



January 29, 2011

The MAA Board of Directors met at Northern Solstice Alpacas on January 29, 2011, beginning at approximately 10 AM and continuing until approximately 3 PM. Jeannine Anderson, Jennifer Caldwell-Jeans, Robin Fowler, Jill McElderry-Maxwell and Ginny Rebar were present. All parties present were enthusiastic, prepared and ready to begin forging the future of the Maine Alpaca Association.

- I. The meeting began with a review of desirable group norms and goals for behavior for use both within BOD meeting settings. These norms and goals include:
  - a) Keeping meeting and organizational goals visible at all times, whether it be on the website or in front of a meeting room. Visible goals help provide focus.
  - b) Updating those goals frequently as they are met or as new goals are identified.
  - c) Using an agenda and a facilitator to make meetings flow smoothly and productively. This holds not only for BOD and member meetings, but also for committee meetings.
  - d) Participants are asked to actively and respectfully listen.
  - e) Feedback should be effective and targeted to a specific receiver, not ambiguous or overbroad in scope.
  - f) Participants are asked to respect their fellow members, their beliefs, opinions and contributions.
  - g) Participants are asked to come to meetings prepared and ready to work.
  - h) Meetings will seek consensus.
  - i) Participants are asked to stay on track, and if necessary, a time keeper will be used.
  - j) Individual strengths within the group will be leveraged for maximum results.
  - k) Participants are asked to raise concerns with the intent to resolve them.
  
- II. Following the review of the group norms, the board held a lively brainstorming session in which tools for success as well as potential barriers were listed. Potential barriers included:
  - a) the wide geographic spread encompassed by MAA;

- b) the diverse interests of MAA members, including the perceived split between those interested in breeding and showing and those more focused on fiber;
- c) communication with members;
- d) a potential lack of access to electronic media and internet for rural members;
- e) a historic focus on competition but not enough collaboration
- f) past goals that were unattainable due to broad reaching scope or ambition;
- g) a perceived lack of time among members.

Items that BOD members saw in the MAA toolbox for success included:

- a) a diverse and far reaching skill set within the membership;
- b) an economic climate that is currently fostering collaboration and cooperation;
- c) a willingness to adopt new means of communicating with members;
- d) a desire to build support and a sense of inclusion;
- e) a desire to improve the “customer service” provided by MAA;
- f) a desire to welcome and validate new members beginning their alpaca endeavors;
- g) a interest in changing the organizational structure of MAA.

III. Given the potential barriers discussed previously, the Board then reviewed the MAA by-laws and identified areas that may require amendment to facilitate the group’s goals. A number of issues were raised regarding language specificity (e.g., section 2.2, where the registered agent is named); these points are relatively minor and do not substantially affect the meaning of the by-laws as currently written.

The Board did note that the by-laws currently call for meeting minutes to be kept of committee meetings. This provision has not been followed in the past, but should be emphasized going forward. In addition, the by-laws call for a conflict of interest form to be completed by BOD members on an annual basis. Although this was not previously completed, it is the BOD’s intent to comply with this requirement.

More substantial changes were proposed to section 4.3, Meetings and Notice. The by-laws currently call for four member meetings, with the annual meeting to be held in January. The Board would like to consider broadening this language to require an annual meeting, with the option of holding as many additional meetings as desired. This would allow greater flexibility in scheduling meetings, as well as the possibility of local or regional meetings. The Board would also like to investigate the possibility of proxy voting, given the difficulty in bringing all MAA members together at physical meetings.

Robin will be meeting with legal counsel this week to determine the broad legal implications of MAA’s current by laws, recommended changes and non- profit status. No changes will occur prior to this meeting.

- IV. After the lunch break, the Board reviewed current MAA goals as culled from meeting minutes.
- a) The continuing need to revitalize the Yahoo! group was raised. Past abuses and misuse of the group have made many members hesitant to post, and despite attempts to clarify the rules, many remain uncertain as to what constitutes an appropriate posting. The Board is considering relaxing the rules further and hoping that the community will be respectful without requiring active moderation.
  - b) The MAA newsletter is not updated on a regular basis. One possibility is that a MAA blog could be incorporated into a new website, with guest posters on a weekly basis. Members could be encouraged to write about topics of particular interest to them. The ability to incorporate photos and other media types may prove more attractive than simple prose.
  - c) Tiered membership is a common feature of other alpaca organizations, and represents a possible new source of revenue for MAA. This is also a potential means to expand and diversify our membership.
  - d) Increased fundraising activities will be critical to the continued success of MAA. Many of the programs and innovations the BOD would like to introduce will require more money than the group currently has.
  - e) Although the new booth is a significant improvement over the old MAA display, it is very difficult to transport and prone to damage. MAA should invest in professional quality display, including a rack to display brochures or cards from all member farms. A larger, more visible photo display to attract attention would also be ideal. Branding will be critical – all aspects of the organization need to share a common logo, font, color scheme, etc.
- V. The Board agreed that Robin should serve in the capacity of President, with Ginny retaining the title of Vice President. Jill will continue as Secretary. Additional positions may be named based on group needs. Pam Drew has agreed to serve as Treasurer, which is not required to be a Board position, and the Board wholeheartedly thanks her for agreeing to continue in this role.

Beyond formal positions, the BOD felt it was important to match areas of interest with board member strengths. All BOD members will be involved with membership activities, from retention to satisfaction to recruitment. Additionally until MAA's goals and need for support in key areas are identified, Ginny will oversee MAA educational endeavors; Jeannine will be involved with marketing efforts; Jen will be instrumental in fundraising; and Jill will be responsible for information technology issues.

- VI. After formalizing some positions, the Board considered what our immediate goals should be and what steps need to be taken to achieve them. Our first priority is to reach out to all current members directly and personally, to both listen to feedback on past MAA efforts, as well as to ascertain each member farm's needs, goals and hopes for the future of MAA. Robin will be visiting many of our member farms and all board members will be involved with visiting at least a handful of farms.

Jen has agreed to establish a MAA page on Facebook that will initially serve as a means of communicating with MAA members, and ultimately with the larger alpaca audience on Facebook. Alpaca owners are very active in networking using this social medium, and MAA should be actively participating.

In summary, our immediate goals are to revitalize the membership, communicate directly with all current members, and discover in what direction the membership wants the Board to lead them.

- VII. The meeting concluded on an enthusiastic and positive note, with Board members ready to begin implementing the steps outlined during the meeting.