PENNSYLVANIA APPLE PROGRAM BOARD MEETING
Minutes of the July 8, 2026 Virtual Meeting

Public notice of the July 8, 2026, Pennsylvania Apple Program Board Meeting was given as stipulated by the Sunshine Law.

CALL TO ORDER

David Peters, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLUTION 2026.7 - MINUTES

Presented by: Ellie Vranich

Seconded by: Kyle Benner

Passed: Unanimously

To approve the February 18, 2026 Meeting Minutes.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Michelle Earley, Senior Accountant, McKonly and Asbury, presented the financial statements as of May 2026. In reviewing the balance sheet, she noted the total equity of $234,432 showed a decrease of $3,552 to the prior year. Regarding the A/P Aging Summary, she noted as of June 2026 only the invoice of $659 for McKonly and Asbury was outstanding. Ms. Early moved to reviewing the Profit and Loss report, comparing May 2025 to May 2026. There was a total income of $203,003 an increase of over the prior year of $80,042. Regarding expenses, she noted slight increases in accounting fees; sponsor/court report/legal; annual state crop assessment; audit fees; and bank fees. She noted there were no board expenses or postage expenses reported and asked for invoices to be sent in. Net income for the current year was a negative $2,931 which was an increase of $79,408 over the prior year.

Ms. Vranich noted the increase in audit fees was for the 2024 audit which was billed in February 2025; however, the invoice was missed and recently caught. She added the 2025 bill should soon be received.

Ms. Early reviewed the Profit and Loss Budget versus Actual. She pointed out differences in the budget versus the actual and noted the overall net income was over budget by $41,888. Ms. Vranich asked if there would be postage invoices, and Mr. Keefe confirmed there would be. Ms. Early pointed out receiving postage invoices and board expenses on a quarterly basis would held keep the financials up to date and accurate. The next report showing a three-year review of the profit and loss was provided as an FYI for the Board.

Ms. Early started to review the 2026/2027 budget starting with the assessment income. Mr. Keim stated the assessment income should probably be decreased. Ms. Vranich agreed, noting concerns about people making their payments. She noted, based on the current year's crop load, the budget would need reduced. She hoped payments on the 2025 crop were made in Q3 and Q4, which is when the largest income is generally seen.

Mr. Morris suggested approving the financial report and receiving the assessment report before continuing budget discussions. He noted the assessment report may inform some of the decision making for the budget. Chair Peters agreed and called for a motion on the financial report.

INTRODUCTIONS

It was noted introductions had not taken place at the start of the meeting. Board members in attendance, in addition to Chairman Peters, included Benjamin Keim, Vice Chair; Kyle Benner; Maggie Travis; and Ellie Vranich, Treasurer.

Carolyn McQuiston was absent from the meeting.

Also present: Michael Keefe, Program Commodities Manager; Frenchie Cline, Administrative Assistant 1, Bureau of Market Development; Mark O'Neill, Division Chief of Food Systems, Bureau of Market Development; Michelle Earley, Senior Accountant, McKonly and Asbury; Sarah Zost, President, State Horticultural Association of Pennsylvania (SHAP); Adam Morris, Esquire; and Kainani Rose, Sargent's Court Reporting.

RESOLUTION 2026.8 - APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT

Presented by: Benjamin Keim

Seconded by: Maggie Travis

Passed: Unanimously

To approve the Financial Report as presented.

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Mark O'Neill, Division Chief of Food Systems, Bureau of Market Development, stated an email was sent indicating that an assessment report was not going to be presented. He stated a review of data collected over the last three years, 2023, 2024, and 2025 had shown discrepancies in terms of bushels and money being applied to correct years. He added the assessment report should not impact discussion on the annual budget as the information presented by McKonly & Asbury was accurate.

Chair Peters understood the effort going into allocating the correct bushels to the correct years. He explained, without a bushel report, the only way to come up with a budget number for assessment would be using a three-year average.

Mr. Keefe apologized for the inconvenience of not having an assessment report. He pointed out the total assessment revenue collected is accurate, the inaccuracy comes from the data being reflected in the correct reporting periods.

Ms. Travis thanked Mr. Keefe for overseeing the cleanup of the numbers. She suggested the Board consider 2024 as a baseline for the budget given it was a low production year. Chair Peters appreciated her comment but noted there were checks from 2024 that were not cashed until the July 2025 through May 2026 period.

Ms. Vranich reviewed documentation from the November 2025 meeting. She suggested using an average of seven million bushels per year and budgeting 20 to 30 percent for the current year's apple crop.

The Board discussed how the number of bushels should be determined for the budget, overall agreeing the Board should lean conservative given how bad the year has been. Ms. Vranich estimated a total assessment of $48,000 using a 30 percent crop estimate from previous years. Chair Peters pointed out there should also be between $50,000 and $70,000 coming in from the 2025 assessment. Based on Chair Peter's comments, Ms. Vranich suggested the Board could estimate $98,000 for the assessment budget.

Chair Peters acknowledged the Board was jumping between the assessment and budgets. He asked if there were any specific comments on assessment to complete the topic before finishing the budget conversation.

Ms. Vranich asked for an estimate on when PDA would be able to provide updated assessment information. Mr. Keefe and Mr. O'Neill explained what was involved in producing accurate information for the prior years. It was noted the effort was time-consuming. Mr. O'Neill hoped the information could be provided sooner, but the worse-case scenario would be the November meeting. Mr. Keefe emphasized the total assessment income was still accurate, and different amounts may be allocated to different years after the review.

Ms. Vranich suggested the budget should reflect $100,000.

Chair Peters asked about quarterly notices, noting his neighbor still did not have a third-quarter notice, which ended at the end of March. Discussion surrounding quarterly notices ensued with Chair Peters expressing frustration at delays in the notices being sent out. Ms. Travis offered to lend support to a formal motion regarding notices that could be shared with the grower community.

Mr. Keefe summarized the suggested notice schedule. The fourth-quarter notice for the current year would be distributed as soon as possible, followed by a fifth-quarter notice at the end of September/early October. The first delinquency notice would be sent at the end of November and a second delinquency notice in January 2027. For the next crop year, 2026/2027, the first notice would be circulated at the end of September/early October, the second notice in December, the third notice at the end of March/early April 2027, and the fourth quarter at the end of June/early July. The sales agent notice would be distributed during July 2026 for the 25/26 crop with a second notice in October and a third notice in December or January.

Ms. Vranich stated the schedule sounded fantastic and asked what assurances PDA could provide that the notices were sent on time. She noted PDA had a lot of work to do with limited staff. Mr. O'Neill stated PDA would have to work internally to make the schedule happen. Mr. O'Neill also shared an ACMA board specific calendar would be needed for the different boards and different assessments.

RESOLUTION 2026.9 - MOTION TO SEND OUT NOTICES

Presented by: Maggie Travis

Seconded by: Kyle Benner

Passed: Unanimously

To approve notices to be sent out per the schedule outlined by Mr. Keefe.

NEW BUSINESS - BUDGET 2026-2027

Discussion returned to the 2026/2027 budget. Ms. Early asked if there were any other numbers the Board would like to change. Ms. Travis pointed out most of the line costs were fixed except for Farm Show and SHAP. Ms. Vranich also pointed out the US Apple number changes annually based on the five-year production average.

Mr. Keim not want to see the research number go down; however, given circumstances, he stated SHAP had enough reserve funds to cover the loss. Sarah Zost, President, State Horticultural Association of Pennsylvania (SHAP), stated SHAP's budget is always in flux; however, they had discussed the possibility of shortfalls from this year's crop. She agreed SHAP could cover a decent amount from reserved funds.

Ms. Vranich stated the Farm Show Consumer Education Fund had been doubled a few years ago at her request. She thought the number could be cut back if needed. Ms. Zost pointed out all of the profit SHAP makes from the Farm Show goes to research.

The Board discussed numbers for SHAP, Farm Show, audit, and postage. It was noted there would likely be two audit invoices because 2024 had just been paid, but there was not an invoice yet for 2025. Ms. Cline agreed to look into the 2025 audit bill.

Mr. Keim noted there was precedence for US Apple to reduce state assessments for one or two years for states that had significant freezes or crop losses. It was decided to consider a discussion on US Apple fees at the November meeting prior to paying the invoice.

Chair Peters asked for any further changes to the budget as presented. Ms. Vranich stated the budget was a good starting point that could be reevaluated in November.

RESOLUTION 2026.10 - APPROVAL OF BUDGET

Presented by: Kyle Benner

Seconded by: Ellie Vranich

Passed: Unanimously

To approve the Assessment Report as presented.

NEW BUSINESS - ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Michael Keefe, Program Commodities Manager, explained the election process before acting as Chair for the nomination of Board Chair.

RESOLUTION 2026.12 - ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIR

Presented by: Ben Keim

Seconded by: Maggie Travis

Passed: Unanimously

To elect David Peters as Board Chair.

RESOLUTION 2026.13 - ELECTION OF BOARD VICE CHAIR

Presented by: Maggie Travis

Seconded by: Kyle Benner

Passed: Unanimously

To elect Ben Keim as Board Vice Chair.

RESOLUTION 2026.14 - ELECTION OF BOARD TREASURER

Presented by: Ben Keim

Seconded by: Maggie Travis

Passed: Unanimously

To elect Ellie Vranich as Board Treasurer.

Ms. Vranich asked what the process was to replace a Board Member who had decided to step away from the Board. Mr. Keefe explained the process involved a mailing to the industry for nominations. The Secretary will then review the nominations and appoint an individual to the Board.

NEW BUSINESS - REFERENDUM DISCUSSION

Mark O'Neill, Division Chief of Food Systems, Bureau of Market Development, explained the Apple program was up for a referendum vote. He noted the Agenda listed April 2027; however, the date could be shifted if the Board desired. He suggested allowing a month for producers to vote.

Ms. Travis stated there had been discussion about using the Hershey conference to get momentum going for the referendum. She pointed out cleaning up the numbers and having mailings going out in a timely fashion would be helpful for the Board's cause in asking for the vote from the grower community. Ms. Vranich agreed with Ms. Travis. Mr. Keim commented if the referendum was pushed back into late April or May, then it would be difficult to get a good representative sample back from respondents. It was noted early March would be a good time to send ballots.

Ms. Vranich asked, if a change to the program order were to be suggested, would it need to go out with the referendum. Mr. Morris stated the referendum to continue the program has to happen separately from a referendum to change the program order. Ms. Vranich was interested in considering adjusting the number of trees someone had to have in order to pay in to the program. Mr. Morris stated the amount of 500 trees was actually set by regulation. Changing a regulation is a lengthy, two-year process. Mr. Morris shared the regulation could be found in Title 7 of Pennsylvania Code in Chapter 104. The 500 trees could specifically be found in section 104.2, under definitions. Ms. Travis noted it would be interesting to see the assessment numbers derived for US Apple versus the numbers used for Pennsylvania.

Mr. O'Neill returned to describing the referendum timeline. It was agreed the ballots should be distributed the first or second week of March to be returned within a month.

ADJOURNMENT

RESOLUTION 2026.15 -ADJOURNMENT

Presented by: Kyle Benner

Seconded by: Maggie Travis

Passed: Unanimously

To adjourn the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:43 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Kainani S. Rose

July 8, 2026