



Good afternoon everyone. I am Keith Karaff, Executive Director of CASI. I hope that you are all doing well with shelter in place directives. I know that many of you have been very creative setting up Zoom meetings, Facetime, etc., using all those social media sites to keep in touch and visit. I also understand that puzzle companies are doing a booming business right now. And probably like mine, our yards are looking better than they have in a long, long time. And with all time available, I hear that many honey-do lists are being completed. Before I begin, in March I had a birthday and I had set up a fundraiser on Facebook with all the proceeds going to CASI. I want to thank everyone that was able to donate to my birthday fund. We were able to raise over one thousand dollars and thanks to an anonymous donor right after it ended, the fundraiser was able to donate \$1350 to the organization. I want to thank you all again and I am truly humbled by your generosity.

Since our last briefing, the Board of Directors has been having many discussions trying to work out the future path for CASI. The timeline I have set to work through issues that affect the organization is on track. What follows are the results of our actions to date.

Rule Change Proposals

I have asked the Board to suspend policy 3.1.3; the Rule Change proposals for this year and they have agreed. With a deadline of May 15, 2020, and with the shelter in place directives across the country, it is simply not feasible at this time. Rule Change proposals will be moved into the 2020-2021 chili year.

Pod Cookoffs- Credentials Requirements

I asked the Board to suspend a specific line item in the Bylaws regarding the Pod Cookoff requirement for the 2019-2020 chili year. The Bylaw, Article XIII. Section 1.d and Article XIII. Section 2. d, states: *Hold a CASI Pod Cookoff advertised as such in the Terlingua Trails during the chili year.* This policy has been temporarily suspended for the 2019-2020 chili year only. After looking at the schedule of Pod cookoffs since October 2019, less than half of the Pods have had their cookoffs. Many Pods had their cookoffs scheduled through April and May and have subsequently had to cancel or postpone at this time. There were also many other Pods that had not scheduled. With the number of months left in the chili year, there is no way that all these Pods would be able to reschedule or even schedule their events due to the lockdown. Pods will still be required to submit credentials with the new slate of officers, membership verifications etc. for the upcoming year.

Protecting State, Regionals, Open Championship Cookoffs

Again I approached the Board regarding the status of the above referenced cookoffs. As many of you are aware, our Championships can be grandfathered in after five continuous years and there were



some scheduled that would have attained that status. This year their status is in jeopardy. Here is the motion that was made and passed by the Board of Directors:

I move that due to the Covid19, those existing grandfathered and existing State, Open and Regional cookoffs, as outlined in Rule V1.B.1, Rule V1.B.2 and RuleV1.B.2.C, that had already scheduled their cookoff for the current chili year and are unable to reschedule for the current chili year not be penalized and retain their status for the 2020-2021 chili year in accordance with Rule V1.B.1, Rule V1.B.2 and Rule V1.B.2.C.S

By the actions taken here, these cookoffs are now safe.

Moratorium Extension

The Board had a conference call earlier this week to discuss the moratorium. We waited until mid-week so that we were able to have the most up to date information about shelter in place and lockdowns. With much discussion and thought, we have decided that the moratorium will be extended until May 31, 2020. I placed a caveat in the motion that should circumstances improve, the option to lift the moratorium is in place. Playing wait and see, we are tasked with trying to make decisions with the available information and predictions. Mid-May, we will once again have a conference call to look at future steps.

We ask for your continued support and understanding. Several members of the Board have received emails and phone calls thanking us for our efforts. Some are asking questions about future decisions. We are working to resolve many issues that are still outstanding. We are now working on some of the most important issues. The issues in the upcoming discussions affecting the membership are the required point totals for cooks for qualification, State cookoff numbers and required number of cooks at cookoffs.

Per the timeline, each one of these is on the list for discussion. It takes time to work through all these topics and to hold votes on each one. You may ask why? These future topics, just like the previous ones, each require a vote to temporarily suspend a policy, bylaw or rule. With the structure of the CASI business, we are required to discuss and vote on each topic individually. These cannot be combined in a single vote nor should they be. Again, we are in an unprecedented position and we are working diligently to resolve these issues.

When the lock downs are lifted and the shelter in place is removed, we will be left with few months in the chili year. If possible, please look at rescheduling your event if that is an option. Just a reminder to the Regional cookoffs, Labor Day weekend is still available in Texas. Also, I would ask the Pods this: if there are several Pods within a reasonable distance to each other, look at the possibility of combining Pod Cookoff weekends. Possibly one Pod on Friday night and one on Saturday, or Saturday and Sunday...even a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We have lost so many cookoffs to date that we will not recover these for this chili year.

We understand that itch that you all have to get back out on the trail cooking, however there is something else to consider. When the moratorium is lifted and cookoffs begin rescheduling, due to the



concern of many people, the issue is going to be finding judges. Until some sense of confidence returns to the public, I fear that we will face this particular problem over and over again. I think that it is going to take a great deal of publicity and advertising to ensure you have enough judges to cover your rounds.

As for the Great Peppers' Meeting, at this time, it remains scheduled for the September 11-13 weekend. As we move forward and with new information we will keep you informed.

It is still our intention to have the 54th Terlingua International Chili Championship. However, because of the nature of such a huge gathering, everything will depend on the actions of Brewster County.

We are all going through trying times right now. The uncertainty of the future is a bit unsettling. As creatures of habit, we are at ease in our knowledge most of the time that things happen when they are scheduled and we plan and see our plans through. Our complacency has been warped and no matter how we try, it will not fit neatly back in place. However, the one thing I know about our family is that we are resilient. We are creative. We are strong and dedicated. Time and time again throughout our history, we have taken what seems an impossible situation, and through our members' time, commitment and imagination, have worked through our limitations and we will do so again. This is a bump in the road. We will come out of this stronger and more committed than ever before.

Before I close today, I must thank a group of people that have been of tremendous support to me over these past weeks. They have been offering me guidance, suggestions and words of encouragement when I am feeling a bit overwhelmed. Kris, Cindy, Nancy, Mike, Don, Scotty, James, Brian, Renee and Jennifer. Your Board of Directors. Thank you all so much. And most of all, I have to thank Michael. He is the one that gets to listen to me try to figure out my next course of action. He is the one that is giving me unwavering support. He's the one that says you don't need another margarita. He has been and continues to be my anchor. All I have to say is...You know what? When I became your ED, I never thought I would have the responsibility of having to guide this organization through such an unprecedented upheaval. I hope that you all understand that making these decisions is difficult. It takes time and a lot of discussion to ensure that we are doing our best to protect our cooks, our sponsors and our organization. We are doing our dead level best to ensure that when this crisis is over...we still have a CASI. We are working as responsibly and quickly as possible. Now is not the time to make snap decisions. Are they wrong? Maybe. Are they right? Maybe. Only time will tell.

I thank all of you that have joined me today. The transcript of this speech will be emailed to all the Great Peppers, the *Terlingua Trails*, the blogs and our social media sites.

In closing, I would like to share this quote with you all that means more to me than you can ever know:

"In Him, there are no limitations. One only limits self by doubt or fear."

Thank you all and God Bless.

