

UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers
Tuesday, April 13, 2021, 1:00pm-2:30pm
Conducted on Zoom

Original Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome, introductions, approve minutes of previous meetings
(Matt Barron, Chair)
- 1:05 Membership (Matt Barron)
- 1:15 Extension overview (Jody Jellison)
- Financial overview
 - Federal update
 - Current operational status re: Covid restrictions
- 1:30 Program reports
Clem Clay, Agriculture
Lisa Sullivan-Werner, Nutrition Education
Linda Horn, 4-H Youth Development
River Strong, Clean Energy
- 1:50 Fundraising for Clean Energy project, Matt Barron, River Strong
- 2:00 State legislative action, Jody Jellison, Joe Shoenfeld
- 2:10 Report from annual CARET meetings in Washington, Ted Wales (invited),
Carrie Sears
- 2:20 Staffing and Human Resources report, Joe Shoenfeld
- 2:30 Adjourn

MINUTES

Members Present: Matt Barron, John Lebeaux, Mike Lueders, Ted Wales, Deb Phillips, Karen Heymann, John Lee, Chris Dunn

Members Absent: Patricia Bigelow.

Guests: Ed Bourgeois, Ashley Randle, Laurel Facey

Staff and Faculty Attending: Jody Jellison, Joe Shoenfeld, Bill Miller, Linda Horn, Clem Clay, Lynn Adler, River Strong, Kathleen Geary (recording minutes), Lisa Sullivan-Werner

Welcome, introductions, approve minutes of previous meetings: Matt Barron, Chair

It was noted that December and January meeting minutes are both up for approval.

Joe Shoenfeld read out corrections to January minutes provided by Ed Bourgeois. On page 3 of the January minutes: "Ted Wales stated that there is a way to protect trees from heavy equipment." On Page 4 of the January minutes, last paragraph: "Ed Bourgeois suggested that the group might meet to discuss how to move forward on advancing the area of soil health." *[Corrections have been incorporated.]*

Vote to approve both December and January minutes (via roll call):

Matt Barron – present, approve
Patricia Bigelow – not present
Chris Dunn – here, approve
Karen Heymann – here, approve
John Lebeaux – here, approve
John Lee – here, approve

Mike Lueders – here, approve
Deb Phillips – here, approve
Ted Wales – here, approve

Attendees then introduced themselves for the benefit of the guests in attendance.

BOPO Membership: Matt Barron

Matt Barron provided a membership update. He noted that he had been working on the appointment of Ken Nicewicz, who had been the CARET representative. He is waiting for update from Rep. Hogan's office. He has been trying to get the Senate President and House Leader to add a Senator and Representative to the advisory board and is waiting for a status update.

Deb Phillips asked Matt Barron what he was looking for from Rep. Hogan's office, and offered her help if needed.

John Lebeaux asked if Matt Barron was waiting for a Farm Bureau designee. Matt Barron responded that the Farm Bureau has nominated Ken Nicewicz from Bolton. John Lebeaux told the board that the appointing commission has a lot on their plate, and that he will assist in this appointment.

Fundraising Report: Matt Barron

There is a proposal for a project from Dwayne Breger and River Strong of Clean Energy Extension on wood use. The project would assess quality and quantity of non-forest wood materials that could be used to generate thermal energy, and would try to assess greenhouse gases from combustion. Matt Barron is fundraising to fund this project, and he will be having conversations with various people involved in different parts of this process. He would like to see if this is a possible template for further projects in other areas of Extension.

River Strong seconded their excitement around this possible project, as he thinks that it represents a viable energy source.

Ted Wales noted that arboriculture was his primary business before he retired, and that he had had waste wood chipped and trucked to NH where the chips would be burned for electricity – he asked whether there something we can learn from the state of NH around this?

Matt Barron offered to provide a copy of the project proposal to anyone who is interested. He noted that there are many large tree companies active in the state, resulting in a tremendous volume of waste wood.

Mike Lueders stated that would like to look at the proposal.

Ted Wales thought that the Massachusetts Arborist Association would support this.

Extension Overview: Jody Jellison

Jody Jellison began a presentation on financial overviews by telling attendees that she will send detailed spreadsheets to the members of BOPO. Dr. Jellison noted that CAFE/Extension has about \$11 million in obligations for salary and fringe for the federal year FY2021. Dr. Jellison reminded attendees that the pandemic-related closing of the plant diagnostic and soils laboratories for several months last year negatively impacted revenue. She discussed the seven retirements from the unit and noted that two are currently in the pipeline for replacement.

Federal update: There will be documents distributed with the minutes around this topic. Dr. Jellison thanked Ted Wales for CARET representation. She explained that CARET, the Council on Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, does annual advocacy work which involves asking the federal government to continue (and increase) the federal allocation to both research and extension.

Current operational status regarding Covid-related restrictions: The campus is currently in “guarded”

status. Campus facilities are closed to visitors without special permission. Dr. Jellison talked about working toward a more hybrid system of delivering programs. The farms and labs are pretty much open, and CAFE plans to continue to operate these in a safe manner. Testing is required of students and staff who are in person (including those who have been vaccinated). The University is still operating with travel restrictions, but Jody is hopeful that CAFE will meet its obligations for pest surveys. She is also hopeful that outreach events (at least ones held outdoors) will be able to proceed in a “nearly normal” fashion.

Fall planning: The Chancellor has asked all units to plan for a “mostly normal” fall semester.

Ted Wales asked about the status of federal funding for federal year 2022, and about the timing of the notification on said funding.

Jody Jellison responded that with respect to the increased ask for the entire system, she doesn't know the status. She noted that once USDA determines how much money is available for the entire research and extension system based at the Land-Grant universities, they apply a formula to see how much the states are going to get. She said that she usually has a pretty good idea of where we stand with that by October, although we usually don't get our actual figure until much later (four months into the year).

Matt Barron noted that yesterday's budget submission by President Biden has a 16% increase for USDA, with money going to ag research. Jody Jellison added that it is usually split between capacity and competitive funding. She hopes that Smith-Lever funding gets some part of any increase, as Smith-Lever has been essentially static for about ten years.

Screenshots of Jody's documents follow:

Financial overview: (documents will be distributed with minutes)

CAFÉ overview of salary and wage obligations by operational unit

Includes both outreach and research missions

\$11,185,482 salary and fringe obligations for federal year 2021

138 full time equivalents (administration, farms, youth development,

obesity/nutrition, agricultural economic development, food security/farm systems, environmental stewardship, food safety, sustainable energy, climate change)

Overview of obligations by funding source (federal year)

Non-Extension State: \$1,130,813

Extension State: \$1,595,789

Federal Smith Lever: \$1,915,644

USDA FNEP: \$864,685

Trust/Revenue/Gift: \$837,661

Federal Experiment Station (research): \$1,455,800

Grants: \$3,362,721

Other: \$23,367

Extension-specific summary of primary funding sources

2020 TOTAL (excluding grants) \$5,170,743

USDA Smith Lever \$2,849,846

Revenue income \$870,236

Extension UMass state salary support \$1,450,660

Covid impacts

Revenue generation (-\$659,772 thru 7/1/20)

Retirements (7)

Federal update: (documents will be distributed with minutes)

CARET and annual advocacy process/"Hill visits"

ARIA and infrastructure update

- \$11.5 B APLU ask for agricultural research infrastructure within \$30 B in R&D for infrastructure w/in "American Jobs Plan". Based on recent report showing 69% of the COA buildings are at or near the end of their service life

Current operational status/Covid restrictions:

Guarded status

- Campus closed to visitors
- RLOP system in place for authorizations
- Farms and labs open
- Testing required
- Travel restrictions

Summer and fall planning processes:

- Outreach events (twilight meetings, youth events, scouting)
- Fall planning for “mostly normal”

Extension Program Reports

Clem Clay, Agriculture

Clem noted that a new manager of analytical operations at the Soils Lab was hired (which is good during the peak season). There are one or two other items in the queue, Clem noted, and he is glad that there is some “unfreezing” in the hiring freeze. The ag team continues to do most programming virtually, and there are people getting out into the field (under some continuing restrictions). Clem is hoping that they will be able to provide some in-person programming for smaller groups. People on his team are feeling positive about a significantly more “normal” year and providing in-person delivery will make a real difference for staff.

Matt Barron asked about twilight meetings this summer.

Jody Jellison responded that she thinks that there are two steps involved. She is optimistic that twilight meetings and outdoor educational opportunities will be allowable over the summer. Initially at least, the team will look at holding them off campus. The campus is currently closed to non-students and non-staff, at least until the end of the spring semester. The University is being very cautious in limiting occupancy on campus. The ability to hold on campus events will lag a little bit, even as we hold programs at non-University locations.

Ted Wales asked if the requested Soils Lab funding increase was accomplished.

Clem responded that it was not, and this is still on the wish list, although the team is making it work with the equipment available.

Ted Wales stated that he thinks that this request for updated Soils Lab equipment would be on the lists of Green Industry Alliance and other groups if we had Ag Day this year. He stated that he believes that the increased demand for soil testing will show the importance of Extension to the funding decision makers.

Lisa Sullivan-Werner, Nutrition Education

Lisa noted that she and her team are in the middle of preparing a six month report this week. NEP staff has been completely remote and doing programming virtually. There have been some challenges particularly with schools, although the educators were in a nice routine January-March, doing virtual programs in remote classrooms. In April this came to a halt as students returned to in-person learning. Lisa noted that as the educators reach students at home, often families join in, and she anticipates that NEP they will keep up this in some way. The team is doing a study of technology in the classroom to see what this could look like. They are thinking ahead for the summer, when they usually work at farmers markets doing food demonstrations and giving out recipes and food samples. Instead, the team is developing recipe demonstration videos that could be accessed through a QR code available at farmers markets. The NEP team is working on a reopening plan, which is in draft form, that looks at when staff will return to offices and when educators will again be out in the community.

Linda Horn, 4-H Youth Development

Linda noted that 4H continues to do all programming virtually, and that the team reaches constituents weekly with an emailed news blast. The team has been particularly successful with a career exploration series. Linda gave the example of a student from Brazil who has joined several virtual presentations.

This past weekend 4-H members gave virtual presentations, and there will be a virtual awards ceremony this week. Linda noted that due to the unusual nature of the program, students could tape their presentations if they preferred, and they were judged alongside the live presentations.

The 4-H team is planning the second annual virtual 4-H fair for the state, which will be held the first weekend in August.

Linda hired a new 4-H educator to serve the areas of Bristol and Norfolk counties, with some overlap with the Worcester educator.

The team has been planning to have people go back to the office and to hold some in person events.

Matt Barron noted that he is still looking for a 4-H Foundation representative to BOPO.

River Strong, Clean Energy

River Strong noted that he is standing in for Dwayne Breger at today's meeting.

He has been working remotely like most people.

River talked about the dual use solar program which gets support through the DOE SMART solar incentive. The team has been reviewing projects as they come in, and nearly daily they take calls from farmers and developers interested in the program.

River mentioned the DOE award that will allow the team to do more research on dual use solar.

Karen Heymann noted that dual use solar is of interest to many in the conservation community, specifically regarding impacts on land use. She asked who the stakeholders are who will be engaged when there are results to report. River responded that they are still in the development process on this grant and are working on getting to contract on this, but he suggested that stakeholders will be farmers, state agencies, conservation groups (such as Mass Audubon), and others. The Clean Energy team welcomes input on who should be included as stakeholders.

Karen Heymann asked how the dual use solar project might fit in with the MA food system plan.

River Strong then talked about the pollinator friendly solar certification program, which encourages developers to put pollinator friendly plantings under solar arrays. The program offers a range of certification levels. To date there have been nine certifications awarded, with five applications so far this year.

River also described the community driven solar siting financing project. With funding from NREL (a department of DOE), this project helps rural communities develop a toolkit around solar siting. This is a result of response to community pushback on solar siting. There are pilot programs in Western Mass. communities (Blandford, Wendell, Westhampton). Clean Energy will soon launch a toolkit and process documents, which will be published on the website.

State Legislative Action: Jody Jellison and Joe Shoenfeld

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative "adopted" Extension as one of its projects/causes for the year. Director Winton Pitcoff and his Steering Committee have been working in the legislature to raise some money to go to MDAR to contract with Extension. It was noted that CAFE provided priorities to work on, and there is currently advocacy for \$1 million to support these areas: soils, IPM,

urban ag, and pollinators. It was mentioned that Winton Pitcoff has been working hard on this – it is good to know that someone is out there forcefully advocating on our behalf, and that they are advocating for funding that would arrive in a targeted manner. Joe Shoenfeld added that of the four areas named, three would support positions, while the soils area would both support positions and allow for updating outdated equipment. This effort has been endorsed by the food system caucus in the Massachusetts legislature.

Chris Dunn stated that he has forwarded to CAFE an invitation from local legislators to make a presentation to the food caucus on the work of Extension.

Lynn Adler asked about next steps and the timeline.

Joe Shoenfeld responded that it is too far out of reach to get excited about at this point.

Joe Shoenfeld expressed appreciation for MDAR's willingness to work with us on this, and to possibly serve as a conduit. He clarified that we don't want to impact MDAR's base funding with this request.

Report From Annual CARET Meetings In Washington: Ted Wales and Carrie Sears

Ted Wales noted that it was about 1.5 months ago that Zoom meetings with people in Washington occurred, and that it was successful due to efforts by Bill Miller, Carrie Sears, Clem Clay and Jody Jellison. Ted said that he was especially grateful to Bill for setting up appointments with legislative staffers, some of whom were very engaged. Ted said that he is encouraged by the report of the President's budget increase. He is very impressed by the national organization of land grant universities and of CARET. It will be exciting to see how successful the fundraising is at the federal level, and then we have to be sure that our state can provide matching funds. Jody Jellison clarified that for every federal dollar that comes in through the capacity grants, we need to show one dollar of non-federal support, which is mostly state and some county funds. In response to a question from Matt Barron, Ted Wales indicated that he was able to get an audience with a legislative staffer from all members of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation. Ted also noted that he was able to meet with Congressperson McGovern, who has a history of support of Extension's mission. Bill Miller clarified that we did not get a response from or a meeting with anyone from the office of Stephen Lynch.

In response to a question from Matt Barron about Katherine Clark's office, Bill Miller stated that there was a meeting with Congressperson Clark's staffer Casey Davidson. It was mentioned that there were several very positive meetings, in particular the one with Congressperson McGovern. It seemed that everybody knew Extension, and some connected to particular programmatic areas.

Carrie Sears stated that USDA-NIFA is very supportive and seems to have 4-H in focus for 2021 and beyond. She noted that the Ag Summit focus was on young agricultural leaders of the future and that nine youth from Massachusetts attended and met with legislators. In response to an inquiry from Matt Barron, Carrie noted that Congressperson Moulton's staff person is an alumnus of 4-H.

Jody Jellison expressed her gratitude for the efforts of all involved.

Ted Wales stated that we will find out next March where the funding is. He thinks that with the healthy soils action plan we will have a huge opportunity to get the state legislature to recognize how important Extension is. Ted also advocated for more Extension activity on the Mount Ida campus.

Staffing and Human Resources Report: Joe Shoenfeld

Joe Shoenfeld noted that despite a University hiring freeze, exceptions have been made for CAFE hires, particularly on grant-funded positions. Joe noted that Nutrition Education Program (NEP)

director Lisa Sullivan-Werner will retire in July, and he is currently working with others to appoint an interim director, which will create two vacancies that will also be filled on an interim basis. Joe is also working to fill other vacancies in NEP and to raise several educators to a higher salary classification level. Joe noted that NEP has the greatest number of staff among the teams in CAFE. Joe noted that in the Ag realm, the team is working on hiring a vegetable educator, in addition to having a hired a new leader for the Soils Lab. At the Cranberry Station the team is working to hire two post-doc researchers and two tech assistants. In 4-H the team has filled the position made vacant in Bristol and Norfolk by the retirement of Jay Field, with the new hire due to start in May.

Ted Wales asked about Jason Lanier, who is filling two roles currently. Joe Shoenfeld responded that we did not address this situation in the “first wave” of hires, and that this will possibly be included in a “second wave” of hiring. Clem Clay confirmed that we are looking at the next set of decisions to be made on personnel in the Ag program, as we near completion of the “first wave.”

John Lee asked Matt Barron about the Farm Bureau positions on BOPO *[John Lee missed the intro]*. Matt replied that Ken Nicewicz has been nominated.

The meeting adjourned at 2:33pm.