

To give you a sense of where we're going, first let me catch you up on where we've been...

In the winter issue of this magazine, I noted that in November 2021 the California Avocado Commission Board engaged the executive search firm, Boyden, to help identify and recruit our next President. Over the past few months, the Succession Task Force — a small group comprised of current and former Board members — has been working closely with the Boyden recruiters, Jeff Hodge and Gwen Sabo, to drive this process forward, and I am happy to report that it is nearing the end.

While it has been a busy few months for the Boyden recruiters and the Task Force, preparation for this leadership transition has been many years in the making and advanced by the collective effort of many stakeholders. In 2017, President Tom Bellamore and Chairman Rick Shade kicked off the effort with the Board and with the formation of an ad hoc Succession Committee. The work product of this effort five months later was a comprehensive Succession Plan, prepared well ahead of Tom's retirement date but in place, in case of emergency.

It is articulated in the Succession Plan that there should be regular review and modification as necessary, but over more than four years, it is still on point. For example, the Succession Plan identified the following short- and long-term priorities:

- Position California avocados to be the world's most valued and desired avocados
- Advocate for, and engage with, the industry
- Support industry strategy through research and outreach
- Cultivate organizational excellence and demonstrate the effective use of resources

Your Board believes these remain our strategic priorities today and that the Key Industry Aspirations specified in the Succession Plan also haven't changed:

- An assured place in the market
- A price to growers that is both premium to the competition and fosters grower sustainability
- Consistently high-quality production
- Highly productive and efficient growers
- Production stability from year to year
- Socially responsible practices
- Leaders in innovation
- Positive consumer perceptions about our brand

With this Succession Plan as our foundation, Jeff Hodge and Gwen Sabo hit the ground running late last year. First, they conducted numerous stakeholder interviews with current and past Board members, CAC's vice presidents, handlers and other growers. Over the holidays, they leveraged their network to develop an initial list of both internal and external candidates for presentation to the Succession Task Force. Since



Rob Grether

then, the Task Force worked with the recruiters to review resumes, narrow the candidate list and then conducted multiple rounds of interviews with numerous candidates — first on Zoom and then in person.

While I can't yet share with you our selection, I can share this: there are many very talented, highly experienced, and natural leaders who were genuinely excited about the opportunity to lead the California Avocado Commission. It has been a truly humbling experience. We have had the privilege of interviewing candidates from a wide variety of industries, candidates with deep knowledge in relevant verticals, and candidates with innumerable professional accomplishments. It is gratifying for me to serve an organization — as represented by the growers, the staff, the culture, the brand, and the product — that is so attractive to so many extraordinary people. We have a lot to be proud of at CAC. We have a lot to look forward to at CAC. Stay tuned. 🍊

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Grether'. The signature is fluid and cursive.