



**AMERICAN PECAN COUNCIL  
FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING  
February 13, 2024**

**Minutes**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Larry Don Womack, Chair, called the meeting of the American Pecan Council to order at 10 a.m. CT on February 13, 2024, after notice was properly given to the Council.

**A. ROLL CALL**

The roll was called and the following members and guests were in attendance:

Phillip Arnold  
Brent Brinkley  
Kortney Chase  
Will Easterlin  
Mark Hamilton  
Ron Hays  
John Hueler  
Shannon Ivey  
Justin Jones  
Lalo Medina  
Jared Miller  
Frank Salopek  
Louie Salopek  
Mike Spradling  
Randy Stephens  
Evo Soria  
Debroh Walden Ralls  
Larry Don Womack  
Jeff Worn  
Steve Zaffarano

Mary Bruorton GPGA  
Wayne Watkinson, Legal  
Catherine Clark, TPGA  
Blair Krebs, TPGA  
Brycen Salopek, Quail Hollow and APPB member  
Anne Warden, APPB staff  
Serena Schaffner, APPB staff  
Brandon Drummond, APPB staff  
Kristi Mosquera, APPB Staff  
Abby Maharaj, USDA



Matthew Collins, USDA  
Allison Beadle, WildHive  
Beau Hayden, E-Commerce Consultant  
Dr. Charles Rohla, Noble Research Institute

A quorum for the meeting was confirmed.

#### **B. CHAIR REPORT**

Mr. Womack addressed the Council and the progress that has been made since the hire of the new CEO, Ms. Warden, in November. He noted how quickly the organization has been able to move forward and gain momentum due to the help of many the many stakeholders that make up the organization and the partnership between APC and USDA.

#### **C. CEO UPDATE**

Ms. Warden elected to give her time to two important agency guests to discuss marketing activities in India and the United Kingdom, due to time zone considerations.

Mr. Sumit Saran, of Sure Strategies – APC’s Indian agency – gave a presentation showcasing the opportunity American Pecans has in India due to its dynamically changing environment and growing, health-conscious population.

Mr. Saran also spoke about the potential of the dry fruit and nut market and pecans specifically. He gave an example of the growth of pistachios, which started out importing nine metric tons three years ago and now imports 37 metric tons. He believes pecans can take a similar trajectory, if the US stays committed in the long-term.

He discussed APC’s efforts to induce consumption opportunities at retail that can drive trial and showcase pecans as a snack and an ingredient in authentic Indian dishes. We will also continue to foster the partnerships that have been built, with the understanding that shippers will need to work closely with importers to help provide knowledge on roasting, seasoning and cracking.

Mr. Peter Meadows, co-founder of The Garden, APC’s agency in the UK gave a presentation on promotional work on behalf of American Pecans. During the presentation, Mr. Meadows noted the UK has a rising number of single households that are driving the demand for convenient ready-to-eat meals, snacks, desserts and baking mixes and 2/3rds of UK adults are snacking at least once a day (Mintel Snacking Report UK March 2023) making American Pecans a perfect choice. Mr. Meadows discussed the importance of reaching UK snackers through retail activations among the UK’s largest like Sainsbury and Tesco along with Costco. He then proceeded to share recent results of retail promotions for American Pecans in Sainsbury, Tesco and upcoming initiatives in Costco.



Sainsbury promotions consisted of digital banners, social promotions as well as in-store recipe cards and signage and occurred over the holidays from October to December. While the promotion was happening, purchase of pecan packages doubled from approximately one bag of pecans per customer to two bags of pecans per customer.

Mr. Meadows gave an overview of Tesco sales results noting promotions were in 300 Tesco stores across the U.K and called out the availability of American Pecans in store aisles through signage and digital promotions. Pecans saw an increase in sales from 1,200 packs per day to more than 1,600 packs per day over the promotion period. Plans to continue to promote American Pecans in Costco will happen in April 2024 and include ad placement in their popular *Connections* Magazine.

#### **D. USDA UPDATE**

Ms. Maharaj discussed proposed changes to the marketing order regarding APC sheller seats and the respective geographies. USDA is proposing changing the pecan marketing order governing APC to allow all sheller seats to be “at large.” The Council discussed the changes, which were recommended by the Governance Committee, and there was no opposition to changing the sheller seats to at large and maintaining the rotation schedule.

### **II. CONSENT ITEMS**

#### **A. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Mr. Womack dispensed reading of the Minutes from the December 15, 2023, Board Meeting and the September 2023, November 2023 and FY23 Year-End Financial Statements as they were provided to members in advance. The Council had no changes to the Minutes and a motion was made by Louie Salopek to approve the December 15, 2023, Minutes as well as the September 2023, November 2023 and FY23 Year-End Financial Statements. The motion was seconded by Ron Hayes, and the Council voted to approve the documents.

### **III. GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Ms. Warden provided an update on Governance Committee activities. The committee also moved to restart compliance audits, beginning with handlers on and used by Council members, and staff is in the process of soliciting proposals for an auditing contractor. The committee also viewed the budget and advised APC staff to monitor the cashflow.

Ms. Warden also discussed APC Bylaws that require board approval for members to travel outside of normal council business. With many industry meetings coming up, it is important to have staff present as well as a member (APC Chair or Industry Relations Chair) to represent the voice of the industry. Chairman Womack was requested to attend the SEPGA, GPGA, OPGA and NPSA conferences. Mr. Jones was requested to attend the NCPGA conference. Mr. Louie Salopek made a motion to approval member travel. Mr. Stephens seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.



#### **IV. GRADES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Ms. Warden provided an update on a co-hosted session with the National Pecan Shellers Association for input on USDA's proposed rule to update voluntary pecan grades and standards. Following the meeting, the Grades and Standards Committee submitted a comment of support from the APC for the proposed rule.

Mr. Womack recommended reconvening the Committee to review all previous quality assurance efforts and agree on next steps.

Ms. Warden then discussed two human nutrition research projects that are in place but slightly delayed due to Covid (University of Georgia; University of Colorado). Despite the delays, the studies are on track and will look at vascular function and chronic disease risk in aging adults while the other will look at energy and metabolism with healthy volunteers. These works are expected to be completed and published in the fall of 2024. Ms. Warden noted this work aligns with the research work of APPB and its intended scientific pipeline.

#### **V. INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE**

Ms. Serena Schaffner reviewed APC's export strategy focused on four key markets, including Germany, UK, India and China. Ms. Schaffner provided updates on in marketing programs including Germany, where efforts are underway to grow awareness of American Pecans among consumers. A new Instagram account – Pekan Pionere – was launched and sparked 84K visits to the website. While awareness of pecans and belief in health benefits are high, trial and purchase is low comparatively, so Ms. Schaffner noted efforts moving forward will lean toward driving trial and purchase in order to grow consumption.

Ms. Schaffner also discussed the recent promotions in the UK and India and shared more details around a recent Reverse Trade Mission in India where five prominent importers went on a three-state tour to learn more about the pecan industry.

Ms. Schaffner also noted the committee approved the revised international budget based on a revisit of funding, including the MAP program.

#### **VI. INDUSTRY RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Ms. Schaffner discussed recent strategy and positioning when it comes to informing and educating the industry about APC and APPB. Ms. Schaffner noted APC and APPB would be attending and presenting at each grower conference in 2024 and will host a booth that allows more 1:1 discussions. The committee noted the importance of also having Council and APPB members present at these meetings.

Ms. Schaffner also provided an update on the new materials being developed to help Members talk about APC and APPB to their peers, as well as upcoming plans to better communicate APC/APPB activities, including email blasts, partnerships with trade media and more.



**VII. MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE**

Ms. Schaffner provided an update on the activities of the committee, which included the fielding of an industry survey to learn what topics, materials and formats the industry would prefer APC provide. The survey would be anonymous and fielded for 3-4 weeks to give ample time for response.

In addition, the committee also reviewed a new Marketing Committee charter to further focus the work of the group. The proposed charter would prioritize B2B marketing, commercial partnerships and support the industry's ability to market pecans domestically and internationally. The committee would also invest in product innovation research that could improve the value and demand of pecans.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business discussed.

**IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

No executive session was needed.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mr. Louie Salopek moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Frank Salopek seconded, and the committee approved. Mr. Womack adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trent Mason

Approved after review of the Board and USDA:

Larry Don Womack