

**Minutes from
UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers
Tuesday, February 11, 2020 - 1:00 -4:00
UMass Collaborative Services Facility, Shrewsbury**

Members present: John Lebeaux, Michael Lueders, Karen Heyman, Matt Barron, Jody Jellison
Members Absent: Patricia Bigelow, John Lee, Ted Wales, Chris Dunn, Deb Phillips
Guests: Laurie Flanagan
Staff/Faculty: Joe Shoenfeld, Bill Miller, Linda Horn, Heather Lohr, River Strong, Clem Clay, Lisa Sullivan-Werner, Kathleen Geary

The meeting was chaired by Jody Jellison, member and Secretary of the Board. Because there was no quorum present, no votes were taken.

1. Jody Jellison reported on news from Extension.
 - She mentioned the current open searches: the search for a 4-H educator in Worcester County is coming to a close, seemingly with a likely successful hire; we are about to launch a search for a new regional 4-H Educator in the three northeast counties, replacing Wendy Marcks who retired at the end of January. Va Shon Wallace-Hiltzold, another 4-H Educator in the same office, is serving as interim regional Educator until the permanent position is filled.
 - The search for a new CAFE web developer has concluded with the successful hire of Evonne Gong, previously a digital communications specialist with the University's Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning.
 - Jody informed the Board that the 4-H Office in Pittsfield has closed, following the non-renewal of Extension's lease on space in the Conte Federal Building.
 - The CAFE website now features a summary and interpretation of the 2017 USDA Agricultural Census for Massachusetts. The interpretation was developed by a faculty member from the University's Department of Resource Economics, Jill Fitzsimmons. Bill Miller indicated he will send out the link to the BOPO members.
 - The annual meeting of CARET—the Council on Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching—a council of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) is coming up in DC in March. Ken Nicewicz, UMass's longtime volunteer representative to this group, has resigned. This year BOPO member Ted Wales will be filling in and attending with Extension Agriculture Program Director Clem Clay. Ken Nicewicz will meet them there to facilitate introductions in the legislative delegations. He will also receive a recognition award from APLU for his long service.
 - CAFE staff is planning its annual presence at Agriculture Day at the Statehouse in March.
 - Jody told the Board that she had concluded a successful negotiation with the Board and Director of Camp Farley on Cape Cod to once again become 4-H affiliated.

2. Lisa Sullivan-Werner reported on news from the Extension Nutrition Education Program.

- Lisa reported that she and her staff are developing new plans for both of their programs, SNAP-Ed and EFNEP which will take effect in 2021. New priorities and objectives are being developed with broad-based input from staff, which will translate to support and investment from staff to make the implement the plans smoothly and effectively. In response to a question, Lisa reported that HIP—the state’s Healthy Incentives Program—is not allowed to be promoted with SNAP-Ed funds.
 - Two long-time and very well-respected field supervisors for the program have retired, Andrea Gulezian of the southeast regional office in Raynham and Pat Harmsen of the western regional office in Springfield. Their roles are being covered by interim leaders until searches and hires can happen.
3. Linda Horn reported on news from the Extension 4-H Youth Development Program
- The next two months are busy ones for 4-H. Upcoming events include visual presentation days, state poultry workshop, photography workshops, Mass. Agriculture Day at the Statehouse.
 - Membership is at the same level as it was last year. The program is hoping to pick up a few more new members throughout the spring.
 - In addition to positions to be filled that Joe mentioned, Barnstable County will be hiring another 4-H staff person, filling an opening from a retirement.
 - As 4-H volunteer leaders are retiring, 4-H volunteers and educators are realizing the necessity for a ‘how-to manual’. They are hoping to coordinate with 4-H in other states to compile one.
 - Bill Miller recognized the strong performance of Linda Horn in her role as interim director of the program. He mentioned both her doggedness in keeping things moving forward and her dedication to the 4-H youth.
 - Bill Miller mentioned the number of 4-H billboards he has seen up and down I-91 in Massachusetts.
4. Clem Clay reported on news from the Extension Agriculture Program
- Winter School for turf professionals is currently underway and near completion for the year.
 - A greenhouse cultivation class was held last month.
 - Clem mentioned upcoming programs including a pollinator workshop and the ‘Mass Aggie’ gardening workshop series for consumers.
 - Sonia Schloemann, long-time small fruit educator for Extension, has announced her intention to retire later this spring.
 - There is an open technician position Soils Lab that is currently being filled.
 - The Program’s Risk Management Team (Tom Smiarowski and Paul Russell) works with farmers and growers to understand available insurance options for them. They have been funded through the ‘targeted states’ list in the farm bill and that funding is coming to an end. The program is currently strategizing on developing a proposal for another \$100K grant to continue funding their work for the next eighteen months. This funding is more competitive now, and has been reduced by more than half.

- Clem passed around copies of the Program’s Green Directory for 2020.
 - Soil health presentation done with Masoud recently...also intending to launch a healthy soils initiative, so that we can provide more info to external requests around healthy soils
 - Collaborations also ongoing in dual use solar array with Clean Energy
 - Interagency services agreement on Pesticide Management exams with (MDAR?)
 - Hemp – trying to prepare for the day when there is an approved hemp plan. John Lebeaux mentioned that HEMP Plan is under internal review. Permits will begin to be issued shortly under the state plan, while waiting for federal review.
5. River Strong reported on news from Clean Energy Extension
- Offshore wind coming in a big way – multi giga watts of wind. Workforce development training happening. Certification process being developed to enable people to become active in this new technology, a three-course program, mostly online.
 - 40 UMass students have been trained by CEE to visit communities and provide assessments on the municipalities’ use of green technologies,
 - CEE is in the process of developing a certification program for pollinator friendly solar arrays. Developers will be able to follow series of steps to get certification, state may incentivize this training. Poised to reduce costs over the way it’s occurring now.
 - Over the last year over 21 applications have been reviewed by CEE for dual-use solar arrays, about a third of which have been accepted by DOER.
 - River discussed “Community Choice” aggregation, a law that enables bulk buying of electricity from competing suppliers. Obviously price is a driver but so is the way the energy is produced and offered.
6. Bill Miller offered information on new programs in development from the CAFE director’s office
- The CAFE Summer Scholars program will be entering its fifth year this summer. While it supports student work in both research and extension, it has been research-heavy in the past. Bill is pushing the Extension Agriculture team to put forward more proposals
 - CAFE is looking to continue to float a complementary program with graduate students working with public policy projects.
 - Bill reported that later in the federal fiscal year we will look at needs for new farm equipment and other needs from faculty and staff, once the financial status of spending during the year is clear.
 - Bill also mentioned that extension faculty member Michael DiPasquale is developing concepts around an expanded urban program in nutrition education, economic community development, 4-H urban clubs, breastfeeding and child development.

The meeting was then opened for general discussion

Joe noted that since there was not a quorum attending the day's meeting that we would need to postpone anything needing a vote. These include: new BOPO members and possible bylaw changes.

Karen Heymann asked about ZOOM meetings, how they work. Joe offered a description; John Lebeaux commented that from his perspective as a municipal official for 25 years, he doesn't think that online virtual meetings will ever qualify for a public meeting, that you have to have a quorum actually physically in the room. He suggested that changing the quorum from a two-thirds majority present to a simple majority would help.

Matt Barron offered that he thought we should perhaps try to get a seat on the board for someone from the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association and other entities, since Farm Bureau doesn't seem interested in this Board. Matt also suggested that someone representing an interest in climate change in agriculture would be a good addition. He also commented that the statute should be tweaked, amended, not replaced. Members discussed various ways to make the changes, experiences others had had. Who to include, which groups to consider. Climate change, EEA, urban ag, what groups to consider for sake of inclusivity. Ideas were floated about approaching Farm Bureau and asking them to cede 2 of their seats on BOPO for other entities. Karen asked how it works in other states...Joe responded that our position is kind of unique because we don't have county by county extension as most other states do.

Joe was asked to remove Pat Bigelow from the mailing list, and he replied that he is not comfortable doing that without a vote.

Joe provided fiscal overview/update: In Extension, over 90% of the budget is tied up in salaries. Funding comes in through the federal Smith-Lever Act, UMass must match it 1:1 and then grants and contracts supplement that. The current allocation under Smith-Lever was \$2.3M in 2019. In 2020 we expect a reduction by 113K. Smith-Lever funding reflects what the state (through the University) is putting in. Over last decade, Smith-Lever funding nationally has moved up incrementally each year; however, this is the first year since the recession that it has gone down. For UMass Extension, it is becoming extremely difficult to make our match. In the past there were more tenure-track faculty who provided input through Extension. Because UMass has not chosen to make up the difference in cash, making the match has become more and more difficult. Joe reported that the structural problems that make it difficult to achieve our match requirements are being communicated to the leadership of the university by Jody.

Matt asked if in this season of deficit, will important positions such as Sonia's continue to be filled? Clem responded that Jody has committed to replace Sonia. Joe apologized for not having all the answers around this budgeting and suggested that questions should be directed to Jody.

Joe and Bill noted additional current opportunities and challenges:

Cranberry Station – Proposal for renovation and addition at the Station. Chancellor Subbaswamy last year pledged \$1.3M for work to be done to the current structure and last year

released \$250K for a planning and design process for the work. Plans would result in two brand new laboratories, three shelled labs, and new meeting space. There is also a strategic planning process going on. Bill reported that there are new members on the Cranberry Station Oversight Board, developing a plan for staffing in the future.

Other funding opportunities and challenges:

Jody has made a request to the Provost for \$107K for funding community-based work in Springfield. There are opportunities for Extension faculty to work there on issues of maternal health and nutrition, urban forestry and 4-H youth development. Extension faculty Michael DiPasquale was recently awarded a new \$350K grant to continue his work in Springfield.

Soils Lab state government initiative update: last year the effort focused on two pieces of equipment that needed replacing. Will happen again as a budget amendment ask from the state. Internal commitments have been made, such as online paying for soil testing, setting aside a small % of gross revenues so that they can take care of future needs. Many industry groups have been receptive to assisting, though no commitments have happened yet. Paul Mark will file amendment.

Clean Energy Extension is developing concepts for a project examining how best to use dual use solar energy installation within the state.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.