

**Minutes from
UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers
Monday, June 10, 2019 - 11:00 -2:00
Mount Ida Campus of UMass Amherst, Newton**

Members present: John LeBeaux, John Lee, Michael Lueders, Matt Barron, Deb Phillips, Karen Heymann
Members Absent: Jack Angley, Patricia Bigelow, Chris Dunn
Guests: Karen Connelly, Laurie Flanagan
Staff/Faculty: Jody Jellison, Joe Shoenfeld, Bill Miller, Sonia Schloemann, Hilary Sandler, Linda Horn, Geoffrey Njue, Christine Hatch, Lisa Sullivan Werner, Mary Owen, Sandy Thomas

Meeting commenced at 11:00 with John Lee as acting Chair. Introductions were made.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved with one alteration, in the third paragraph of the “News” section, in which the \$17M annual budget mentioned by Jody Jellison was clarified as the total CAFE budget, not the Extension budget.

Report from Jody Jellison, Extension Director

New BOPO member has been confirmed: Christopher Dunn. Chris serves as UMass Executive Director for Government Affairs and as special advisor to Chancellor Subbaswamy and was appointed as the Chancellor’s representative on the Board.

At the Cranberry Station, two new extension faculty have come aboard: Sai Sree Uppala and Giverson Mupambi. Detailed architectural plans, funded by \$250,000 from the Legislature in the FY19 budget, are moving forward to construct a new building at the Station. The Chancellor has authorized renovations to the current building in order to update HVAC system and add a new roof totaling \$1.2 million. Jody feels optimistic, though funds authorized in the 2018 Environmental Bond for the new building have not yet been released.

Budget: Jody reports that federal Smith-Lever funds will come in pretty close this year to requests (by August, it is hoped) and fairly stable funding will ensue. The core of extension funding is USDA Smith-Lever funding which fluctuates slightly up and down. Extension also has a small number of gifts. The state budget is unknown but Jody feels cautiously optimistic.

Jody thanked all those who advocated for funds for new equipment for the *Soils Lab*, commenting that Karen Connelly played a major role. Ultimately, it was not successful, but the hope is that it may be in the future.

Marijuana and Industrial Hemp: moving forward is challenging with the combination of university, state and federal government’s interesting dynamics and discussions about what we can, and are able, to do. The path forward on the hemp side will become clearer after the state budget passes. We are currently acting under the 2014 Farm Bill because USDA has not yet released interpretation of the 2018 Farm Bill. Different states interpret the federal 2014 Farm Bill in different ways. We can provide technical advice and soil

testing to hemp growers who registered through the state. But we cannot offer plant diagnostics, which is under review at this time. We will probably not do not hemp research this summer but maybe next summer.

Deb Phillips questioned funding streams for towns hosting retail cannabis businesses, inquiring whether the taxes paid by those entities could be a source of funds for agriculture. Commissioner Lebeaux replied that the state receives 17% tax from recreational marijuana sales with none coming into the state for hemp. Jody Jellison added that we are constrained because of the status of recreational cannabis at the federal level. Once we can operate under 2018 Farm Bill, things may be clearer.

Search for *Agricultural Director* (Kathy Carroll's former position) is going forward. There are two excellent finalists and reference checks are being done now. Planning to have someone on board within two months.

Preparations for a search for the *Worcester 4-H* position are underway. Jody thanked *Linda Horn* for filling in and taking on significant responsibilities and leadership.

This is the fourth year for *CAFE's Summer Scholar* program. It has been quite successful with 33 students this year and several more in a new policy track. Jody acknowledged generous prior support from the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture for initiating and supporting this worthy program and the Massachusetts Grange for four years of continued support.

Joe Shoenfeld Updates

Waltham facility status: Last building at Waltham will close at end of calendar year. The remaining five tenants have petitioned the city to purchase land and buildings. All 4-H staff from the Waltham office have been relocated to Hallden Hall on the Mount Ida campus. UMass is exploring the creation of a drop-off station at Mount Ida for soil and tick samples to be sent to UMass Amherst laboratories via daily courier on an experimental basis to determine if it is helpful and will bring increased business.

Joseph Troll Turf Facility, South Deerfield. Spurred by new protective gear worn by our employees, a few adjacent neighbors raised concerns about chemical applications. Joe Shoenfeld, CAFE Farm Manager Bob Skalbite, along with turf faculty and UMass public relations staff attended several Select Board meetings in Deerfield to explain our research and methods of application. An Open House was held in May with invitation extended to Deerfield Select Board and neighbors that was well attended. A few new systems were put in place for times of application including establishing a notification zone posted with a brightly colored sign in a new sign box at the entry noting times of spraying that day, three yellow flags and a pesticide marker along the road leading into the facility. MDAR helped greatly during discussions and decisions.

Joe-4-H is looking for a small office to be located in *Pittsfield*. A new tenant will be moved into the space we currently occupy in the Conte Federal Building.

Presentation: Hilary Sandler, director, UMass Cranberry Station

Cranberries are one of the leading crops grown in Massachusetts and are one of three native commercially-grown fruits in the U.S. Canadian cranberry growers are taking over as major producers. They have an advantage of fewer pest problems and newer bogs.

Wild cranberries are ecologically unique from small to large patches grown in the wild. Trying to make ours more efficient, now we work with irregular shapes, they have no roots, low-growing fruit grows upright shoots. In U.S. cranberry production, Wisconsin is the most significant grower, Massachusetts is second. China is now beginning to grow cranberries with 4,000 acres already underway.

One of our challenges, being the third most densely-populated states in country, is the pressure on land development and housing.

Harvest processing: wet and dry. Wet processed can be harvested any time, in dark, etc. Dry harvest have to wait for the berries to dry (an inefficient method) . The grower has to contract with handlers: in Massachusetts, Ocean Spray is the largest one. An important requirement for growing is proximity to fresh water.

Pest management is a major challenge. Scale, winter moth, poison ivy, nutrients in wetlands, water and water quality are all major problems for growers. There is increased market pressure to produce a 'perfect cranberry' for slicing along with other marketing pressures. Climate change effects are now a consideration. Case in point, cranberries change colors based on daylight and temperature, so berries are not coloring up. Growers can even be penalized for selling white or pink berries, rather than dark red.

An especially challenging time is coming since the cranberry price will likely go as low as \$20 per barrel this year. Now renovation is underway to remain competitive for some growers. In order to produce more efficient harvests, it can take 4 years to grow new lines with plugs brought in from NJ. Native varieties are great but have lower yields. Maybe marketing them as heritage could be an advantage. Large fruited varieties grow more per acre. Hilary reviewed options for planting and spraying. Possibly drones will to be used within a decade for pesticide delivery. Hilary reviewed integrated research and extension outreach work with Professor Ana Caicedo on dodder problems .

To review her full and rich presentation, go to

https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cranberry_community_presentations/17/

Briefing on developments in the 4-H Youth Development Program, William Miller

(Powerpoint available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-o3oFnsjP9tloLocMpeYz0vC5vnGk1S/view?usp=sharing>)

There are several challenges facing 4-H today. National club enrollment is dropping. For example in 1980 there were 12,000 clubs in the U.S. By 2000 that number had dropped to just over 4000.

In 2012, 238 clubs were active in Massachusetts. Today there are 193 clubs in the state.

The challenges of enrollments are not unique to Massachusetts. Even though club numbers are decreasing, we are still working to form new ones. Time spent by staff to provide support to clubs is 80%.

FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS - 2018

4-H volunteers, partners, and collaborators were invited to share their perspectives on how social trends, emerging opportunities, and audience needs will shape the future of the Massachusetts 4-H Youth Development Program. Focus group and interview participants answered the question:

What are the societal trends that will shape the future of 4-H?

- Importance of Technology (Program Content and Communication)
- Local Agriculture and Food Systems
- Time Constraints
 - Overscheduled youth
 - Fully Employed Volunteers

STAFF - RETREAT

What are the major trends that will shape the future of 4-H?

- Volunteer commitments
 - Increasing parental demands
 - Shorter term volunteer commitments
 - Harder to recruit volunteer club leaders
- Declining enrollments
- Increasing interest in online learning
- Increasing need to collaborate
- Toward educating whole child
- Increasing interest in school enrichment
- Increasing need for College prep and professional training
- Increasing role for technology
- Greater inclusivity (race/ethnicity, kids with disabilities, mental health issue)
- Level funding
- Increasing connection to the land

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- How can we continue to serve our current constituents?
- How can we reach a broader audiences?
- How can we ensure that 4-H programs maintain their relevance?

Deb Phillips offered information about a program for youth in Great Barrington called, “Greenagers” who help with environmental issues. Are there similar goals and a synergy that could be brought together?

Program News Highlights

Linda Horn, 4-H Youth Development Program

4-H has been serving youth since its inception in 1902. Although the organization began with animal care and they continue to offer opportunities in this area, their new motto is: “4-H is not just about cows anymore.” Studies show that being involved in a multi-aged group is helpful as it forms a unique bond where all ages become friends with social barriers being broken down. There is a strong 4-H tradition of working with animals and summer fairs. The confidence that develops from talking with a judge as they learn something new is a valuable asset.

4-H is organizing short-term community service projects through an initiative called "Four Seasons of Giving." Each season 4-H youth report in to get incentives. For example, they track how much money was raised from a car wash and donated to charity; how many pounds of non-perishable food were collected for the hungry; they total numbers of books donated to shelters, etc.) 4-H also teaches technology. STEM ambassadors help with computer coding, and Lego robotics. They reach out to boys and girls clubs, libraries, etc. to help them learn about offerings in 4-H.

STEM ambassadors are college students and several have been hired through CAFE Summer Scholars program. Last year, 250 youth were reached and she anticipates reaching 500 this coming year with eight Summer Scholars as STEM ambassadors. Public speaking presentations offer 4-H youth the chance to research a topic and develop public speaking skills. Awards are a big piece of 4-H programs and are given if they are deserved. Youth attend 4-H national congress and frequently go to regional conferences. Linda said she is not sure where the road will take 4-H, but she is looking for new audiences and getting a variety of kids involved.

Lisa Sullivan-Werner, Nutrition Education Program

NEP anticipates budget to be stable for the coming year. They received funding for farmers markets and some mobile markets. They are planning 84 food demonstrations at farmers markets this summer across the state. The state Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) funding has been reauthorized. This very popular program provides more fresh food for SNAP participants.

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is working with SNAP-Ed to educate consumers. Our nutrition programs reached 41,000 people with direct education and over 107,000 individuals received indirect education through newsletters, displays, etc.

We are doing a special project for GIS mapping with MAPC to see what is happening throughout state. The goal is to find overlays as we locate low-income folks. We want to see if certain areas are related to health and economic indicators along with other parameters.

Sonia Schloemann, Agriculture and Commercial Horticulture

Agriculture program director search is the most important work they are undertaking in program area, she relays the programs are in good shape. Sonia also expressed appreciation to all BOPO members who worked hard on the Soil Lab efforts. She is working with the Healthy Soils Action Plan. She has enjoyed working with MDAR on dual use solar projects.

Tick education is on the upswing from medical zoology lab.

The Spotted Lanternfly conference held recently was well-received. It already has a strong presence in Penn. This destructive pest poses a great threat to fruit growers. Not yet seen in Mass.

John Lee adjourned meeting at 2:10.

A tour of the new 4-H offices at Mount Ida took place with several BOPO members and faculty led by Joe Shoenfeld.