MEETING OF THE

LOUISIANA HORTICULTURE COMMISSION

July 23, 2026
9:30 A.M.
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY
VETERANS MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order by Todd Parker at 9:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL
The roll was called by Courtny Hawes.

Members present: Ricky Becnel, Stephen Shurtz, Cole Sims, Mitch Mayes, Rebekah O'Quin, Cathy Sonnier, Dan Johnson, Rusty Ruckstuhl, Todd Parker, Dr. Ansel Rankins.

A quorum was present.

Others present: Angela Jackson, LDAF Counsel; Tina Peltier, LDAF; Marsha Dugas, LDAF; and Courtny Hawes, LDAF; Bethany Gonzales, LDAF.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Motion: Cathy Sonnier made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded by Stephen Shurtz and passed unanimously.

FUTURE MEETING DATES
The next Horticulture Commission meeting will be held on November 10, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.

EXAM APPEALS
Terry Brandon was not present. This item will be moved to the next meeting.

ADJUDICATORY HEARING
Hearing officer, Terrell Kent, conducted the hearing. LDAF Attorney, Angela Jackson, presented the following cases.

Stipulated Cases: **Case No. 26-HORT-003**

Victor Palacio-AR
D/b/a Palacio's Tree Service
5775 FM 757
Winona, TX. 75792

One (1) violation of La. R.S. 3:3804(C) for advertising and soliciting in a regulated profession (Arborist) without a proper license.

The stipulation was presented by Ms. Angela Jackson.
Respondent was not present but signed stipulation admitting to the violations and agreeing to the recommended penalty of $1,000.00.
Motion: Dan Johnson made the motion to accept the stipulation and penalty. The motion was seconded by Cole Sims. The motion passed with 9 ayes and 1 nay.

Case No. 25-HORT-002

Nancy Sarwinski-LA
P.O Box 575
Prairieville, La. 70769

One (1) violation of LAC 7: XXIX.117.B.4(G) for failing to provide documented proof of having attended or completed an approved substitute for attendance for each credit hour certified during the 2024 licensing year.

The stipulation was presented by Ms. Angela Jackson.
Respondent was not present but signed the stipulation admitting to the violation and agreeing to the recommended penalty of $500.00.
Motion: Mr. Todd Parker made a motion to accept the stipulation and penalty. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stephen Shurtz and passed unanimously.

Contested Cases: **Case No. 25-HORT-009**

Kody Hickman
D/b/a K & K Tree Services/Storm Clean Up, LLC
271 Troy T Cutoff Lane
Florien, La. 71429

Two (2) violations of La. R.S. 3:3804(C) for advertising in a regulated profession (Arborist) without a proper license. One (1) violation of La. R.S. 3:3810(A)(2) for violating a written stop order in a regulated profession (Arborist) without the proper license.

The case was presented by Ms. Angela Jackson.
Mr. Kody Hickman was not present.
Motion: Mr. Mitch Mayes made a motion to find Mr. Kody Hickman in violation of all charges. The motion was seconded by Mr. Todd Parker and passed unanimously. The department recommended a penalty of $500.00 per violation for a total fine of $1,500.00.

Motion: Mr. Mitch Mayes made a motion to accept the recommended penalty. This motion was seconded by Mr. Todd Parker and passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Director's Report:

Mrs. Tina Peltier gave an update on staffing changes, pasture mealybug and phytophthora ramourum positive nursery.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Mr. Ricky Becnel made a motion to adjourn at 10:45 a.m. The motion was seconded by Dr. Ansel Rankins and passed unanimously.