

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas Announces New Board of Directors

Napa, CA – December 2, 2020 - The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas announces eleven elected Member Directors for its Board of Directors. All humbly accept the task ahead of them to shoulder the responsibilities of the organization's past while looking forward to what CMS-A can become through hard work, accountability, and active listening. These members were chosen by their fellow Master Sommeliers and took office as of 6 pm Pacific time today:

- *Christopher Bates, MS*
- *Robert Bigelow, MS*
- *Brahm Callahan, MS*
- *Keith Goldston, MS*
- *Michael Meagher, MS*
- *Kathryn Morgan, MS*
- *Joshua Nadel, MS*
- *Sabato Sagaria, MS*
- *Mia Van de Water, MS*
- *Emily Wines, MS*
- *David Yoshida, MS*

This new Board of Directors understands that this is a pivotal point in the organization's history. The beverage and hospitality community's passionate engagement over the past few weeks has been necessary for confronting the truth of the CMS-A's identity, and it also brings forth great optimism for what the organization can now become.

The CMS-A Board welcomes its membership's and larger community's ideas, tough conversations, and willingness to hold the organization accountable as it fundamentally transforms for the better. In the coming days, CMS-A will begin its search to add four external board members as well as hiring a full-time CEO to contribute new leadership and perspectives to help guide the organization as it begins this next chapter.

The Board knows that many of you are going to have questions, and it has done its best to answer some of these in a formalized FAQ. Any additional questions and feedback are warmly welcomed.

Collectively, the Board and the entire organization looks forward to earning your trust and continuing on a positive path forward, in service to the community at large.

Yours In Service,
The Board of Directors
Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas



The Court of Master Sommeliers sets the global standard of excellence for beverage service within the hospitality industry with integrity, exemplary knowledge, and humility.

Who tabulated the results for the election?

The votes for the eleven positions were tallied, reviewed and verified by an outside election inspector, the law firm of Davis Wright Tremaine LLP.

How many Master Sommeliers voted?

Out of the 159 total Master Sommeliers eligible to vote, 137 voted.

Did the previous Board of Directors resign?

The previous Board of Directors initiated a transfer of power with this special election, with the organization's and community's best interests in mind. This process was important to allow a transfer of responsibility that is organized, legally compliant, and allows CMS-A to evolve and professionalize.

How will the Chair and Vice Chair be elected? When will this happen?

The Chair and Vice Chair positions will be elected by the new Board of Directors. The Board will meet several times over the next few days, and this will be one of the first orders of business.

Who will select the 4 non-Master Sommelier Board Director positions? When will this happen?

There are four positions on the Board for outside subject matter experts who are not Master Sommeliers. The directors in these four positions will be elected by the newly elected Member Directors. These roles will help the Board gain broader perspective, and add supplemental skills that will help it be a better organization for the community at large.

A lead-time of several weeks is expected to properly identify, vet, communicate roles and expectations, and select these four outside positions.

When should we expect to hear an action plan from the new Board of Directors?

The new Board of Directors will hold a series of meetings over the coming days where it will begin to formulate this action plan. We look forward to sharing our thoughts and engaging in discussion around how we can make the organization better.

How will the new Board of Directors manage the ongoing investigation of suspended members?

The outside, independent investigation led by Margaret C. Bell, of Lagasse Branch Bell + Kinhead, is still under way. Ms. Bell is in the process of conducting an impartial investigation of every allegation the Board has received, both through the New York Times articles and from other sources, such as the Ethics Reporting Line. The Board will engage with third-party experts to make recommendations on how to proceed with this information.

Is the new Board of Directors still searching for a CEO to lead the organization?

The previous Board initiated work to engage an executive search firm, to put the newly elected Board of Directors in a position to select and hire the CEO by the end of 1Q 2021.