

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 16, 2023**

A meeting of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) Board was held on Wednesday, August 16, 2023 with the following people present:

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Gary Caloroso  
Will Carlton  
Jason Cole  
Quinn Cotter  
Maureen Cottingham  
Rob Grether  
Jessica Hunter  
Rachael Lanean  
Daryn Miller  
Michael Perricone  
Peter Shore

**ALTERNATES PRESENT**

Maddie Cook  
Connor Huser  
Robert Jackson  
Jamie Johnson  
Jamie Shafer

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

John Cornell  
Ohannes Karaoghlanian

**ALTERNATES ABSENT**

Hayden McIntyre  
Charley Wolk

**OFFICIALLY PRESENT**

Katie Cook, USDA  
Ben Kardokus, CDFA

**STAFF PRESENT**

April Aymami  
Zac Benedict  
Dave Cruz  
Stacia Kierulff  
Ken Melban  
Jeff Oberman  
Terry Splane  
Cristina Wede

**GUESTS PRESENT**

John Berns  
Mark Buhl  
Dan Coxe  
Marji Morrow  
Joanne Robles  
Jacqueline Solares  
Tim Spann

**ITEM #1 CALL TO ORDER**

**Roll Call/Quorum – Item 1.a.**

Rob Grether, CAC chairman, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. with a quorum present.

**Introductions – Item 1.b.**

April Aymami, CAC industry affairs director, announced the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) representatives, CAC staff and known guests participating in the meeting. She requested all other guests to announce themselves so that all participants could be recorded in attendance.

**ITEM #2 OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

District 2 grower Dan Coxe provided comments regarding the organization Avocado Growers of California, and their stakeholders request that the Commission consider forming a marketing focus group to discuss the following: more local marketing support; point of sale displays; local TV advertisements; segregating California fruit from Mexican fruit; focusing on avocado supply; ethically sourced; and showing how the local avocado industry supports jobs.

Joanne Robles from Avocado Growers of California provided comments that avocado growers need to distinguish the California brand from the imported fruit. She stated that at retail locations, CA fruit is being mixed with imported fruit and there is no differentiation between CA and imports. She stated that there has not been any advertising this year and the grower website still has 2021 marketing information listed.

### **ITEM #3 BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING**

#### **Welcome & Overview – Item 1.a.**

Rob Grether, CAC chairman, announced that attendees would be breaking out into three small groups which would rotate through 45-minute strategic planning sessions with members of CAC staff from the three different program areas -- marketing, industry affairs/government relations and production research/grower education. The goal of the groups was to have more intimate conversations regarding CAC's program areas and direction for the future. Mr. Grether stated that CAC staff would summarize the breakout group discussions and present the common themes during the Thursday meeting.

Mr. Grether reported that the sessions would help set the priorities for next year as CAC works through an RFP for a new marketing firm, establish next year's budget, and work to begin creating priorities for the next three to five years. He stressed that this meeting was not to create a five-year plan or to rewrite the mission statement. Mr. Grether commented that last year was an excellent crop with the top value of all time, but this year had been extremely challenging and together with increased production offshore and competition in the US market, CAC had a lot of work to do.

Mr. Grether remarked that he saw creativity, passion and commitment to ideas and working together in a challenging phase for the industry in the responses to the Board survey. He noted he was optimistic for the discussions during the sessions, but cautioned that with low volume and low reserves, the 2023-24 budget would be tighter, and asked attendees to keep that in the back of their minds leading up to the conversations on how CAC would need to operate this next year. Mr. Grether stated that goal for the second day of the August strategic planning meeting would be to review summary of the breakout session discussion and provide direction to management of what should be incorporated into the 2023-24 business plan and budget. The Board would reconvene in October to set the assessment rate and budget.

#### **Breakout Group Discussions – Item 1.b.**

Attendees were divided into breakout groups where each Board group met with each of the program area groups for 45-minute session. The groups were divided as follows:

Marketing - Terry Splane, vice president of marketing, Marji Morrow, marketing planning consultant, and Zac Benedict, online marketing director.

Production Research/Grower Education - Tim Spann, research program consultant, Jeff Oberman, president, and Dave Cruz, business development director.

Industry Affairs/Government Relations - Ken Melban, vice president of industry affairs and operations, and Ms. Aymami.

Board Group 1 – Michael Perricone, Rob Grether, Peter Shore, Maddie Cook, Daryn Miller

Board Group 2 – Jessica Hunter, Maureen Cottingham, Jason Cole, Jamie Johnson, Gary Caloroso

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Board Group 3 – Robert Jackson, Jamie Shafer, Rachael Laenen, Will Carlton, Connor Huser,  
Quinn Cotter

Guests were allowed to choose which group they sat in for sessions.

**ADJOURN MEETING**

Mr. Grether adjourned the meeting at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Stacia Kierulff, CAC Human Resource Manager

I certify that the above is a true statement of the Minutes of August 16, 2023 approved by the  
CAC Board of Directors on October 11, 2023.

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Jessica Hunter, CAC Board Secretary