

MASCOE Board Meeting
May 17, 2018

The MASCOE Board of Directors and members met at the Missouri State FSA Office in Columbia, Missouri on May 17, 2018. The meeting was called to order by President Jared Singer at 9:30 a.m.

2017 – 2018 Board Members present were:

District 1:	Mandi Bird Kristy Gray Debbie Leeper	District 5:	Barb Denker Kate Gerlemann
District 2:	Jared Singer Rebecca Malter Blake Conrad	District 6:	
District 3:	Leann Liechti Tina Young	District 7:	Megan Dunkle (Alt) Brink Naile Kallie Turner
District 4:	Jackson Jones Cindy Baker (Alt) Ron Highley		

Also in attendance: Drew Walters

Review Meeting Minutes

President Singer called for review of the minutes from the March 14, 2018, Regular Board Meeting. Ron Highley motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Kristy Gray seconded. Members voted to approve the minutes as presented and motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Barb Denker presented the treasurer's report and informed members of Income and dues withholdings and associate dues paid. Expenses of plaques, PT Skills for Success training refreshments, mileage paid, and NACOE due. To date General fund balance is \$29,710.90. To date Scholarship account balance is \$6,123.79.

Ron Highley motioned to approve the treasurer's report as submitted. Mandi Bird seconded. Members voted to approve the treasurer's report as presented and motion passed.

a. Tax Exempt Status

An update was given to the board indicating that all paperwork had been submitted and we have heard nothing in regard to if what we submitted is sufficient.

b. Account Signature Authority

An update was given to the board indicating that Barb Denker and Debbie Leeper's names are on both accounts.

Old Business

a. Committee Reports

Awards – Debbie Leeper reported that we have slowed up on Retirements for members. She has requested member names for Sick Leave awards and has only heard from one county.

Audit & Budget – No Report

Benefits – No Report

Legislative – Mandi Bird reported that there are lots of talk of Farm Bill and that the amendments are currently being looked at.

Membership – Drew Walters reported that we have 4 new members, 2 Associate and 2 regular Members. With the addition of 2 Associate members we now have a total of 7.

Negotiations – No report

Programs – No report

Publicity – Jared Singer reported in Abby Inglis absence that the Newsletter is out, and it has a new look. The MWA Executive, Chris Hare thinks it looks great!

NAFEC – No Report

Scholarship – Megan Dunkle reported that the scholarships have been sent and or presented to the recipients. Kate Gerlemann motioned to reimburse Megan for her expenses in postage, cardstock, and folders. Brink Naile seconded. Members voted to reimburse Megan and motion passed.

Webpage – No Report

Emblems – Leann Liechti reported that she had made contact with Superior in regard to our State Convention. She was waiting to hear back from them but was certain they would work with us if we pre-ordered. Between \$1400-\$1600 of Emblems were sold during PT Skills for Success.

Ron Highley motioned to approve the committee reports as presented. Kristy Gray seconded. Members voted to approve the committee reports as presented and motion passed.

Old Business

a. MWA Rally

President Singer announced that notes from the Rally are posted to the MASCOE website for membership to review.

b. 2018 MASCOE Convention

Membership reviewed the tentative agenda and state office attendance.

Barb Denker motioned to spend up to \$1500 for the convention speaker, and to choose from the following speakers Dustin James, Tyne Morgan, or Chris Chinn. Ron Highley seconded. Members voted and approved the motion.

Debbie Leeper motioned to adjust Registration price from the proposed amounts to \$40 for 2-day and \$20 for Tuesday only. Kristy Gray seconded. Members voted and approved the motion.

Leann Liechti motioned to have Rebecca Malter use \$100 for the first timers drawing. Megan Dunkle seconded. Kate Gerlemann moved to amend Leann Liechti motion to give the chair \$100 and ability to write the rules for eligibility of the drawing. Mandi Bird seconded. Members voted and approved the motion and amendment.

The next board meeting will be held in conjunction with the convention on August 27 in New Haven. Labor/Management Agreement was discussed for official time to attend the convention. MASCOE travel policy was discuss for convention and board members will be traveling at their own expense.

New Business

a. 2018 Election

Election timeframe and database was discussed. Election will be held July 23 through August 3.

b. NASCOE Convention – South Dakota

Missouri has been contacted regarding the monetary donation made to South Dakota for convention. Our donation amount has earned us a Banner and Program Ad. Mandi Bird motioned to tell South

Dakota that we didn't need a banner or program ad and to use that money how they saw fit for the convention. Barb Denker seconded. Members voted and approved the motion.

c. Review and Meet with SED regarding Membership Concerns

Please see the document attached for membership concerns, MASCOE Board Input, and SED response.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 1:15 p.m. by Kate Gerlemann and seconded by Mandi Bird. Members voted and meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina Young
2017-2018 MASCOE Secretary

1. CRP Refunds on Partial Buy Outs

Employee Concern as Submitted to MASCOE:

We are allowed to establish manual receivables for annual rental payments, we should be able to continue to do the same on cost share and incentives.

We used to be able to establish manual receivables for cost share, SIP, PIP. This allowed us to establish the receivables with the correct information in one step, not multiple steps that require multiple adjustments that could result in errors in the calculated payment, EX missed steps in the adjustments or dates to the receivables.

After establishment of these receivables then they have to be adjusted for multiple things, more possibility for error by employees. Plus the time it takes for the second party reviews.

I have no issues with automated receivables on full CRP buy outs, but having to create automated receivables on cost share, SIP & PIP by cancelling payments is taking 10 times the time and effort to determine the buy out for the producer. We do not have the manpower to spend this much time on such a tedious process.

One county in our District had 18 receivables for a buy out on a few acres to build a house, it took them all day. How cost effective is it for an employee drawing \$25-40 dollars an hour spending this much time to the taxpayer?

For the counties that have a lot of CRP, especially the ones that are close to urban areas buyouts are a common practice to build homes.

I hear manager's discussing looking at waiver's of refunds due to this time consuming practice.

MASCOE Board Input:

The MASCOE Board appreciates this concern and the additional time that will now be involved manually adjusting receivables for partial contract terminations. However, MASCOE also understands this is being driven from the national level, and the Missouri STO may have little ability to alter the policy, or the functionality of the receivables software. Generally, MASCOE agrees there is room for improvement in the process. MASCOE does not support waiving refunds to avoid processing the receivables.

SED Response:

SED Fordyce responded that he understood that this was a time consuming and difficult process for the County Office, but also understood the need for the change due to accounting. He took note of the concern and would look further into it.

2. New CRP Mid-Contract Management Policy

Employee Concern as Submitted to MASCOE:

After reviewing 2-CRP MO. Amend 28, Par. 366 B, it was determined that the new policy places undue hardship on producers, and is inconsistent with other Missouri cost-share policies. I request MASCOE to discuss the change in policy during their next meeting.

MO Par. 366 B states, "...If producers wish to receive cost share for a 2nd round of MCM, it must be included on the original CPO. If included on the original CRP, the second round of MCM will be mandatory. Mandatory round of MCM not completed will be subject to compliance penalties. Mandatory MCM will be included on the 848A."

Some items of discussion for the policy change:

- Can COC waive compliance penalties for second round of MCM if producer cannot complete for reasons beyond their control, such as weather.
- Does requiring 2nd round of MCM violate 2-CRP Par. 495 B, "The State CRP practice requirements and specifications shall: ...not require performance beyond that which is needed to ensure that the practice functions properly."
- Why do some cost-share practices, such as mowing within 1-year of establishment, mowing in conjunction with disking and chemical application, and disking in conjunction with prescribed burning, have the option of not being completed without penalty while failure to complete second round of MCM is subject to compliance penalties?
- Does the change in policy discourage CRP participants from completing additional practices that would promote and enhance the plant diversity and wildlife benefits, as well as help prevent growth of trees and brush on CRP?

Please contact me with any questions or further explanation.

MASCOE Board Input:

The MASCOE Board agrees this policy inhibits the ability to manage CRP cover based on conditions and needs throughout the lifespan of a contract. Like the previous item, however, MASCOE also understands this is being driven by FSA's need to have an accurate accounting of CRP cost-share obligations. Flexibility in additional rounds of MCM is preferred.

SED Response:

SED Fordyce again understood the potential issues this would cause but again understood that CEPD needs accurate accounting for all cost shared items for any CRP contract. During the discussion, a possible solution mentioned was including a second round of MCM for budgeting purposes, but allowing the participant the ability to not complete the second round if not needed, without penalty. He took note of the concern and would look further into it.

3. Service Center Safety

Employee Concern as Submitted to MASCOE:

After the recent shootings and bombings across the country I feel it is in the best interest of COF employees to be able to protect themselves (and their fellow employees) while in the building. Many FSA offices are in very rural settings. For example some county offices are a few miles out of town. It may take ten minutes for law enforcement to show up and take action. During the 1980's I was told (during COT training) that several FLM's throughout the country were shot in the office for having to foreclose on family farms. USDA County offices are not protected by law enforcement like the Social Security Offices or the large FSA offices in KC or STL. We are dependent 100% on law enforcement officials that are several minutes away. Currently we are in "gun free zones". It is illegal to bring a firearm or concealed weapon into the office. In many towns, we are the only presence of the Federal Government and we are sitting ducks. I humbly request that MASCOE discuss this matter. If MASCOE decides the issue is important, I ask that

you forward the issue to NASCOE so it can be discussed at the national level. Many FSA employees (and NRCS/SWCD) would volunteer immediately if allowed.

With that being said, I don't think the right to carry in a Federal Building should be a "free for all" and it should never be forced upon any employee. Concealed Carry training is not enough as it does not provide the training one would need to properly defend an office. I feel anyone that would take on that responsibility should be put through a rigorous training program that requires yearly certification. I also feel that proper background checks would need to be conducted to ensure the safety of the staff and public.

With many school districts around the US gearing up to protect their students, I feel that now is the time for MASCOE to stand up and protect its members. Run, hide, fight is a death sentence in a COF (per the Homeland Security Training provided to District 2 last year) and employees deserve the right to defend themselves.

Thanks for your consideration of this matter.

MASCOE Board Input:

MASCOE understand the prohibition on carrying firearms on Federal property is law. Accordingly, a change of federal law would be needed to alter the policy. MASCOE does however feel FSA management at all levels should consider measures to ensure employee safety in Service Centers. Many board members are not in favor of employees possessing firearms in the office. However, many board members and employees have expressed concern about our ability to protect employees from a physical threat at a Service Center. Alternatives to firearms have been suggested such as:

- Non-lethal protection like pepper spray or a taser,
- A "panic button" in offices that would immediately notify law enforcement of an emergency

Thorough training would be needed in the use of these items. Employees have also asked for training in handling a threatening situation.

SED Response:

SED Fordyce is aware of the lack of security. Board Members made him aware of some instances that are in the local offices around our state, for example doors only able to be locked from the outside. He was unaware this situation and feels that this was a matter that FSA could potentially address with the landlords or that maybe FSA would potentially be able to address these types of issues. He took note and would check further into the security matters addressed in the question as well as the other concerns that could be addressed by the landlord and or FSA.

4. Availability of State Committee Regular Session Minutes

Employee Concern as Submitted to MASCOE:

County Committee regular session minutes are required to be available to the public. Does this also apply to STC minutes? If STC regular session minutes are not available to the public, could they at least be made available to COF employees? It has been suggested to make them available back to January of 2012.

MASCOE Board Input:

The MASCOE Board supports the timely availability of State Committee Regular Session Minutes.

SED Response:

SED Fordyce saw no reason why these minutes could not be made available to the County Office staff and would visit with the Admin. Section to see if they could not get this done. Would take some work to get them all on there but would address it.

5. Missouri Staffing Priorities

Employee Concern as Submitted to MASCOE:

What will the staffing priorities be in Missouri, once we are permitted to advertise? (PTs? COTs? CEDs? GS positions?) How will current CED vacancies be addressed with no COTs currently on board?

MASCOE Board Input:

The MASCOE Board agrees this is statewide concern.

SED Response:

SED Fordyce talked at great length regarding staffing. He is confident that we will be seeing some vacancies posted very soon. He could not give a definite time line. The staffing model is being used and is a great tool. SED's will have flexibility from the model if they feel something in the staffing is not reflecting like they know it is in there state. He was very positive in where Missouri stood and the numbers they would be receiving for hiring staff.