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MINUTES

Organizational Meeting

Meeting was virtually on Zoom and in person
Thursday, October 23, 2025 @ 10am CT

Chairman Steve Cargil called the meeting to order at 10:04am. Members and alternates present in person or virtually were Will Beckwith, Bret Erickson, Marcus Forthuber, Dennis Holbrook, Steve Cargil, J. Allen Carnes, Mike Davis, Kristen Davis seated for Thomas Hanka, Wayne Reavis seated for James Crawford, Brandon Olivarria seated for Brandon Laferre, Tony Martinez seated for Trevor Stuart, and Nano S Tafolla.

Others present in person or virtually were Delaney Fuhrmeister, Rebecca Geller, USDA; Sabrina Wilson and Melinda Goodman, FullTilt Marketing; Dante Galeazzi, Marisol Garza, Hector Garza and Lilly Garcia, TIPA/STOC.

Delaney Fuhrmeister seated the new committee and read the Anti-lobbying and Antitrust statements.

1) Roll Call

- a. Lilly Garcia conducted roll call – a quorum was present.

2) Election of 2025-2026 Officers

- a. Steve Cargil was nominated by the Committee for Chairman
- b. Will Beckwith was nominated by the Committee for Vice Chairman
- c. Tommy Hanka was nominated by the Committee for Secretary
- d. Marcus Forthuber was nominated by the Committee for Treasurer
 - **Motion to keep the same slate of officers made by Dennis Holbrook; seconded by Bret Erickson. Unanimously approved.**

3) Approval of the 2024-2025 Final Audit Report

- a. Ms. Janet Robles with Oscar R. Gonzalez CPA presented/reviewed the two fiscal year audit reports.
 - The audit received an unmodified (clean) opinion.
 - Net position: \$202,129 (unrestricted: \$188,575).
 - Change in net position: +\$42,516.
 - Cash increased: \$60,000.
 - No material weaknesses or noncompliance were noted.
 - Expenses were \$61,000 under budget.

- **Motion to approve the Final Audit Reports for 2024-2025 made by Wayne Reavis; seconded by Bret Erickson. Unanimously approved.**

4) **Marketing Presentation, Update & Budget revision**

- a. Ms. Sabrina “Sabs” Wilson, FullTilt Marketing presented the Plan
 - Proposed Marketing Budget increase from \$72,000 to \$102,192.11
 - Key program areas:
 - B2B focus (≈60%) to strengthen buyer relationships.
 - Restaurant Week – San Antonio (March 24–April 2, 2026)
 - Website & Social Media refresh
 - University educational campaign (Gen Z awareness)
 - Professional photo/video content
 - Retail Display Contest
 - Digital POS materials & buyer kits
 - Viva Fresh activation targeting 400 buyers
 - Collaborations and sweepstakes initiatives
 - Discussion Highlights:
 - Members supported stronger B2B initiatives but expressed concern about funding the proposed “**World’s Largest Onion Art Installation**” in Weslaco.
 - Noted that the city had pledged land and partial support, but members prioritized practical marketing reach over high-cost installations.
 - Clarified that leftover **\$23,303** from FY24–25 reserves could offset part of the excess.
 - **ACTION ITEM: Marketing subcommittee to revise the budget and plan to postpone onion installation.**
 - **Motion to approve the marketing budget increase by \$30,192 using reserves and excluding the onion installation made by Bret Erickson; seconded by Dennis Holbrook. Unanimously approved.**

5) **Approval of Minutes**

- a. 06/03/2025 - Budget & Nominations Meeting
 - **Motion to approve the June 03, 2025, minutes made by J. Allen Carnes; seconded by Bret Erickson. Unanimously approved.**

6) **Review/Approve the 2025-2026 eCompliance**

- a. Dante Galeazzi confirmed that no changes were made to the plan. Plan outlines inspection procedures, investigator schedules and documentation protocols.
 - **Motion to approve the 2025-2026 eCompliance made by Wayne Reavis; seconded by Will Beckwith. Unanimously approved.**

7) **Approval of 2025-2026 Marketing Policy**

- a. Dante reviewed the Marketing Policy with the Committee
 - **Key Highlights:**
 - Industry experienced a **dramatic increase in supply and lower average prices (\$9 avg.)**.

- **FDA** continues listing onions as a **commodity of concern**.
- Continued vigilance requested for **onion leaf miner** detection (contact TAMU Extension if found).
- **Upcoming USDA Administrative Hearing:** February 2–3, 2026, regarding proposed Marketing Order #959 amendments.
- **Forecast for 2025–2026 Season:**
 - **Acreage:** 7,000 acres
 - **Yield:** 525 bags/acre
 - **Projected Production:** 3,675,000 (50-lb equivalent bags)
- **Approval of the 2025-2026 Marketing Policy and determinations made by Bret Erickson; seconded by Will Beckwith. Unanimously approved.**

8) Old Business

- a. **USDA Administrative Hearing**
Scheduled for **February 2–3, 2026** in Mission, TX (CEED Building). All industry participants are invited to provide written or oral testimony.
- b. **Mechanical Harvesting Research Update**
Report by: *Will Beckwith* (Research Subcommittee)
 - Collaborative test plot established with **Jed Murray** featuring **20 commercial varieties**.
 - Monitoring fertilizer uptake, maturity stages, and damage rates at varying curing intervals (3–5 days).
 - Purpose: optimize mechanized harvest procedures suitable for Texas soil and climate conditions.
 - Additional **variety strip trials** under evaluation.
- c. **Proposed Amendments to Marketing Order #959**
Mr. Galeazzi explained that the South Texas Onion Committee has been working with USDA AMS to update the existing **Marketing Order No. 959** to better align with current industry practices and simplify administrative processes. Four amendments were proposed and discussed with the committee for review and approval before being presented at the upcoming USDA public hearing.
 - **Proposed Amendments:**
 - **Eligibility and Representation Updates** – Clarify definitions of producer and handler members and align seat representation by district and volume.
 - **Administrative Flexibility** – Allow USDA to approve committee actions by electronic or written consent when in-person meetings are impractical.
 - **Budget and Reserve Authority** – Modernize fiscal language to reflect current USDA accounting practices and permit reserve fund carryovers within established limits.
 - **Reporting and Compliance Modernization** – Update handler reporting forms, compliance timelines, and inspection procedures to reflect digital submission capabilities.
 - **Discussion:**
 - Members acknowledged the updates as procedural improvements to reflect current operations.

- Questions were raised regarding whether these changes would affect assessments or voting eligibility. USDA clarified that no changes were being proposed to rates or producer-handler balance, only clarifications in wording and process.
- The committee agreed the changes would increase efficiency and transparency.
- **Motion to approve moving forward with §959.84 to reduce voting threshold from less than 2/3 thirds to more than 50% made by Wayne Reavis; seconded by Dennis Holbrook. Unanimously approved.**
- **Motion to approve moving forward with §959.48 to add marketing promotion, including paid advertisement made by Will Beckwith; seconded by Brandon Olivarria. Unanimously approved.**
- **Motion to approve moving forward with the definition of the Public Member under §959.22, update §959.26 for clarity and improve the alignment with the section's subject and intent, §959.27 to describe who nominates the public member and alternate and when the nomination occurs and §959.31 regarding the public member alternate made by Dennis HOLbrook; seconded by Wayne Reavis. Unanimously approved.**

9) New Business

- a. H2A and Earlier start dates – **TABLED**
- b. Voting on language for the grower list rule
 - Discussion:
 - The committee reviewed USDA-recommended updates to ensure the grower list used for acreage reporting and referenda is complete and accurate. Dante clarified that this applies to producer growers only, not handler-to-handler transactions.
 - Final Language Approved:
 - On an annual basis, each handler shall furnish a complete supplier report to the committee detailing each producer who provided onions during that season. Such reports shall be sent to the committee and shall include the name and business name of each grower as well as the business mailing address, business phone number, and email address. Handlers shall submit this report to the committee not later than July 15 of each season.”
 - **Motion to vote on the language for the growers list rule made by Bret Erickson; seconded by Will Beckwith. Unanimously approved.**
- c. Postponing the 2026 referenda
 - USDA advised that holding a 2026 continuance referendum *and* a separate referendum for the four proposed amendments would be duplicative and confusing. USDA recommended postponing the continuance referendum to **2031**, aligning with the 6-year cycle.
 - **Motion to postpone the 2026 continuance referendum to 2031 made by Dennis Holbrook; seconded by Bret Erickson. Unanimously approved.**

10) Meeting adjourned

- **Motion to adjourn made by Wayne Reavis; seconded by Bret Erickson. Unanimously approved.**