

PENNSYLVANIA DISTILLED SPIRITS INDUSTRY PROMOTION PROGRAM

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

2301 North Cameron Street

Third Floor, Room 310

Harrisburg, PA 17110

Minutes of the May 14, 2025 Board Meeting

Public notice of the May 14, 2025 Pennsylvania Distilled Spirits Industry Promotion Program Meeting was given as stipulated by the Sunshine Law.

CALL TO ORDER

Terri Gillespie, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Board members in attendance along with Chair Gillespie included, Treasurer, Ellen Hough, and Gregg Feaster

Alex P. Moser was not present at the commencement of the meeting

Russel Fletcher was absent from the meeting

Also Present: Adam Morris, Esquire, Assistant Counsel; Patrick Andrews, Division Chief; John Howard, Chief Counsel; Michael Keefe, Commodities Program Manager; Nathan Kresge, GK Visual; Thomas Kristich, GK Visual; Doug Metz, GK Visual.

CALL TO ORDER

RESOLUTION NO. 2025 - 7-CALL TO ORDER

Motion by: Terri Gillespie

Second: Ellen Hough

Passed: Unanimously

To call the PA Distilled Spirits Board to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLUTION NO. 2025 - 8-APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by: Ellen Hough

Second: Terri Gillespie

Passed: Unanimously

To approve April 2, 2025 meeting Minutes.

The Board discussed corrections to the April 2, 2025 Minutes.

INTRODUCING NEW BOARD MEMBER, GREGG FEASTER, CORK & COMPASS CRAFT SPIRITS

Michael Keefe, Commodities Program Manager, and the Board welcomed Mr. Feaster to his first Board meeting. Upon exchanges of interaction between Mr. Feaster and other Board members, Mr. Keefe invited Mr. Feaster to a few icebreaker questions.

Mr. Feaster noted that he is the head distiller located in Bedford, Pennsylvania, operating in a sectioned-off area behind Fat Jimmy's Bicycle Shop, within a shared complex that also includes Old Bedford Brewery. The distillery has produced rum but has not yet begun sales due to ongoing work on bottling and labeling. They plan to begin vodka production soon to support their completed cocktail and tasting room, which currently serves drinks using spirits sourced from other local producers. Mr. Feaster expressed enthusiasm for producing gin, with plans to collaborate with Lucky Sign, and indicated longer-term goals to distill brandy by utilizing surplus fruit from local orchards.

Mr. Feaster noted that he is supported by two part-time friends. He owns the distillery and manages it alongside his wife, who leads the cocktail service and recently obtained her SERV Safe certification. Looking ahead, they hope to add a food component to complement the distillery, bike shop, and brewery, addressing a shared need for food offerings in the complex. Mr. Keefe noted the excitement around their early-stage planning and development.

The Board welcomed Mr. Feaster to the team.

ELECTING A BOARD TREASURER

Michael Keefe, Commodities Program Manager, clarified the informal nature of the treasurer role on the Act 57 boards, including the Malt and Fruit Beverage Board and the Distilled Spirits Board. He explained, while treasurers on other boards often approve invoices for payment, for these boards the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB) allocates funds to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), which then processes invoices and remits payments through its financial office. Although the Board has statutory authority to recommend how funds should be spent, the treasurer role in this context is limited in scope. Mr. Keefe noted that Russell had suggested Ellen Hough and Mr. Moser share the treasurer responsibilities, with Ellen having already expressed willingness to do so.

Ms. Hough agreed to serve as Co-Treasurer with Mr. Moser, calling the role simple and manageable.

Ms. Gillespie confirmed Ellen's commitment and reiterated the co-treasurer arrangement with Mr. Moser.

Adam Morris, Esquire, recommended that each co-treasurer be authorized to act independently to avoid potential delays or deadlocks, similar to the structure used in estate administration with multiple executors.

Ms. Gillespie formally proposed the nomination of Mr. Moser and Ms. Hough as co-treasurers, each with the independent authority to act on behalf of the Board.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025 - 9-ELECTION OF TREASURER

Motion by: Terri Gillespie

Second: Alex Moser

Passed: Unanimously

To elect a Board Treasurer and Co-Treasurer.

PRESENTATION FROM GK VISUAL ON THEIR PROPOSAL, PENNSYLVANIA’S PIONEERING SPIRIT: A FEATURE-LENGTH DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

Michael Keefe, Commodities Program Manager, welcomed Nate Kresge, Tom Kristich, and Doug Metz, from GK Visuals to provide an update regarding their feature-length documentary on Pennsylvania’s Pioneering Spirit.

Mr. Kresge provided an overview of a documentary project aimed at telling the untold story of Pennsylvania whiskey. He explained that, unlike New York's Empire Rye initiative, Pennsylvania had not yet captured its rich whiskey history in a film format. The documentary would chronicle the evolution of whiskey from the early colonial period, through the Whiskey Rebellion and Prohibition, to the present-day resurgence of craft distillers producing high-quality products in the state. The narrative would be conveyed through the voices of those directly involved, including distillers, farmers, maltsters, historians, collectors, and whiskey writers, rather than relying solely on voiceover narration. Mr. Kresge also offered to share the presentation slides with the group and previewed a short sample clip to illustrate the envisioned film style.

Q&A SESSION WITH GK VISUAL ON THEIR PRESENTATION AND PROPOSAL

Mr. Kresge presented a short video previewing the final product, which included a brief history of Pennsylvania whiskey, its uses throughout the years, and its cultural significance.

Mr. Kresge outlined further details about the proposed documentary on Pennsylvania whiskey. He stated that the project would be a feature-length film, approximately 60 to 90 minutes, capturing voices and visuals from across Pennsylvania, and potentially Kentucky, where there is significant enthusiasm for Pennsylvania's whiskey heritage. The production team aimed to begin filming immediately upon approval, with some footage already captured locally. The timeline included capturing seasonal shots, followed by a lengthy editing phase and eventual distribution through film festivals and screenings.

He explained that the production company, GK Visual, was celebrating its 20th year and had previously produced the successful documentary Poured in Pennsylvania, which explored the

state's craft beer scene and was nominated for a Mid-Atlantic Emmy. That project also inspired a follow-up series. For the whiskey documentary, the team had launched an Indiegogo campaign, which had raised approximately \$540, primarily to increase awareness rather than serve as the main funding source. Mr. Kresge clarified they were unsure whether additional external funds would be appropriate alongside Board funding and looked to the Board for guidance.

Regarding distribution, he stated the plan included in-state screening events with Q&As, followed by submission to film festivals for exposure and potential acquisition by platforms like Amazon or Netflix. He addressed intellectual property concerns by noting that GK Visual would retain ownership of the final product to streamline distribution but emphasized their willingness to share footage with partners for marketing or promotional use, as they had done with their previous beer-related content.

Mr. Morris stated that the Board had standard intellectual property terms and conditions in its contracts and offered to provide a copy for review and discuss further offline.

Ms. Gillespie asked whether the beer film had received funding from the Beer Board.

Mr. Kresge responded that the beer documentary had been funded through beer marketing sources and the Department of Tourism.

Mr. Moser expressed support for the project but admitted confusion about whether the proposal submitted required or assumed additional funding beyond what was requested from the Board.

Mr. Kresge clarified that the proposal was intended to cover the full production cost, but he had interpreted the RFP as possibly requiring a listing of matching funds. He explained that in prior grant experiences, funding had sometimes only covered a portion of the total project, requiring alternative funding sources if the full amount was not granted.

Mr. Moser reiterated his belief that the project could be valuable, particularly in promoting Pennsylvania rye, which he described as a central and under-told story in the state's distilling landscape.

Ms. Hough emphasized that rye whiskey was a unique and marketable asset for Pennsylvania. She noted that it could serve as the initial draw for visitors, who would then explore other local offerings, such as Mr. Feaster's rum distillery in Bedford, making rye a strategic hook for broader tourism.

Mr. Keefe clarified that Section 8 of the RFP allows the Board to require applicants to commit a percentage of documented matching funds at its discretion. These funds could be used for contractual expenses but not for personnel or in-kind contributions. He explained that this provision was meant to expand a project's impact or ensure full execution if the Board did not fund the full requested amount.

Mr. Kresge acknowledged the confusion around matching fund requirements and confirmed that the proposed budget of \$187,700 would cover the entire cost of production, including travel, editing, music licensing, legal fees, marketing, and film festival submissions.

Ms. Gillespie inquired about festival fees, which Mr. Kresge confirmed were necessary for entry. He also confirmed that filming had begun with a teaser video, an interview with historian Drew Hannush, and plans to film more and explore Pennsylvania rye whiskey relics.

Mr. Keefe asked about the project's full budget and how the Board's funding would be used.

Mr. Kresge reiterated that the Board's funding would cover all production-related costs. He noted that actual expenses could vary slightly, and the final reimbursement would reflect actual spending.

Mr. Feaster compared the proposed documentary to Neat: The Story of Bourbon, to which Mr. Kresge agreed, noting a similar structure but with a different approach. He mentioned that figures in the bourbon documentary supported the Pennsylvania rye project and expressed excitement over the broader recognition the story could receive.

The Board recognized the significance of Pennsylvania's Wines and Spirits culture, and hopes the documentary performs well.

Mr. Keefe noted that the Board would be funding a separate statewide marketing campaign and encouraged Mr. Kresge to collaborate with that campaign by providing film excerpts or raw footage for broader promotional use.

Mr. Kresge agreed to collaborate and share footage and requested to be put in contact with the campaign lead. He asked whether a follow-up meeting would be necessary after submitting the full proposal.

Mr. Keefe replied that the next Board meeting would be held on June 26, 2025, and, depending on the Board's review of the full proposal due by May 30, 2025, they would follow up if another presentation was needed.

UPDATE ON DISTILLED SPIRITS PRODUCER SURVEY

Michael Keefe, Commodities Program Manager, provided an update on the Distilled Spirits Producer survey, noting that it was now in the Guild's hands, with a meeting scheduled with Mr. Etchells to finalize the distribution strategy. He thanked Board members for completing the survey and asked for feedback, which Mr. Andrews and Ms. Hough described as quick and straightforward, likely leading to better responses. Mr. Andrews raised concerns regarding distribution management, but Ms. Hough believed it was simple enough, especially as Guild membership was growing. She encouraged outreach beyond current members to maximize participation.

Mr. Keefe agreed to suggest this broader outreach and explained that if Mr. Etchells shared his contact list, Mr. Keefe could cross-reference it with survey responses to target reminders. The group discussed logistics like sending reminders after two weeks and using a QR code in future Guild communications. Ms. Gillespie suggested a two-week initial window, followed by a reminder and another two weeks before closing the survey, which Mr. Keefe accepted. He confirmed he would compile the responses into visual and tabular formats for review.

Ms. Hough asked when the Board could revise the next RFP based on the survey data and recent experience. Mr. Andrews responded that the next RFP would be drafted over the summer and finalized at the November 2025 meeting. He explained that Board members would have the opportunity to review and suggest edits in advance of that meeting. The final RFP would then be reviewed by legal advisors before being published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Mr. Andrews also provided a detailed walkthrough of the Pennsylvania Bulletin website, encouraging members to subscribe to the weekly alert feature to stay informed of new grant opportunities, regulations, and announcements. He emphasized that the Bulletin is the official channel for all such notices. Mr. Keefe added that this resource could help identify other funding opportunities for members' businesses and encouraged board members to monitor marketing efforts by other boards to inform their own outreach strategy.

OTHER BUSINESS - None

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

ADJOURNMENT

RESOLUTION NO. 2025 - 10-MOTION TO ADJOURN

Motion by: Terri Gillespie

Second: Ellen Hough

Passed: Unanimously

There being no further business, the PA Distilled Spirits Industry Promotion Program Meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Ashley Hamilton

May 14, 2025