

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
September 12, 2023**

A meeting of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) Executive Committee was held on Tuesday, September 12, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. with the following people present:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jason Cole
Rob Grether
Jessica Hunter
Rachael Laenen

STAFF PRESENT

April Aymami
Ken Melban
Jeff Oberman
Terry Splane

GUESTS PRESENT

Unidentified Caller
(323) area code

OFFICIALLY PRESENT

Ben Kardokus, *CDFA*
Sam Mareno, *USDA*
George Soares, *Kahn, Soares & Conway*

ITEM #1 CALL TO ORDER

Roll Call/Quorum – Item 1.a.

Rob Grether, CAC Executive Committee chairman, called the meeting to order 1:01 p.m. and established a quorum.

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, legal counsel and known guests participating in the meeting.

ITEM # 2 OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ITEM # 3 CONSENT CALENDAR

Consider approval of Executive Committee meeting minutes of August 9, 2023 – Item 3.a

Mr. Grether introduced the consent calendar items and asked for questions or comments. With no comments on the consent calendar items, the following motion was put forward:

MOTION:

The Executive Committee approves the Consent Calendar, Items 3.a as presented.

(Cole/Laenen) MSC Unanimous

MOTION 23-9-12-1

The Consent Calendar is attached to the permanent copy of these Minutes and identified as EXHIBIT A.

ITEM # 4 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Update on the overall administration of the Commission – Item 4.a

The following is a summary of the updates provided on activities since the last Executive Committee meeting on August 9, 2023:

- **2023-24 Budget Planning Process** – Jeff Oberman, CAC president, reported that management was working on development of the 2023-24 budget and would be prepared to present to the Finance Committee at the October 4, 2023 meeting. He noted that the budget was being prepared based on the parameters set by the board at their August meeting, which was an assessment rate of 2.25%, crop size of 200 million pounds and value of \$1.15 per pound. Mr. Oberman stated that management also was operating on the direction of 30% budget cuts across the board.

Ms. Aymami stated that based on discussion at the August Board meeting, she understood the

direction from the Board was that the Industry Affairs department should look to reduce budgets where savings were available, but that current activities should be maintained, as well as their corresponding budgets. She noted that with this as the direction, the Industry Affairs budget was only being reduced by 3%. In addition, Ms. Aymami commented that she had reviewed the Administration/Operations budget for any available savings, but the current version of the 2023-24 budget was only a 3% reduction from 2022-23.

The Committee confirmed the direction from the August Board meeting was for Industry Affairs activities to be maintained. In closing the Committee requested management develop their recommended 2023-24 budget, based on the Board's direction, and be prepared to present to the Finance Committee at their October 4, 2023 meeting.

- **Marketing Agency Search** – Terry Splane, CAC vice president of marketing, provided an update on the status of the search for a new marketing agency of record. He reported that the search team had completed all rounds of interviews, including in-person with the final four agencies at their offices. Mr. Splane noted that a final decision would be made within a week, with hopes to begin the onboarding process and allow transition from the existing agency prior to the start of the new fiscal year.

During discussion the Committee commended the marketing staff and the work done during the agency search. In addition, a comment was made that Board members who had been part of the search team learned a lot about CAC's marketing programs and a suggestion was made to look for opportunities to share these same marketing insights with the full board in the future.

- **Government Affairs Task Force** – Ken Melban, CAC vice president of industry affairs and operations, stated that the Taskforce had met twice with their next meeting scheduled September 19, 2023. He noted that George Soares, CAC's legal counsel, had been in discussions with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to have them participate in the meeting and discuss if there are grower relief remedies available through the State.
- **Assembly Bill 399** – Mr. Melban commented that despite industry efforts to gather opposition to AB 399, the urgency clause had been removed from the Bill, which resulted in only a majority (as opposed to two-thirds) vote required for passage. He noted that at this point the Bill had been moved to the Governor for signature, but efforts were still underway to attempt to secure a veto.
- **Ventura County Farm Bureau Request** – Mr. Melban reported that CAC had received a request from the Ventura County Farm Bureau to support the concerns raised by the Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group (VCAILG) regarding tentative waste discharge requirements for irrigated ag lands within the Los Angeles region. He noted that he submitted a letter to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board supporting the VCAILG's position and urged the Board and their staff to continue to work with VCAILG and local growers to ensure the adoption of feasible and effective requirements.
- **Asia Fruit Logistica** – Mr. Melban provided a brief update on CAC's participation in the Asia Fruit Logistica trade show. He noted that CAC's participation in the event was an opportunity to meet with potential buyers in the China and Korea markets and to garner interest in a reverse trade mission to the U.S. in 2024. Mr. Melban commented that while the expenses associated with this event were paid for utilizing federal grant funds, he was mindful of the time and resources on CAC staff, and that without further traction from California handlers to move fruit

into the Asia market, CAC may not pursue additional funding for these activities in the future. Mr. Splane also attended the AFL trade show and commented that his position on future involvement in market development in the Asia market would be dependent on clearly defined objectives and the value back to California growers.

Mr. Oberman stated that a complete analysis of CAC's activities the AFL show and the return on investment was in process and would be presented when complete.

- **August Board Meeting Follow-up** – Mr. Oberman reported he had received positive feedback regarding the off-site, in-person August Board meeting and was seeking direction from the Committee on whether the October meeting should be off-site or at the CAC office.

The Committee and management discussed the options for the October meeting to be held off-site, with the consensus that it would be too rushed for the October meeting, but there was support for management to explore ways to encourage Board members to come early to the meeting for networking, both the evening and morning before the meeting.

- **Internal Controls** – Mr. Grether requested that management prepare an update of the authorization levels contained within CAC's Internal Controls to conform with the current staff structure for approval at the October Finance Committee meeting. He noted that the full Internal Controls Policies and Procedures could then be built out and presented at a later time.

ITEM #5 CLOSED SESSION REGARDING APPOINTMENT, EMPLOYMENT, EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE, OR DISMISSAL OF AN EMPLOYEE PURSUANT TO CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 11126(a)

The Committee may go into closed session to discuss and make recommendations regarding appointment, employment or dismissal of an employee. – Item 5.a

Mr. Grether convened a Closed Session of the CAC Executive Committee at 1:45 p.m. for the purpose of conducting the annual performance review of the CAC President, per CAC Bylaws. Mr. Grether requested that members of the Executive Committee, legal counsel and CDFA participate in the Closed Session and that Mr. Oberman would be asked to join, as necessary.

ITEM #6 RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ANNOUNCE ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION, IF ANY

Mr. Grether returned to open session at 4:07p.m. and announced that the committee had taken no action in Closed Session.

ADJOURN MEETING

Mr. Grether adjourned the meeting at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Aymami, CAC Industry Affairs Director

I certify that the above is a true statement of the minutes of the September 12, 2023, CAC Executive Committee, approved by the CAC Executive Committee on September 26, 2023.

Jessica Hunter, CAC Board Secretary

California Avocado Commission
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2023

EXHIBITS ATTACHED TO THE PERMANENT COPY OF THESE MINUTES

Exhibit A	September 12, 2023 Consent Calendar
Exhibit B	September 12, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary

CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION
AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary
To be attached to the Meeting Minutes

Meeting Name: <i>Executive Committee Meeting</i>	Meeting Location: <i>Online (Zoom)</i>	Meeting Date: <i>September 12, 2023</i>
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<i>Attendees Who Voted</i>	<i><u>MOTION</u></i> <i><u>23-9-12-1</u></i>
Jessica Hunter	Yea
Rob Grether	Did not vote
Jason Cole	Yea
Rachael Laenen	Yea
<i>Outcome</i>	Unanimous