



## **Assessment Steering Committee**

**Thursday, October 2, 2025**

**9:30a.m. - 11:00 a.m. PT**

**Videoconference**

**Tom Bodtke, Chair, presiding**

### **MINUTES**

#### **Call to order**

The meeting was called to order by Tom Bodtke on Thursday, October 2 at 9:31 a.m. PT.

**Committee Members Present:** Tom Bodtke, Denny Vander Kooi, Shelly Hartmann, Brittany Lee, Jody McPherson, Ellie Norris, Paul Sangha, Brandon Raso, Brandon Wade, and Bryan Sakuma, USHBC Chair (ex-officio)

**Committee Members Absent:** Andres Armstrong, Gunnar Avinelis, Luis Miguel Vegas,

**USDA/AMS Representative:** Jeanette Palmer and Sarah Richardson

**Guests:** Dan Barber, and Teddy Koukoulis, NABC Chair

**Staff Members Present:** Kasey Cronquist, Jared Ruggles and Shaun Rundle

QUORUM PRESENT

#### **Approval of Agenda**

**ACTION 2:** Motion made to approve the agenda for Tuesday, August 26, 2025.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Chairs Comments**

Chair Tom Bodtke thanked everyone for their outreach and education efforts around increasing the USHBC assessment rate and the importance of bringing the industry together to be discussing this subject.

Kasey Cronquist discussed the most recent letters of support received thus far, highlighting Florida, MBG, Proarandanos and the Chilean Blueberry Advisory Committee. He shared that he was also aware that Aneberries was working on a support letter and Brandon Raso could share the New Jersey letter during the regional reports. Cronquist also reported that 100% of the current MOU contributors have signed a commitment letter supporting an additional \$14/ton voluntarily, should the USHBC establish a mandatory level of \$36/ton on fresh. He also reported that SunBelle has also provided letters of support; one for joining the current MOU group at the additional \$18/ton voluntary contribution, starting October 1st and a second letter committing to join the \$14/ton voluntary contribution should the industry commit to \$36/ton on fresh.

Tom thanked Cronquist for the report and thanked the MOU group for their continued goodwill effort and support for the additional voluntary contributions.

### **Region Check-In**

Tom Bodtke invited each member to share an update from their region.

Committee members shared their reports.

Bodtke acknowledged that, based on the reports, the majority of growers, albeit slight majority in some states, are generally supportive of an increase to the assessment, while the ideal level varied between regions.

### **Recommendations to USHBC Council**

Bodtke summarized the general consensus of support for an increase and asked for a motion to reflect the unanimous support for an increase.

ACTION 3: Motion made to approve overall committee support of an increase.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

With a unanimous vote of support for an increase, Bodtke asked if there could be a motion made that would address the specific rate to recommend to the council.

ACTION 4: Motion made to recommend to USHBC Council to increase the assessment rate to \$36/ton for fresh and \$30/ton for processed, with the expectation that rigorous accounting and performance benchmarks would be reported back to the Council.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried on a vote of 7 in favor, 2 opposed.

### **Items and Scheduling of Next Meeting**

The committee discussed any future responsibilities or meetings that would be necessary, now that the committee's recommendation would be presented to the Council. Cronquist acknowledged that the primary purpose of this committee has been fulfilled, but suggested that there may be a need to

convene for a modified purpose and would be discussing the future of the committee and its purpose with Bryan and USHBC vice chair Denny VanderKooi.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m. PT on Thursday, October 2, 2025.