

Minutes - Massachusetts Board of Public Overseers (BOPO) Meeting - 4/27/17

Board Members Present: Matt Barron, Jack Angley, John Lee, John Lebeaux, Michael Lueders.
Jody Jellison

Observers and Guests: Ed Bourgeois, Mary Jane Bacon, Winton Pitcoff

Extension Staff: Kathy Carroll, Will Snyder, Lauren DuBois, Nick Brazee, Pat Harmsen, Joe Shoenfeld, Bill Miller, Sonia Schloemann

Introductions

1. Review of Minutes

a. Approved

Jellison notes that new Dean (Serio) will attend a future Board meeting.

2. Welcome/Highlights (Jellison)

- Update on NIFA funds – Extension is working thru CARET and APLU for a 19% across the board funding increase. Presents budget recommendation is for an overall 21% decrease
- Request for IPM state funding – budget line through MDAR
 - Commissioner Lebeaux met with Representative Hogan who is sponsoring the request. *“Promising Concept, now a matter of \$ and cents. It’s not dead”*
- Update provided on Cranberry Station Director search which remains in progress with several promising candidates having already been interviewed
- Farm Manager Position to be hired soon. Individual will oversee all Research Farms/Facilities
 - Key responsibilities include overall farm management, shared personnel and operational capacity, cost recovery
 - Position will report to Joe Shoenfeld
- College policies regarding Indirect Cost Returns for external research grants by Extension Faculty and Staff have changed in response to request made by Extension Director
 - Greater proportion of costs will now be returned to UMass Extension
- New format is being created to communicate financial information, allocations, expenditures
 - Report to be distributed at Next BOPO meeting (July)
 - College of Natural Sciences is facing significant budget cuts

Discussion:

(Angley) What is your reading of University Administration's commitment to Extension?

(Jellison) There are challenges at various levels. Extension is only one of many competing concerns to the higher administration levels. Chancellor understands the land-grant mission and related responsibilities. (Current Dean) Steve Goodwin has been a strong advocate, who balanced Extension with other priorities. New Dean (Serio) is an excellent scientist and communicator. Her leadership team is being established and Extension Director Jellison has been a consistent presence in the discussions. College is large and diverse and BOPO is charged with helping Dean Serio appreciate the importance of Extension and value to our stakeholders and partners. We hope Dean Goodwin will stay engaged.

- Extension Faculty in fisheries policy based in Gloucester – Search is in progress with several promising candidates having already been interviewed
- Currently reducing the number of horses retained by Hadley Farm
- Camp Farley Executive Director was arrested – (Camps are independent but we have an MOU that allows them to use our 4-H logo.) We are looking at ways to maintain youth safety, protect our brand.
- Recent “High Impact” Publication contains additional highlights
- A series of Planning Grants have been awarded to Extension Staff and Faculty to support efforts to obtain external funding
- 4H Conservation Leadership Program is in the initial stage development – committee identified with participation of Extension Staff and Faculty from Department of Environmental Conservation
- CAFE Summer Scholars - 2017 second iteration with internal funds and matching funds from external partners (Mass. Grange, Mass. Society for the Promotion of Agriculture)

Discussion:

(Bacon) Are you sending letters to Congressional Delegation asking for support?

(Jellison) We were allowed to contact Elizabeth Warren, which is not typical, as her office requested information.

3. Update on Mass. Local Food Action Plan Statewide - Collaborative Food Systems Approach

(Pitcoff) – ppt available upon request.

- Focus Areas –
 - Food Waste Streams
 - Food Processing
 - Farmland Protection
 - Inputs – Water, Energy, Pollinators
 - Food Production and Distribution
 - Marketing
 - Food Access
 - Health
- Overarching themes: Workforce, Environment, Equity
- Implementation: Legislature, State Administration, Stakeholders
 - MA Food System Collaborative – monitor implementation
 - Significant role for Extension in Implementing Plan

4. Assessing risk for decay in American Elm (Brazee) – ppt available upon request.

- Investigation focusing on potential risks and rewards of fungicide injections to protect against Dutch Elm Disease – research is ongoing.

5. Strategic Discussions and Planning - Listening Session (Carroll)

- **What is most important way Extension can make a difference over the next 5 years?**
(Lueders) Education has been a hallmark, beyond higher education, professional education and growth
(Angley) Cranberry Station has helped us adapted to the constantly changing threats
(Lueders) We need to keep learning in order to help/respond to our client's needs.
(Bourgeois) – Continue to connect farmers to research and to each other using technology. A platform to connect is needed. Information can be generated and shared from many different places. Tap into collective wisdom.
(Angley) System still works on a local level
(Bourgeois) There is a need to get info disseminated more broadly.
(Barron) – I am worried if we are even going to have a Forestry Extension Program. We can organize and communicate with our elected officials. Show them why these products matter. Show off and promote exciting things.
(Lee) – Climate Change, Energy Conservation. Extension has tremendous credibility based on previous record. I'm not hearing enough of an understanding of where the information and services are coming from and the value of an interested, but not a financially interested 3rd party.
- **What should be the focus of the work moving forward, for the next generation of employees?**
(Bacon) – There are two efforts: the research and the applied work. Students are focused on hard science and not on the applied work. Extension has to win the support of the public for the organization to survive.
(Carroll) With declining financial support, we have had to chase money to sustain our program. Our programs are increasingly funded by external support.
(Angley) What do we need to do on federal and state level to be an effective advocate for increased resources?
(Carroll) We are also facing the possibility of letting some things go. Previously we decided to maintain the whole program by asking all teams to generate their own operating expenses.
(Angley) The commissioner's experience and commitment will be valuable.
(Jellison) The Extension group has been dealt a difficult situation. Growing public needs, reduced resources. Your feedback is needed to inform difficult choices.
(Angley) – Is there a possibility to work in a more narrowly focused manner, rather than trying to do too much?
(Carroll) – We need to seriously look at divesting.
(Bourgeois) – An emerging funding source and partnering opportunity is specialty food companies.

6. Massachusetts Envirothon (Snyder) – ppt available upon request

- Envirothon is the leading Statewide Conservation Education program for high school youth
- Statewide collaboration of many organizations and agencies
- School Team-based competition
- Focus areas: Water, soil, forest, wildlife and current issue (Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation)
- Documented Benefits: Youth development, civic education, conservation experience and education

7. 4H Urban Program –in Holyoke and Springfield (DuBois) – ppt available upon request

8. Nutrition Program update (Harmsen)

- Program reached nearly 70,000 individuals last year
- Focus on healthy food and physical activity, recipes, food demonstrations
- Program reaches clients across the entire age spectrum
- Federal Funding for Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) appears stable
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Education (SNAP-Ed) program is at greater risk. It may transition to a state block grant. Representative McGovern is opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.