



UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers UMass Collaborative Service Center

Meeting Notes April 2, 2010

Present

Members: Nancy Garrabrants, Michael Lueders, Jack Angley, Ted Wales, Lynn Griesemer, Art Eve, Rena Prendergast, Jerry Myers, Nathan L'Etoile

Guests: Mary Jane Bacon, Robert Schrader, Bob Macleod, Stephen Herbert, Douglas Gillespie

1. Welcome

Jack Angley called the meeting to order and asked for acceptance of notes from the January 29th meeting. Nathan L'Etoile moved to accept the minutes. Michael Lueders seconded. The notes were accepted.

2. Center for Agriculture Update

Steve Herbert reported on the following Center initiatives:

- Extension Budget – Steve noted Extension is being asked to prepare for university funds reduction of either 3% or 6%. He stated this level of reduction is less than previously projected in light of the state budget uncertainty.
- FY11 Plan of Work – The FY11 federal plan of work was submitted April 1st as required. The FY11 plan is jointly developed with the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station and is a first step towards further integration of research and Extension.
- Solar Electric Installations – Steve mentioned his concern that solar electric facilities are being proposed for installation on farmland. A specific case in Monson was noted. Steve noted he had proposed an installation at UMass that would be elevated, allowing the continued agricultural use of the land. Steve's proposal sparked a lively discussion of both design and funding options.

3. Extension Update

Nancy Garrabrants reported on the following Extension developments:

- FY11 State Budget – Reviewed projected FY11 Extension budget, noting that program funding would remain level while reductions would be absorbed within administration.

- Outreach Funds and Transition of Staff - Nancy used a handout to show the use of Outreach funds from FY07-FY10, as well as projected uses FY11. Three former OMT staff will transfer to Extension and Extension funds will purchase the equivalent of two FTE's of staff time from University Relations. Extension expects to spend approximately \$105,000 less on technology and communications support in FY11.
- Award - Jean Anliker, NEP Director, received "Priester Award" for development of the SPIN (strength and power in nutrition) project and its application in Springfield
- Federal Budget - As part of annual initiative of the Council on Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET), Ken Nicewicz and Nancy met with individual federal congressional aides (all except Scott Brown) to advocate for increased FY11 Extension and Experiment Station funds. Five congressmen subsequently signed on to support an increase of national funding for Extension to \$350 million per year. Success with this initiative would increase Massachusetts Smith Lever funding by approximately \$400,000 per year.
- Federal Competitive Funds – The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is a primary source of competitive funding for Agriculture and the land grant system. Stephen Herbert and Nancy are convening meetings with interested faculty on campus to support the development of funding proposals.
- Logo - A new logo has been developed for the Center for Agriculture and is being used on Massachusetts Agriculture Day promotional materials.
- Audubon Representative to BOPO - Nancy has been in contact with Massachusetts Audubon regarding the appointment of Wayne Castonguy, of The Trustees of Reservations, to replace Robie Hubley on the Board.

4. Agriculture Day at the State House

Nancy Garrabrants reviewed the letter from BOPO and Extension promotional materials to be included for distribution at Agriculture day. There was support for the letter, as well as concern, the letter include the signature of all board members. An effort would be made to get Ed Davidian's signature prior to Agriculture Day. Turning to scheduling legislative visits on farm day, Nancy noted legislative visits were scheduled for 10:00-11:30 AM. A brief discussion followed regarding visits. Robert Macleod stated four 4-H Foundation members were attending. Ted Wales noted representatives of the Green Industry alliance were attending and scheduling meetings.

5. Advocacy Strategy Development

Nancy Garrabrants began the conversation by stating she believes there is value in Agriculture having a consistent message and wanted to discuss how the board might support articulating such a message. In the context of Board discussion, Doug Gillespie suggested that very high level state priorities – such as green energy production – might be developed as broad priorities for agriculture. Following discussion, Nancy requested members forward to her suggestions for advocacy priority areas that can be discussed at the June Board meeting.

Nancy questioned, in light of the numerous retirements in the state legislature, whether developing a legislative agricultural caucus would be a good step. Doug Gillespie observed an agricultural caucus may not be advisable as it might take responsibility for agricultural issues away from individual legislators.

Discussion followed related to whether BOPO should take a more proactive approach to coordinating the advocacy message for agriculture. There was general agreement that commodity associations provide this role and it is not the best role for the Board. Nathan L'Etoile suggested individual meetings with legislators, such as inviting them to specific local events, was the best strategy. Several board members supported this approach.

6. Concern & Issues from Members

Jack Angley asked members if there were additional issues or concerns related to the work of the board that should be on agenda for future discussion.

- Doug Gillespie mentioned the probability casino legislation would be enacted by the legislature and the potential opportunity to link long term funding for agriculture to casino revenues. Doug specifically mentioned funding for agricultural innovation, agricultural loans or agriculture in the classroom could be possibilities.
- Ted Wales noted there was a water conservation state agency meeting scheduled in Boston and questioned if the agenda was strongly related to agriculture. Ted agreed to send the agenda to Nancy for distribution to the Board.
- Jack Angley mentioned Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) was a critical area to focus upon as GAP standards are increasingly limiting entry into the fresh foods market.
- Responding to a question from Jack, Rena Prendergast noted the nutrition community was interested in the appropriate definition of organic.
- Nancy Garrabrants questioned whether the board would be interested in meeting via webinar rather than in person. Nathan L'Etoile raised the issue of whether such a venue would violate open meeting law.

Meeting Adjourned 11:50 A.M.

Next Meetings: June 18th and October 15th

Robert Schrader
Associate Director
April 7, 2010