

PA Milk Marketing Board
Carol A. Hardbarger

A Welcome to Our New Consumer Member

June 2021 was a busy month for the Milk Marketing Board. Rob Barley, Chairman, was reappointed by Governor Wolf and approved by the Pennsylvania Senate. In addition, we finally have our new Consumer Member after waiting over a year.

Kristi Kassimer, Fayette County, was appointed by Governor Wolf and recommended by the PA Senate Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee to assume the Consumer Member position on the board in mid-June and was confirmed by the full Senate on the following day. She brings a wide variety of agriculture advocacy and experiences to the board including previous work with the PA Department of Agriculture.

Kristi is also the great-granddaughter of Emerson Work who served on the precursor to the board, the Milk Control Commission, in the 1960s.

The Milk Marketing Law actually includes, in Section 204, a description of a Bureau of Consumer Affairs, to operate under the oversight of the board consumer member and the agency secretary. It has been quite a few years since this bureau has been in operation; in the not so recent past the General Assembly funded a portion of the operating costs.

The PMMB Bureau of Consumer Affairs is tasked in the law to “consult with representatives of consumer groups, to disseminate information relative to activities of the board, to act as a liaison to other Federal, State and local agencies involved in the dairy industry and in milk marketing, to supply pertinent data to news media and other interested parties and to make any recommendations found necessary as a result of such consultations with consumer groups and other bureau activities as directed by the secretary, consumer member and board.”

Once funding from the legislature was lost, the board continued to maintain a staff position to fulfill these duties, but after a few years realized that was no longer financially possible. At that point, whatever work done in support of consumers was primarily the responsibility of the consumer member. While serving in that capacity, I did attempt to provide more outreach and other efforts toward working with consumers and consumer groups, but we are in no way able to provide services as in the past.

In her Committee hearing, Kristi stated she would be interested in working with others at the Milk Marketing Board to develop cohesive pro-dairy messaging for online use. She and the senators also discussed ongoing issues with dairy promotion in contrast with plant-based beverages.

Welcome, Kristi! We are excited to have you on board and to begin working with you.

PMMB is always available to respond to questions and concerns. I can be reached at 717-210-8244 and by email at chardbarga@pa.gov.