

Grainland looks forward to new chapter at annual meeting

Written by Chris Lee

Grainland Cooperative members experienced a rather short agenda at their annual meeting Tuesday, June 12 at HHS.

The member-approved merger was looked back upon and the future outlook was outlined.

Board chair Casey Gerk began his report by asking, "Who is driving Grainland Co-op these days?" He said some people may think it is CHS back in Minnesota or the producer board and management teams at Grainland. "You might even argue it's the railroads ... but I assure you the same people that are driving now always have been and always will be are you folks here tonight," Gerk said.

Gerk compared Grainland to the producers and farmers who make up Grainland. He said fear of change and fear of the unknown is the challenge they all face.

"As we finish the chapter of Grainland, and turn the page and begin a new chapter of Grainland CHS, we should all be excited about the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead," Gerk said. "We are partnering up with a global leader in the world of agriculture.

"As we turn the page and start with a fresh clean sheet of paper in front of us, we should begin with where we are now. We are still Grainland. You might see from time to time CHS behind it or the board regional in front of it. We are our own business in Country Operations," Gerk said.

Grainland is one of 41 cooperatives that make up Country Operations which is currently the second most profitable division of CHS.

"As individuals, you are now owners of CHS," Gerk told the members last Tuesday. "As owners of CHS, that money goes directly to you based on the profitability of CHS and the amount of business you do at Grainland.

"In a nutshell, they own us, you own them, you get a share in the profits of CHS, you get to share in the profits of Grainland. Thirty-five percent cash, 65 percent when you turn 70 or 100 percent cash if you are already 70, that is where we are today."

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Gerke said there are some things the company should look for in the coming years.

“First, we need to get a feel of how the whole merger with CHS is going to work,” Gerke said. Secondly, he said they need to get back to where farmers look at Grainland as an extension of their operation.

Gerke closed by recognizing CHS and how excited they are for what is to come.

General manager Rick Unrein began his report by recognizing the 114 employees who make Grainland what it is. “These people bring it for you every day and are just a pleasure to work with,” Unrein said.

Unrein outlined where things stand with the shuttle elevator project. Once the merger with CHS became final, talks with NKC and BNSF railroads began regarding the project. Unrein said an agreement has to be reached with the railroads because without it, the project is not possible. “Despite our efforts, the process has taken longer than we expected because BNSF and NKC, as of today, have still not finalized an agreement,” the general manager noted.

Unrein said they continue to urge the railroads to finalize an agreement so they can continue to move forward. He also noted the project was recently rebid so things are ready to roll when an agreement is made. Unrein said the company that got the bid is Todd & Sargent who is currently working on the new mill west of town for Seaboard Foods.

Towards the end of the meeting a question was asked by a member who was concerned for the lack of progress on the proposed train loader project. The member wanted to know if all stops were being pulled to try to get the project moving forward.

Board chair Gerke said he agreed with everyone in the room and didn't think they would still be waiting for something to get moving forward.

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“This past nine and a half months have been very productive for our cooperative,” Unrein said as he finished up his report. He noted both Grainland and its parent company, CHS, are having phenomenal years so far.

It was noted annual meetings will be held on the last Tuesday in February from here on out. The fiscal year will also come to an end on Aug. 31 instead of Jan. 31.

Kurt Micek of Micek and Crouch P.C. of Lincoln, Neb., gave the financial report and congratulated the membership on the decision to merge with CHS Inc. “I know this is a major step forward.” He ran through the financial report pointing out a few minor changes since the merger became effective last year.

Four directors elected

Four directors were elected during last Tuesday’s annual meeting. Three candidates were running for two positions in District 1. Incumbents Ernie Krogmeier and Les Peterson were joined by Mark Lutze in running for District 1 seats. Lutze and Krogmeier were elected in District 1. Incumbent Steve Boerner in District 2 and incumbent Mike Hoppe in District 3 were both reelected. Both were running unopposed.

A meal was served prior to the meeting by Bill Pelle with the help of Holyoke FCCLA members.

Following the business portion of the meeting, numerous prizes were given away to members in a drawing.

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