel Muir, Sterling-Rice Group, shared the latest updates for the 2023 Industry Communications program with the group. She reiterated the objective for this program is to engage with industry members on a deeper level to provide more resources, be the source of credible information, and unify members. The NHB will be approaching this program strategically by prioritizing industry segments by their need state (assessment payers, state beekeeping associations, etc.)

Additionally, Muir recapped the stakeholder interview insights revealing three major findings:

- It is more important than ever that NHB continues to be the unifier of the industry.
- There is an opportunity to engage under-represented parts of the industry and leverage their voices with consumers.
- The NHB can be an even stronger resource that supplies education and materials to the industry, adding more value.

Finally, Muir recapped best practices for industry communication outreach and talked about plans for conducting persona development and journey mapping exercises as the next step. This will result in a roadmap for industry messages, prioritized tactics, and identify any tools that may need to be developed.

The recommendation from the NHB is to create a workshop for the stakeholders providing them with information and tactical tools. They can in turn then share these resources and messaging to other members and sectors of the honey industry.

*Volunteers for this are MindyRyan Tharp Gehring, Blake Shook, Tom Sargeantson and Bjorn Anderson.*

## **IN-HOUSE MARKETING**

Jessica Schindler, Marketing Manager for the NHB, gave the board an update on the in-house events that are planned for the upcoming year. The Tastemaker's Conference took place on March 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> in Chicago for a group of food bloggers and content creators. The NHB sponsored the event's breakfast spread on both days of the conference, making honey the preferred ingredient throughout the menu, including items like a Honey Hot Cake Bar and Sweet and Spicey Chicken and Waffles. Along with being the exclusive breakfast sponsor, staff worked an expo booth for two days to speak directly to attendees about honey, honey bees, pollination work and the overall impact in the global food system.

In our sixth year of the Epcot Flower and Garden Festival, the NHB sponsored the Honey Bee-stro marketplace, which provided an opportunity to educate guests about honey, honey bees and pollination. This festival is a 4-month event that sees hundreds of thousands of guests throughout its run. The Honey Bee-stro has been a guest favorite with the longest lines all day for opening day of the festival. This year the marketplace offered new food selections, new education boards throughout the marketplace and a bigger presence of honeybee antennas being handed out to park goers at strategic times throughout the festival, corresponding with Earth Day and World Bee Day.

Schindler discussed how the NHB has been working on new collateral pieces, including a new decal, to be available mid-year. Also created were new promo pieces to generate buzz about honey and how important honey bees are to our planet.

Matt Halbgewachs asked, "If we could work with different organizations such as YETI who has the "Built for the Wild Program?" Barry asked the board to share any ideas of businesses with which we could potentially collaborate.

Greg Olsen suggested creating a promo piece that markets the idea of adding honey to your water:

- Buzz In Your Bottle

- Put Some Buzz in Your Mug
- Throttle In Your Bottle
- Add A Big Squeeze & Help the Bees
- Natural Honey, No Alternatives Needed, My Bees Make Honey

Schindler also shared that the NHB created some beautiful new pop ups that are 2 sided, which communicate our messaging about honey, honey bees, pollination, and beekeeping. These are easier to transport to events than our big booth.

The Today's Dietician Spring Symposium is a long-awaited event that has been years in the making. Not only will the NHB be exhibiting at a booth during the expo portion of the event, but the NHB is also sponsoring a bee garden tour excursion for a hand-selected group of attendees. The 2-hour tour will offer an educational perspective into a beehive, followed by a honey varietal tasting and ending with a mead flight tasting. It is sure to be a one-of-a-kind experience for the intimate group of guests.

The NHB will exhibit at the largest event organized in-house in the fall, the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics Food Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE). FNCE is a 3-day event that sees more than 10K attendees of health and nutrition professionals, looking for more information from brands and research to help them when doing their job. This is an excellent opportunity to get honey in front of attendees and get the most recent research into their hands. Schindler went on to explain that it is a terrific opportunity to show attendees what sets honey apart from other sweeteners and take them on a journey through the various varietals and forms of honey they can find. It is a worthwhile event with lots of great conversations and learnings to be had.

## **DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

Jocelyn Martinez, Digital Communications Specialist for the NHB, began by discussing the current landscape of social communications. Consumer trust is at an all-time low, with 59% of consumers defaulting to distrusting news found on social media. Martinez explained that information found on social media is thought to be less believable with 27% of survey participants never believing information they find only on social media. Fifty-six percent of those surveyed also do not trust the social media industry to do what is right, the only sector still losing ground.

Organizations can combat distrust by providing credible information. This can be done externally through corroboration, demonstration, and education, and internally through measuring social media success. Top metrics to track are social media engagement, social media followers, website traffic, marketing leads, and earned social media mentions. Top goals in 2023 are to: raise brand awareness, increase brand engagement, acquire new customers, increase web traffic, and increase sales.

The majority of organizations are on at least four of the top social media platforms, with the NHB being present on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube. The most used channels for B2B are LinkedIn and Facebook, and for B2C/NGO are

Facebook and Instagram. Martinez also informed that it is important to maintain a solid balance of organic and paid social media content, and that only 19% of survey participants believe that paid social media is less important than organic. Influencer marketing remains a go-to strategy for brands looking to connect with their target audience, and 71% of B2C organizations plan to use influencer marketing in 2023.

The NHB shared 922 pieces of content across its consumer-facing channels in 2022, 9.78% less than 2021. Despite the decrease in content, the NHB saw increases in reach, impressions, and engagement. The NHB saw a shift in top performing content skewing towards more honeybee-centric content. Martinez also mentioned that a big focus for the NHB in 2022 was to grow its Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn audiences, which it did successfully through follower ads. The NHB increased all online audiences except for one – consumer e-newsletter – for overall growth of 17.7 k (7.22%).

Martinez broke down the 2022 key learnings that will inform the 2023 social media strategy, including continuing to run follower ads monthly and weave more of the pollination story and its link to honey into its general content. Video remains an essential element to any marketing strategy and the NHB looks forward to utilizing new Celebrating Beekeeping videos as a tool for visual storytelling. While Instagram impressions were up, engagements were down and the NHB plans to evaluate new calls-to-action that focus on engagement, while continuing to focus on reach. Martinez wrapped up by presenting that the NHB has established a good balance of organic and paid content and will continue to be strategic when boosting content on all channels.

Tom Sargeantson asked, “If there is a way to differentiate and distinguish our information as being trustworthy?” Martinez clarified that we are doing this throughout all programs.

Blake Shook asked, “Why are we not pursuing TikTok as a social platform?” Martinez noted that the NHB has secured handles but has not moved forward with doing anything. Third party influencers are an effective way to reach out to consumers and share our information.

Tharp Gehring asked, “Whether we can increase drive to our sites by doing giveaways?” Martinez advised that we cut back on doing giveaways because we were seeing some of the same winners. We continue to review this and keep it on our radar to do in the future. Tharp Gehring also suggested that we make it easier to follow our links and handles and our agency contacts.

## **RETAIL PROGRAMS**

Don Ladhoff, FreshSmartSolutions, provided an overview of the state of the retail industry, Food retailing will grapple with a number of challenges during 2023, including the continuing pressure of food inflation that is altering the shopping behaviors of most Americans. In addition, supply chain issues persist along with ongoing staffing headaches



which are driving increased investments in technology to help counter these labor shortfalls. And the proposed purchase of Albertsons/Safeway by Kroger could create a grocery behemoth with 5,000 locations across 48 states and potentially touch off a ripple effect of more grocery mergers and acquisitions.

Retail programs for 2023 will evolve from promoting honey purchases by primarily utilizing retailer-specific advertising vehicles as we have done in recent years to a three-pronged approach implementing advertising, retail promotions and a focused program to validate the impact of Honey Saves Hives messaging in driving incremental honey purchases. The vast majority of this activity will continue to be centered around the month of September in celebration of National Honey Month.

The NHB will continue to communicate the reasons to purchase honey through advertising running in magazines published by retailers including Stop & Shop, Giant Food, The Giant Company, Weis Markets, Schnucks and Rouses Market. These eye-catching, full-color print ads will attract shoppers' attention while increasing their purchase intent for honey.

In addition, the program will offer support to selected retailers who agree to promote honey during National Honey Month with feature ads and displays. And the NHB will increase the interest for retailers and shoppers alike by partnering with the National Peanut Board and their program to drive promotional activity for the peanut butter category.

Finally, as the Honey Saves Hives initiative enters its fourth year, the NHB will also field a program that will enroll a small number of retailers to implement Honey Saves Hives messaging in-store and out-of-store during September 2023 and measure its impact in driving incremental sales of honey. The NHB plans to work closely with participating retailers to place the HSH message on signs and in-store advertising elements in addition to showcasing the HSH story on digital ads, email blasts and in their social media channels.

The NHB 2023 Retail Programs will spur added honey sales at retailers across the U.S. while also addressing a number of the key objectives of the NHB Strategic Plan, namely:

- Drive demand and preference for honey
- Showcase the value of honey
- Balance Good for Me/Good for the Planet strategy tying it back to consumption & purchase
- Educate the next generation of honey consumers

Blake Shook asked, "What are your thoughts on food prices?" Ladhoff stated that inflation is having an effect in that people are being cautious about what they buy.

### **Production Research Update**

Danielle Downey, Project *Apis m.* (PAm), introduced PAm's mission to fund projects and direct strategic efforts focused on practical solutions to improve honey bee health and to

promote profitable beekeeping. PAm has a small staff, guided by a Board of Directors held by industry leaders and a Scientific Advisory Board.

Being uniquely positioned to fund practical and applied honey bee research, PAm is proud to administer research projects for the NHB. The NHB has funded close to \$2 million in research projects in partnership with PAm. This is a significant and stable part of PAm's annual research efforts on behalf of the beekeeping industry, although PAm receives funding from many other sources.

Downey reviewed the five projects the NHB most recently funded and their relevance to industry and gave highlights of outcomes of some previously funded projects.

PAm participated in three significant events in the beekeeping industry and Downey reported on them:

- Efforts to coordinate and prepare for the Tropiclaelaps mite threat, it is spreading in other countries.
- There were sudden and significant losses this spring, unique in their timing and similarities to CCD- this began in Florida but a national effort to probe other regions to take samples and interview beekeepers.
- FDA and EPA are exploring oversight of topically applied pesticides with a focus on pet collars, but this would affect all Varroa treatments used by beekeepers as well.

Bee Health Collective (BHC) is a website the NHB and PAm created specifically to answer industry requests for this resource; to gather and share credible research information about honey bee health. It includes a Bee Bulletin Board that contains research funding opportunities, employment opportunities and scholarships. The BHC is consistently kept up-to-date with research information but is not getting industry use or media attention. PAm is contracting SEO optimization and working to update the user experience and add new content- it is a work in progress.

Sarah Neves asked, "Why don't we have a good lab in the US for testing honey?" Downey shared that it raises the question of who will use this lab and it is very expensive. Dustin Livermore said, "They would love to see it, but it would be a huge undertaking. The German labs would have to undertake such steps and it would fall more on the packers NHPDA and WSHPDA to coordinate. A U.S.-based lab would create a lab that provides US values and interests. Another issue is that there is so much discussion and debate as to which tests are better. A satellite lab is a more feasible option in the future." Poulk suggested connecting with Jill Clark regarding this topic.

### ACTION ITEM III: TO APPROVE THE AMENDED BUDGET

Motion by Joan Gunter, seconded by Alan Turanski and carried to approve the amended budget.

## ACTION ITEM IV: TO APPROVE THE 2023 BUDGET

Motion by Dan Winter, seconded by Chris Olney and carried to approve the 2023 financials.

## ACTION ITEM V: TO APPROVE NATIONAL HONEY BOARD HANDBOOK

Motion Bjorn Anderson, seconded by Dan Winter and carried to approve the National Honey Board handbook.

### **NUTRITION PROFESSIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAM**

Taylor Laitsch, Sterling-Rice Group, presented that they collaborate with nutritionist to position honey as the preferred choice of sweetener and kept top of mind.

We want to continue to leverage them as a voice for our messaging Good For Me, Good for the Planet. Nutritionists are also a trusted source of information for consumers.

The NHB is moving away from general research and shifting towards research projects that drive awareness and are actionable. The Mediterranean diet is an example of this, and we will be promoting this diet with nutritionists and providing handouts to share the research along with recipes.

### **MEDIA PLAN**

The NHB's target audience is RD's providing an opportunity to educate and build reach to consumers. We are trying to be present at the key moments throughout the year to be available for questions and connect.

Nutrition research is also a valuable tool to share with other programs to promote honey over other sweeteners.

### **NUTRITION RESEARCH UPDATE**

Barbara Lyle, B. Lyle, LLC. in partnership with Porter Novelli, presented key trends overall in nutrition, which included continued emphasis on limiting added sugars and promoting diet patterns that are low in added sugar. Specific examples that were highlighted:

- FDA's recent draft proposal defining the term "healthy" for use in food labeling limits added sugars with levels differing by food group.
- Food manufacturers have been using the filler erythritol (a sugar alcohol) in formulating foods using certain low or no calorie sweeteners. Erythritol received

substantial negative press based on human blood levels being linked with risk of cardiometabolic health and a small pilot trial showing high doses associated with increased blood clotting.

Lyle shared that the Mediterranean diet includes a lot of vegetables and fish making honey an excellent and unique fit with this diet. Therefore, the NHB has placed a lot of emphasis showing how honey can be incorporated with this diet.

Lyle also shared the latest on the NHB nutrition research program's multiple on-going trials. The successful partnership with experts on honey composition from a human health perspective at the University of Toronto was highlighted, noting the team has independently published two review papers highlighting potential health benefits of honey. The first systematic evidence review suggests that honey, which contains uniquely metabolized sugars and other beneficial bioactives, can be used in small amounts as part of an overall cardiometabolic healthy diet. The second highlights that although excess energy from sugars (especially sugar-sweetened beverages at high doses) increases body fat, there are exceptions. Honey and fruit were associated with reduced body weight.

In the coming months, a University of Toronto study on food composition data will be shared with the USDA FoodData Central database and compared with synthesized syrup honey alternative, in addition to anticipated findings from two digestive health studies and a study on sweetness of honey.

## **OPEN DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS**

Turanski shared that it is important to research the sustainability of beekeeping and provide messaging from a technical standpoint, as well as simple messaging. He stressed the importance of this research highlighting what the global impact is. With stories that focus on U.S. beekeeping specifically vs global practices and the carbon footprint. This communication angle will help frame honey against other sweeteners and the full uniqueness of honey.

Halbgewachs suggested the idea of promoting the benefit of what bees do to carbon producing plants and a carbon negative impact. There is a huge opportunity to benchmark honey vs other sweeteners.

It was mentioned in the discussion that the Almond Board of California did a sustainability study with a third party. Turanski suggested a subcommittee to brainstorm how to address the issue of combating honey alternatives and the negative attacks on honey. *Volunteers for this committee are Alan Turanski, Matt Halbgewach, Greg Olsen, and Dustin Livermore.*

Halbgewachs stated anti-dumping, testing, and labeling are things that can help ward off synthetic honey. That testing methods, educational tools and best practices all help to align the industry as one voice. Country of origin labeling, state, and local laws. Quantifying the testing already going on for honey coming into the US. It was asked if AMS gets involved in honey issues. Cook said they have meetings if there are serious issues. But stated that what the Board and staff are doing to address any issues through white papers and resources is the best way to address matters. Industry associations are also working outside of the NHB to deal with issues and create a standard of identity.

Tharp Gehring said, "We need to work to unify the industry and share the resources of the NHB with all your contacts in order to benefit everyone." Suggested improvements are:

- Nominate people to be on the Board
- More involvement at state beekeeping meetings through Board Member attendance to share all the information available and to help unify the industry.

Margaret will send the link to all NHB's links and the upcoming summits to register.

**ACTION ITEM VI: TO ADJOURN MEETING**

Motion by Bjorn Anderson, seconded by Joan Gunter to adjourn the meeting at 12:07