From Your Commissioner

Wishing Everyone a Happy New Year!

The last month or so has been a challenging one for me. Not only was my reappointment in question, I was also suffering from a head cold that wouldn’t let go. It was not a lot of fun trying to be at the top of my game while feeling like I was in a constant fog. So while I had not planned on taking a month off from writing a column, it was probably for the best. Thank you to Josh Marshall and John Porter for taking up the slack.

I want to thank all the individuals and organizations who wrote letters or spoke in support of my reappointment. Your support meant more to me than you know. To those who were opposed to me continuing as the Commissioner, I want to thank those of you who were specific in your reasons for not supporting me. What I heard from all of you will help make me a better Commissioner, even though negative comments are not easy to hear. Even when there were two sides to a story, it was clear to me that I could have done better.

There was a lot of talk about my lack of use of the Agricultural Advisory Board. Those comments were true, but they were somewhat out of context. One only has to look at the history of the board to understand that the board has not served the purpose as set out in statute for decades. Understanding that the past is not an excuse for present behavior, I will be working on a plan with the board to make sure it becomes both relevant and productive. An outline has been shared with the members and once approved by them it will be forwarded to the Governor and Council for any comments they might have. I am pleased to report that the Governor has appointed Denis Ward as Chairman of the board. Denis and I have spoken and are hoping that the board will be able to meet to discuss the plan in February.

Prior to that meeting we will also be publishing the names and contact information of the board members in the bulletin along with the details of the plan. It is my hope that we might hear from you either by email or at the meeting with any ideas you might have as to how the Advisory Board can better serve the agricultural community.

Repairing burned bridges can be a difficult, if not impossible, task and it became clear to me at the hearing that I have torched a few. It was never my intent to do that, but as the saying goes “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” I have begun the task of reaching out to people to mend fences and I will continue to do so over the coming weeks. My offer is to meet with anyone or any group of people who would like to start down a new path with me. I am also suggesting that they invite their Executive Councilors to attend.

As we enter the New Year I hope that everyone starts the year with a fresh outlook. We all need to be mindful of the past, but if we allow ourselves to be governed by it we miss out on many opportunities. There will be many opportunities in the coming year and I would encourage everyone to reach out to me if I can help with anything under the jurisdiction of the department. Here is hoping that all our readers have a happy and productive New Year.

Shawn N. Jasper-Commissioner