

The Marketing and Communications Committee was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by USTA Director of Marketing and Communications Dan Leary who made welcome remarks, including introductions of Committee Chairperson Ashley Tetrick, and USTA staff TC Lane, Kyle Credit and Wendy Ross on the dais.

1. Roll was taken by Leary. Committee Members present were: co-chairperson Ashley Tetrick, and directors Chris Antonacci, Dave Bianconi, Dan Bittle, Jason Bluhm, Barry Brown, Roy Burns, Michael Carter, Joe Frasure, Kevin Greenfield, Rich Mattei, Chris McErlean, Jason Roth, Jason Settlemoir, Dein Spriggs, Cathy Webb, and Shawn Wiles.

The following agenda items were presented at the meeting.

2. Guest Speaker – Ty Higgins, General Manager, Ag New Communications

Ag Net Communications General Manager Ty Higgins' "Sell Local: Buying In to the Grassroots Outreach Model" presentation discussed target audiences and the challenges in promoting harness racing to those outside the industry. He emphasized how during his time at the Ohio Farm Bureau, the organization trained members and put farmers, not lobbyists, in front of the cameras to discuss everyday content, not corporate messaging.

Higgins explained how they built grassroots digital advocates and focused on transparency and normalcy. His advice to the harness racing industry included, being transparent in promoting normal operations to the public that build trust, simplifying social media to reach audiences outside the industry, utilizing horsemen to tell the stories, and showing the horses as athletes. He emphasized that local outreach has more impact.

(Note: On Friday morning, Higgins hosted his weekly podcast from the Hilton. Higgins interviewed USTA President Russell Williams, USTA COO TC Lane and USTA Director Dr. John Mossbarger from Midland Acres farm for the broadcast that aired on stations across the State of Ohio.)

3. What We Tried, What We Built, How We Did, and What We Learned in 2025 to Help Us Move Ahead into the Future.

Dan Leary, Wendy Ross and Kyle Credit made the USTA Communications Department's "What We Tried, What We Built, How We Did and What We Learned to Help Us Move Ahead into the Future" presentation.

Leary discussed the HarnessRacing.com Show that had a full schedule for the first time in 2025 and how the USTA has utilized technology, pre-race/event promotion, social media influencers as well as race replays and additional graphics to create awareness and boost social media numbers. He described how efforts will continue in 2026 with some new opportunities to monetize some of the USTA's social media efforts through sponsorships and advertising.

Ross talked about the social media growth, which included 50 million impressions, 12 million video views and 1.5 million engagements that led to 15,000 new followers on USTA social media platforms.

Credit concluded the presentation explaining to the committee how these efforts have contributed to increasing the visibility and building the brand of harness racing, and why that strong branding is essential in growing the sport.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **xxxxxx**