

**UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers**  
**Thursday, November 18, 2021, 10:30am-12:00pm**  
*Conducted on Zoom*

**Original Agenda**

- 10:30 Welcome, introductions, approve minutes of previous meetings, Matt Barron, Chair
- 10:35 Extension overview: Jody Jellison
- 10:45 Membership, Matt Barron  
Fundraising for Clean Energy project, Matt Barron
- 10:50 Program reports
  - Clem Clay, Agriculture
  - Joe Shoenfeld for Tracie Gillespie, Nutrition Education
  - Linda Horn, 4-H Youth Development
  - River Strong, Clean Energy
- 11:10 Commercial Horticulture programs, Clem Clay
- 11:20 Legislative action, Joe Shoenfeld
- 11:30 Food Science Extension projects, Amanda Kinchla
- 11:50 Discussion
- 12:00 Adjourn

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

**Members Absent:** Patricia Bigelow

**Staff and Faculty Attending:** Clem Clay, River Strong, Jody Jellison, Linda Horn, William Miller, Joe Shoenfeld, Heather Lohr, Christine Hatch, Lynn Adler

**Guests:** Annie Sullivan, Aidan Foley, Maria Cataldo, Thomas Darr, Taryn LaScola-Miner, Ed Bourgeois, Paul Sullivan, Barbi Woolf, Elizabeth Sullivan, Brie Travaline, Alena Lieto-Trivedi, Jess Sanna, Melissa Lowry, Colleen Puleo, Lois McCallin, Emily Cavanagh, Ellen Golden, Steven Bonauto, Jennifer Gibbons, Sue Dennen, Karen Tajalli.

Chair Matt Barron welcomed everyone to the meeting and took roll call of the members. He announced that because of the large number of guests participating who wished to discuss the Sunny Roick 4-H Club, that he would move the discussion item on the agenda from the end to the beginning of the meeting. Joe Shoenfeld announced protocols for the discussion, including asking speakers to identify themselves by name and location once recognized by Mr. Barron.

Guests made the following comments:

Jess Sana, Cumberland RI: She has been active in Sunny Rock 4-H. Jess wants to know what inconsistencies have been noted at Sunny Rock. Wants to know when the club was told that operations must cease. Were there any safety violations that can be specified? Why were all the animals sent someplace else all at once? Curious about all the sudden changes and when the club was notified.

Paul Sullivan, Mansfield: Said he was a 'huge supporter' of 4-H. He asked for more discussion time. He asked BOPO to ask Extension for specifics about why so many people have come to the meeting today. Why was a nationally recognized and honored volunteer 'fired'? He said that this 4-H Program was ended incorrectly. He wants BOPO to investigate what happened with the shutdown.

Aidan Foley, Boston: A member for four years at Sunny Rock with two children participating. Said it is difficult to provide exposure to agriculture when living in Boston, and that Sunny Rock has become integral to exposure to agriculture and animal care. Very disappointed with the sudden closure of the club. Would like explanation as to why animals were removed.

Maria Cataldo, Walpole: Said she was President of Sunny Rock 4-H Club and has worked with 40 kids in programs. She said that the process of Joe Major's removal and the massive downsizing of the program was done without due process, transparency and fairness and that inaccurate and incomplete information led to the closure. She said that "we did ask on multiple occasions what needed to be done to open the club. To be shut down without being told what to do was unfair, we asked many times and never received a response."

### **Extension overview**

Jody Jellison responded by saying that all the emails and communications that Extension has received have been read and considered. She voiced appreciation that the guests are at the meeting as concerned parents and volunteers to share your comments. She then read an official University statement about the Sunny Rock 4-H Club.

Ted Wales remarked that he doesn't think anyone on the board was aware of this situation with Sunny Rock. He voiced his hope that once all issues were addressed that things will return to normal at the club. In another matter, he wondered whether Farm Bureau has started discussions on Agriculture Day at the Statehouse Day for 2022? John Lee responded that he will inquire about that at another meeting the following afternoon. Matt Barron noted that the Statehouse remains closed and will remain so until at least March of 2022.

Matt Barron asked Jody Jellison whether she could provide a timeframe that UMass administration will come to a resolution on this Sunny Rock issue. She responded that she had no formal time frame, but she said the University is prioritizing this issue.

Joe Shoenfeld told the Chair that the meeting had a quorum and could move forward. Matt asked for votes to approve the minutes from three previous meetings. Minutes from meetings held on 1/25/21, 4/3/21 and 7/29/21 were voted to be accepted as amended.

Deb Phillips, John Lee and Ted Wales said that they had not known of the situation with Sunny Rock 4-H Club. Mike Lueders asked that a vote be taken on the motion to hear more about Sunny Rock at the end of the meeting. Mr. Barron noted that the problem seemed to be 'above Extension's pay grade' at this point and being dealt with in the upper administration at UMass Amherst.

There was a brief discussion of membership and fundraising. Matt Barron informed board that he had emailed Representative Kate Hogan about Ken Nicewicz's nomination to the board and inquired about the status of the nomination.

Dr. Jellison provided an overview of other news from Extension. She began by informing the board that former longtime member and chair Jack Angley had passed away recently. She complimented his years of service and dedication to Massachusetts agriculture and requested a moment of silence in his memory. She then introduced the new interim director of Extension's Nutrition Education Program (NEP), Tracie Gillespie. She also thanked Ted Wales for accepting her appointment as CARET representative for UMass Extension. Finally, she noted the

transition of most Extension programs to or online or hybrid delivery modes. She discussed the challenges of staffing for urban agriculture, 4-H and NEP. She told the board that she believes that funding for 2022 will likely be stable at the federal level.

Matt Barron moved the discussion back to Board membership updates. He said that he was sorry to report that the nomination from the Mass. Farm Bureau Federation of Ken Nicewicz still has not been approved by the Governor's appointments office even though it has been nine months since it was submitted. In addition, he said that the president of the board of trustees of the Mass. 4-H Foundation, Inc, Steve Borgeson, had told him that the names of three individuals have been presented to the Governor's office to represent 4-H on BOPO. These are Reba Hatcher, Deb Bomarsey, and Cathy Adams. As to the Advisory Board, Matt has received no response from the Speaker of the House regarding his possible appointment to an Advisory Board. After the last BOPO meeting, Matt contacted Mary Blaine with the Mass. Beekeepers' Association to ask if they would like to have representation on BOPO. He also reached out to Andy Burnes (a Dartmouth farmer and chair of the Board of The Livestock Institute) on the recommendation of John Lee about becoming a BOPO member but he has not yet responded to the inquiry.

Matt Barron provided an update on his efforts to raise funds for a research study to be conducted by Clean Energy Extension. He told the board that Eversource had told him that they were not willing to provide financial support for the effort. Clean Energy Extension Director Dwayne Breger mentioned that he has identified another possible financial supporter for the project

## **Program reports**

### Clem Clay, Agriculture Program

The Extension Fruit, Vegetable and Crops/Dairy/Livestock/Equine Programs have operated normally from June on this year. There were many virtual options through the spring, then many in-person events in late spring, summer and early fall, with a return to more virtual events for the late fall and winter. Work on publications and professional development funded by SARE has continued. Staffing trying to move ahead on hiring a production agriculture leader. Hannah Whitehead, who has been a grant-funded honeybee extension educator working for Professor Lynn Adler has now joined the Vegetable team in the Agriculture Program as an educator.

In Pesticide Education, the program is now fully online and continues to offer pesticide applicator licensing exam preparation courses. In the Plant Diagnostics Laboratory, there has been a relatively normal year, with the new addition of testing for industrial hemp. Professor Rob Wick's retirement means that the Lab won't be able to provide the same level of turf diagnostics as in the past. In the Soils and Plant Nutrient Testing Laboratory, there has been financial success, but also long turnaround times on results. A new Lab Manager was hired and then resigned three weeks later. We are retooling that position and hope to get it into place this winter and then resume some of the suspended tests and enact system upgrades. Deborah Phillips asked Clem Clay about jumping worms, what we are thinking about that, what we know, how to manage and their impact on agriculture.

### Joe Shoenfeld for Tracie Gillespie, Nutrition Education Program

Joe read brief report which Tracie Gillespie had prepared on the Nutrition Education Program.

### Linda Horn, 4-H Youth Development Program

We are currently in the process of filling a vacant position, hiring an educator for the northeast area of state. In professional development, many staff are participating remotely and learning

about new programs in 4-H around the country. We hope to implement some of them here. The Program is planning winter forums, Explore UMass, Animal Science Academy, remote or in person, we are getting these programs ready so youth can take advantage. The College Exploration Program ties in to Explore UMass, aimed at high school sophomores and juniors - will work with them on college essays, college recruitment and offer tour and overnight stay at UMass Amherst. A new horticulture track may be added, We received \$5,000 from the Grange for gardening program and it will provide kits to urban audiences on soil testing, etc. After Thanksgiving, staff and eight youth will attend the National 4-H Congress and will interact with other youth from throughout the country – being held in Georgia.

#### River Strong, Clean. Energy Extension

We are beginning to implement our dual-use research project—and \$1.8M three-year project looking at agrovoltatics, in partnership with developers, UMass Cranberry Station, MDAR, UMass Resource Economics Department, the Extension Agriculture program. It is looking at impacts on the agricultural economy and crop productivity. The project has eight site trials in various regions.

We are continuing to support MDAR in evaluation process for applicants for SMART grants. In our Pollinator Friendly Solar Certification program, Zara Dowling has taken the lead in program, offering various levels and range of program support. We are the only pollinator friendly program with financial incentive in country. Matt Barron is us helping with an opportunity to look at non-forest wood residues supporting modern clean wood burning thermal applications. Proposing research to look at impacts with a \$600K budget – clean waste energy municipal preproposal will be submitted. Karen Heymann asked what is their process for forming an advisory committee – what is process for participation and what is timeline to learn more about when we can be involved? River Strong replied that they have a list of about 20 names, including hers. CEE will be deciding on those early next year and contacting folks.

#### **Clem Clay – Commercial Horticulture programs**

Our staff members Jason Lanier and Tawny Simisky spoke to you at were at the BOPO meeting in January [shows slide of team staff, and what the group does]. Workshops and classes and webinars were mostly online, though there were some in-person events during the summer. He highlighted the fact that there is an upcoming jumping worm conference and showed some other events happening, like fall wrap up occurring this week. Highlight on Turf Winter School: up to 70 people may attend and they already have a long waiting list. A couple of pest issues: lots of inquiries about jumping worms. In response to that we will host a conference, we are trying to develop fact sheets and responding to press inquiries. He advised that no one should panic because it isn't as bad as it seems, but that containment is the recommended strategy since there is no pesticide for them. Other challenges: Spotted Lanternfly has been found here – and it is a bigger issue than the worms. Overall in the program, coping with the retirement of Mary Owen over a year ago, with Jason Lanier and Tawny Simisky doing a great job handling things but there will be a meeting soon to come up with clearer plan for replacing capacity.

#### **Further discussion of Sunny Rock 4-H Club**

Matt Barron and Mike Lueders discussed just listening to what people who are on meeting today would like to say. Jody Jellison agreed.

Elizabeth Sullivan, West Roxbury: She has a son who has been in 4-H at Sunny Rock for two years. She said that the program was shut down with no information or communication. She said that she wanted BOPO to know the impact that this has had

on her son, not being able to care for goats. She thought that the responsibility and care her son showed was not returned to him by UMass and 4-H. Impact was abrupt. She wanted to say that families want to help rebuild this program. She said that her son has learned so much at Sunny Rock and kids are paying the price for adults dropping the ball.

Annie Sullivan, Mansfield: Started by saying Joe Major has given this program so much. Annie was in the program for eight years, she photographed the animals at Sunny Rock, Joe encouraged her to do that, he also gave her the opportunity to teach and mentor younger 4-H youth. Hands on animal care is not available anywhere else, she's heartbroken that other children won't be able to experience this. She learned everything about agriculture through the Sunny Rock program. She said that she wants answers as to why Joe was 'fired'.

Karen Tajalli, Sharon: Sunny Rock has been in her kid's lives for years and the Sunny Rock farm had a huge impact on the community. Even kids not in 4-h programs would come and interact with the animals. She lauded Joe's encouragement of kids to participate in animal husbandry. Program taught kids responsibility. And that they needed to be reliable and dependable in their care of the animals. Spoke of how upset her daughter was over the removal of all the animals.

Steven Bonauto, Sharon: Rather than express the value that animals have on youth, he wanted to talk about many communications to Linda and Jody, and there has been no clear response about why this has happened, he wants to have them give that explanation now. He said that authorities have behaved in opaque and irresponsible way. He would like to ask them both. Jody said that she recognized and agreed with Steven's request for communication and clarification. Jody said that she would speak for them both in saying that she was not at liberty to say anything at all. She can't give a timeline as to when she can communicate anything further. Steven pressed for a timeframe. Jody said she understood his frustration and concern, but this is currently under review at the higher level of admin within the University. Steven went on to say that Sue Dennen has documented this issue.

Sue Dennen, Mansfield: Lauded the program and Joe Major. Sue questioned Jody's statement, and claims that several parts of the statement were false. She said that the University has not been transparent or honest.

John Lee said that it was stunning and revelatory to hear how much value there is to 4-H. Matt entertained a motion to adjourn, Deb Phillips so moved, and Ted Wales seconded.

Meeting adjourned.