

**UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers Meeting**

**Monday, May 18, 2020, 2pm**

**MINUTES**

***This meeting was conducted via videoconference (Zoom) during the pandemic emergency, when the open meeting law was temporarily suspended.***

**Members Present:** Matt Barron, Chris Dunn, Karen Heymann, John Lebeaux, Michael Lueders, Deborah Phillips, Ted Wales, Jody Jellison.

**Members Absent:** Patricia Bigelow, John Lee.

**Guests:** Ed Bourgeois, Laurie Flanagan, Ashley Sears Randle.

**Staff and Faculty Attending:** Dwayne Breger, Kathleen Geary (serving as secretary pro tem), Christine Hatch, Linda Horn, Bill Miller, Joe Shoenfeld, Sandy Walsh, Brooke Weisenbeck.

**Agenda**

- 2:00 Welcome and introductions
- 2:05 Official business of the Board
  - 1. Selection of members' names to advance to Chancellor for Chair
  - 2. Other official business brought to the Board by membership
- 2:30 A discussion with Brooke Weisenbeck, Assistant Dean for Advancement, College of Natural Sciences
- 3:00 News updates and discussion
- 3:30 Adjourn

**Jody Jellison introduction:**

Jody serves as Secretary of the Board. She noted that we are still operating under suspension of the open meeting law. Joe Shoenfeld will take official attendance. All votes will be polled and recorded. Kathleen Geary will record minutes. Jody has delegated operation of the meeting to Joe.

- 1) Business: hope to move forward with recommendation of chair of the board.
- 2) Short presentation by guest speaker
- 3) Some update on activity

**1. Joe noted that we are required to call the roll of the members:**

Matt Barron – yes

Patricia Bigelow – no

Chris Dunn – yes

Karen Heymann - yes  
John Lebeaux – yes  
John Lee - no  
Mike Lueders – yes  
Deborah Phillips – yes  
Ted Wales – yes

**Additional staff and faculty on the call identified themselves and their roles:**

Linda Horn, 4-H Program Director  
Sandy Thomas, CAFE Outreach  
Christine Hatch, Faculty, Geosciences  
Bill Miller, CAFE Administration  
Dwayne Breger – Faculty, Clean Energy Extension

**2. We need 1-3 names of members to advance to the Chancellor for his appointment of the chair of the Board of Public Overseers**

Deborah Phillips nominated Matt Barron, given the leadership he has shown, with energy and focus to help move things forward. Ted Wales seconded. Karen Heymann also spoke in favor of the nomination of Matt Barron. Ted Wales supported the nomination of Matt Barron, and recommended John Lee and Mike Lueders as additional candidates. Deb recommended Ted Wales as another candidate, and noted that it doesn't seem like Mike Lueders has time to take on this role. Jody asked for confirmation that people would be willing to serve. Matt Barron and Ted Wales provided this confirmation. John Lee was not on the call, but Joe recalled that John Lee has said that he is willing to serve as chair. Ted Wales voiced strong support for the nomination of Matt.

Joe said that with the approval of the board, he can draft a letter of the recommendations made today to the Chancellor for Jody, and will attach minutes of the meeting as evidence of the board's support.

**Roll call votes on each name put forth:**

Matt Barron – Matt Barron, Chris Dunn, Karen Heymann, John Lebeaux, Michael Lueders, Deborah Phillips, Ted Wales

John Lee – Matt Barron, Chris Dunn, Karen Heymann, John Lebeaux, Michael Lueders, Deborah Phillips, Ted Wales

Ted Wales – Matt Barron, Chris Dunn, Karen Heymann, John Lebeaux, Michael Lueders, Deborah Phillips, Ted Wales

Jody Jellison expressed her appreciation to the members of the board. Once the Chancellor confirms the appointment of the chair, the board may select the vice chair at the next meeting, assuming that there is a quorum. Both the chair and vice-chair are two-year appointments.

Jody will send the letter to the Chancellor as secretary of the board. The meeting minutes will reflect that the board took three roll-call votes. While Jody can do a reasonably quick turnaround on the letter, she cannot say how long it will take for the Chancellor to name the chair. Chris Dunn noted that he has worked closely with the Chancellor's office. Joe and Jody will cc Chris when submitting the letter to the Chancellor.

Jody noted that at 2:30 Brooke Weisenbeck will join the meeting to discuss the potential for raising philanthropic dollars for UMass Extension.

**3. Jody provided news updates, summarizing activity ongoing during the emergency:**

- CAFE farms still active, including the Cranberry Station
- Some grad students are on campus
- Teaching function has moved online
- Everyone working to deliver services
- University looking at upcoming financial challenges (currently looking at one week staff furlough in this fiscal year)
- Still waiting for final federal allocation for 2020 (significant funding)
- Classes will be given in the fall, don't know about online vs in person
- Cancelled a lot of summer activities
- 4H, Nutrition, Ag groups transitioning to online offerings, which are listed on the website
- University planning for partial and phased reopening
- University looking at starting up research and outreach

**4. Brooke Weisenbeck, the Assistant Dean for Advancement in the College of Natural Sciences, joined the call at 2:30.**

Brooke introduced herself and noted that she joined UMass last summer as the chief development officer for the College of Natural Sciences. She reports to both University Advancement and to the Dean of the College. She leads a team of ten people, including two frontline fundraisers, charged with building philanthropic investment for the College of Natural Sciences and communicating with constituents.

Matt Barron spoke and noted his representation of the Massachusetts Forest Alliance. He spoke of his meeting with the state extension forester and a new faculty member, during which they told him that they are looking for two new professorships. Matt has a background in political fundraising and is not opposed to asking for money. He asked how can he work with Brooke to bring in money to support this work? A very exciting possibility is with cross-laminated timber (a showcase of this on campus is the Olver Design Building on campus). There is research showing that Eastern white pine and hemlock, common in Massachusetts, are good for this purpose.

Brooke noted that they have organized their development staff around departments, and that forestry is under the Environmental Conservation (ECo) department. They are actively cultivating support, and there is a team that could provide advice on approaching foundations.

Matt asked how he may learn who current funders are, and how one might go after new support. Jody asked Matt if he had spoken with Curt [Griffin, ECo Department Head] about corporations who currently have strong ties to the ECo department. Brooke added that Curt would more readily know who his department is in a relationship with around funding.

Joe asked Brooke to provide a general overview of the climate for fundraising for Extension activities. Brooke noted that overall, the fundraising climate as a whole has shifted in the last couple of months. She also stated that generally there is not a base of people connected to Extension who feel that their lives as a whole have changed, the way there is with a group of undergraduates, for example. Efforts are in place to: leverage collective expertise and networks, identify small group of people who have the monetary backing to support these efforts.

Deb Phillips (representing both Nutrition and the far west end of the state) shared her thoughts regarding competing for funding from the same sources vs working synergistically. Extension is connected to the University, but the University isn't necessarily fundraising for Extension.

- Is there a way to build off what has already been done for fundraising?
- How to build those synergies?

Brooke noted that her team is linking into the central advancement team at the university level. In this way they are actively trying to connect foundations with the appropriate places to support. They make sure that different groups are aware of what the other groups are doing at the University. She noted that no specific team is currently working on corporate fundraising, and she sees that there will be a need for a team to approach corporations in a coordinated way.

Matt noted a funding possibility with Georgia Pacific, which has funding to support efforts within 30 miles of them. They have a plant in Leominster, which, is less than 30 miles from the UMass forest property in Princeton. Brooke said she could help connect them.

Joe talked about supporting department faculty vs Extension faculty. He will continue the conversation with Jody and others to look at appropriate fits for funding requests.

Brooke spoke of the University's next campaign, which has been titled "Be Revolutionary." It remains to be seen what that will look like. There will be opportunity for collaboration across departments, and across the College, in terms of who we approach for sustainability support.

Ted Wales (representing lawn care and arborists) asked if funding may be earmarked for Extension, or if the University chooses where funding goes. He doesn't see that the University always understands the importance of the Extension to residents in the state. Brooke responded that typically, foundation funding application is very specific, in that it aligns with the mission and comes in for a specific purpose. An Extension team will be required to report back to the funder, thus part of Brooke's team's job is that is to be sure that funds are deposited into the correct account and are spent on the appropriate things, as well as ensuring that report back is happening as it should.

Ted Wales noted that he would like to see funding to expand Extension presence on the Newton campus so that Extension outreach is more available to citizens in the Boston metropolitan area.

Laurie Flanagan (of the Massachusetts 4-H Foundation) asked about endowed staff positions including how much it would cost to have an endowed 4-H staff position? It was noted that sums get large very quickly with endowed positions. The possibility exists to do a salary share, in which the position cost could be supplemented by some other funding stream. It depends on the salary line of the position in question to estimate what the costs would be. Brooke believes that endowments are available for staff positions as well as for faculty positions, as she knows that this is true at other universities. Jody noted that one faculty position at Cold Spring Orchard is a partnership between private entities that set up the endowed position, and the University.

Deb Phillips noted that the "Be Revolutionary" fundraising campaign includes sustainability and regeneration, and asked how to ensure that Extension is part of that conversation. Brooke noted that the University is still in the early days on this. It remains to be determined what a sustainability initiative will look like for the long term. As the advancement team collects

stakeholders to be a part of that, they will work with Joe to bring appropriate people to the table.

Brooke invited Joe to share her contact information with the board.

John Lebeaux commented on reopening guidance from the state government. There are aspects of the agricultural and food system industry that don't fall into the first phase. For example, they are currently working on guidance for equine operations. The state recently issued preliminary recommendations on the food security task force, including the establishment of a COVID-19 resiliency fund to address structural gaps, which is a \$36 million program.

#### **5. Continuing general update from Jody:**

- Transitioning online has been “an interesting process,” and it has allowed us to develop outreach capabilities that we have needed to have for a long time, will have some depth
  - o 4-H for example is being inventive
  - o Great insect videos
  - o Ag virtual twilight meetings
- There are virtual offerings that qualify for pesticide credits (have been working with MDAR)
- Plant and Soil Labs still to become operational
- There is a new web page that lists all the new ways we are working, including all the online programming that is being offered
- Continuing scouting missions throughout the state
- There is a subset of educators available for farm visits

#### **6. 4-H Youth Development:**

- They are able to offer quite a bit of online content:
  - o Some remote learning
  - o Animal science: usually do these contests in person at this time of year – instead they are holding contests virtually, and giving youth the opportunity to learn more about it
  - o Photography contests
  - o Dog workshop
  - o Pet therapy class
  - o Science programs: pre-recorded sessions are posted to the Facebook page
  - o Reaching a lot of people who may or may not be 4H, good to reach new audiences
  - o Weekly email blast to 4-H families
- Northeast state 4-H Leaders are all getting together and meeting regularly
  - o Have created subgroups (i.e., virtual fairs)

- Information swap
- Youth can participate in activities in other states

Questions about county fairs and the Big E:

- 7 or 8 ag fairs have already been cancelled
- Big E management has taken the position that there will be a Big E fair this fall
  - This will require a great deal of adjustment if that is going to happen
  - Massachusetts controls the Massachusetts state building
- Seems like it would be a difficult year to hold a fair

**7. Has there been a targeted response to increased numbers of people interested in growing their own food?**

- Jody noted that we need to continue to provide resources to commercial growers, etc., while looking at resources for new stakeholders such as new gardeners – food safety is one area where we might be active
- Lisa Sullivan-Werner has been very active with SNAP-Ed and EFNEP, working with DTA to do as much as they possibly can

Joe Shoenfeld noted that it was quite moving to see how EFNEP and SNAP-Ed very quickly adapted methods for working with their constituents (many of whom are SNAP-eligible). They are doing video food demonstrations and more. It seems clear that one way or another there will be a huge expansion in the audience for their services – how will they serve that expanded audience? The landscape is changing: farmers markets, HIP ... There is still a lot of work to be done there, and they have managed to keep their funders happy. In response to Ed Bourgeois inquiring whether we should reach out to Jim McGovern on this, Jody noted that Congressperson McGovern is firmly committed to this already.

**8. Dwayne Breger of Clean Energy Extension reported that his team received an award from National Renewable Energy looking at solar development in rural communities.**

They are working with three towns in Massachusetts - Wendell, Blandford and Westhampton - to develop solar energy. The Clean Energy Extension team also submitted a concept paper to US DOE looking at dual use solar and agriculture. They were subsequently encouraged to submit a full proposal, which is due June 18. This has the potential to put Massachusetts forward as a unique opportunity for the federal government to examine of the efficacy and agricultural impacts of dual use solar.

*The meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.*