

**Minutes from  
UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers  
Monday September 17, 2019 - 9:00 -12:00  
UMass Collaborative Services Facility, Shrewsbury**

**Members present:** Jack Angley, John Lee, Michael Lueders, Matt Barron, Karen Heymann, Ted Wales, Chris Dunn

**Members Absent:** Deb Phillips, Patricia Bigelow

**Guests:** Ed Bourgeois, Laurie Flanagan

**Staff/Faculty:** Jody Jellison, Joe Shoenfeld, Bill Miller, Sonia Schloemann, Hilary Sandler, Linda Horn, Christine Hatch, Lisa Sullivan-Werner, Mary Owen, Christine Hatch, Lynn Adler, Hilary Sandler, Bob Skalbite, Heather Lohr, River Strong

1. Jack Angley welcomed members and others and introductions were made.
2. Jody Jellison provided a summary of news from Extension:
  - Chris Dunn, executive director of government affairs and special advisor to the Chancellor, has been appointed to the Board of Public Overseers as the representative of the Chancellor.
  - Extension has appointed a new director for the Agriculture Program -- Clem Clay, currently executive director of Grow Food Northampton.
  - Sherrie Guyott, director of the 4-H Youth Development Program, has announced her retirement. Linda Horn has agreed to serve as interim director of the 4-H Program for a year.
  - Katie Campbell-Nelson has resigned her position as Extension educator and team leader for the Vegetable Program, in order to accept a position as professional development director for SARE, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension, for the northeastern states. She currently remains a grant-funded UMass employee working for SARE. Sue Scheufele, also an Extension educator in the Vegetable Program, has been asked to serve as an interim team leader.
  - After the failure of the initial employment search, a second search for a new CAFE Web designer has begun and interviews are expected to begin shortly.
  - Interviews have been completed in the search for an assistant director for administration position in CAFE.
  - The architectural design process for the expansion and renovation of the Cranberry Station in East Wareham is ongoing. We hope that financing for the addition, authorized in the 2018 Environmental Bond, will be released by the state executive branch soon. Renovation work on the existing building, including new HVAC system, roof, and windows is scheduled to happen sometime between October and May, paid for by funding from the Chancellor's Office.
  - USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has leased a laboratory at the Cranberry Station for ten years, for hydrologist Casey Kennedy. We are now negotiating with ARS for a renewal of that lease and an expansion into a second lab, and are hopeful that another agreement will occur

before the end of the FY19, at the end of the month. If that happens, renovations for the new laboratory will be funded by USDA and the space is leased to the for \$1/year for another ten-year term. Jack Angley asked for clarification on the lease. Jody explained that USDA pays up front, expected to be about \$160K, to renovate the space. She commented that it has been a mutually-beneficial partnership.

- Hemp and cannabis – Jody explained that we cannot offer any support to cannabis growers because of our need to comply with the guidance of the USDA, our largest funder. There are also complications with the University. While we can provide soil testing for hemp growers, we cannot provide plant diagnostics. Working with cannabis violates the federal Drug Free Workplace law. It is highly unlikely we will be able to provide any assistance to cannabis growers because of its scheduled class. Ted Wales asked about the research difference between hemp and cannabis. Jody explained that if somebody comes in our Plant Diagnostic Lab with a plant, they would have to provide proof that they are certified in the state program for hemp cultivation.
- Jody briefly mentioned that members of the Mass. Food Policy Council had toured the projects at the South Deerfield Farm. Participants included Commissioner Lebeaux and Senator Jo Comerford. She also mentioned the success of this year's CAFE Summer Scholars Program, which supported 33 undergraduate student experiences and five graduate student policy scholars.
- Jody discussed the current challenges at USDA-NIFA, our federal partner. The operational issues with the move to Kansas City are extensive. Lost email contacts, no list of those who remain versus those who have left. Drawdowns may not be possible in a timely way. 151 (or two-thirds) of the long term staff have left the agency. The final third have until the end of September to either move or resign. This brings both long and short term impacts. Much of the staff has been replaced by temporary employees, making things difficult. Other impacts...the new 1:1 match on specialty crops grants is hurting the northeast more than the rest of the country and is changing the research that faculty are able to do.

3. Joe Shoenfeld brought up Matt Barron's request to him that the main focus of this meeting be on brainstorming how capacity, programming ideas and resources could align.

Matt discussed an email he had received from a stakeholder trying to engage Paul Catanzaro on wood chip products and research into recycling and reuse. Matt told the Board that Paul had responded that he didn't have the time, respectfully. River Strong told the Board said that his area, Clean Energy Extension, has been looking at value-added wood resources, and at waste wood as energy product.

Matt asked if there is a way to have a grad student work on this project. Jody said that can be a very expensive way to go about it. There are programs where we can support them for the summer, though that isn't the same as a two or four year grad student. John Lee asked if this might be a topic for a thesis. Jody also explained that graduate students are paid on external funding.

4. Joe again mentioned the brainstorming focus that had been requested for this session.

Christine Hatch wondered if we could frame use of wood chip waste to the legislature as a resiliency project. Jody followed that umbrella themes are a good way to bring lots of ideas to the table.

Ted Wales expressed a hope that we can develop a way to help all commodities to develop healthy soil to combat climate change...and dismay that the soil lab request for funding from the state to replace aging equipment was denied last year. He said that we need to get the information about the ways Extension can help combat climate change out to voters in Mass. He also said that the legislature needs to know that healthy soil and the impact it can have on climate change is a win-win and that this is the knowledge that will cause the legislature to fund the soil lab. Mary Owen said that there is a soils proposal active at the state level re healthy soils that would route testing through a private firm, instead of through UMass Extension.

Karen Heymann expanded on Mary's comment re the bill, saying that it was not well written, and ignored groups already promoting healthy soil. Ted answered Jack's question about whether there are there any naturally healthy soils, stating that old growth forests are a perfect example. Then he explained that every commodity needs to understand that healthy soil begets healthy plants and carbon sequestration and is beneficial to combatting climate change. Jody mentioned soils research happening at through CAFE's Experiment Station unit, mentioning a new Stockbridge School of Agriculture professor specializing in carbon sequestration in soil, and also noted Masoud Hashemi's ongoing work on the environment and economic impacts of soil and pasture management.

Jody thanked Ted and others for their efforts in trying to get \$160K for the soils lab last year. It is a priority for Extension. She asked if Chris Dunn had any insight in the Healthy Soils initiative and funding issues.

Chris discussed BOPO members' outreach to the UMass President's office. He outlined the large-scale concerns facing public higher education as a whole. The cost of college is high and very concerning to the public. In New England, the number of 18 year olds is dramatically shifting down. This is an industry not getting a lot of support from the state, new revenue has come from enrollment. We are 43rd in the country in percent of funding coming from the state. We usually save ½ of 1% for areas of new growth. His idea for BOPO is telling our story in a way that is industry-focused. The university isn't going to do that for Extension, they are focused on selling education to the consumer, not Extension to the voter.

Ted said that when they tried to get funding, it was as additional funding through MDAR, rather than to the university. Commodity groups are going to see that if the state is going to take needs seriously, then we need to take that advocacy to the state. Ted addressed the east west divide in Mass. politics...he feels that many of the legislators from the eastern part of the state simply don't see the needs that people have that can be filled by Extension. He believes that Extension should be more visible and well known in the eastern Mass.

Ed Bourgeois talked about global soils: healthy soil is about the microbiology of soil. Because it's the way to sequester carbon, many farmers are fully supportive of education in this field. He believes we should seek out independent sources to fund research.

Jody stated that there are additional opportunities: pollinators, 4-H, a stronger footprint in urban areas, nutrition education and the significant amount of food insecurity within the state.

Matt said there is a lot of potential for grass fed beef, lamb, and dairy. Jody: another opportunity for the state is small ruminants. Masoud Hashemi is working on obtaining a grant to research extending forage season for ruminants.

Matt stated that the Farm Bureau should be re-engaged by Extension. The Farm Bureau Barn opening may be a good opportunity to re-engage, next Wednesday 9/25. Joe asked John and Jack if there's a route to better relations with the Farm Bureau? Jack said every year he goes before the Farm Bureau to ask for more representation to BOPO. Can't get people to commit. John agreed that he does not frequently attend Farm Bureau meetings. They are used to playing defense especially at the municipal level...they've spent so much time trying to ward off threats to commercial farms, they have an established community of "farmers" and then there are agriculturists, who don't fit into their definition of what a farmer is.

Matt asked about amending the regulations to get some new blood onto BOPO, more stakeholders, representing more interests. Jody said that change should come from BOPO leadership.

Mike Lueders talked about the question of how initiatives get coordinated so that there is general knowledge about what is going on, and figuring out how to get the funding going so that we aren't working at odds to one another, and not waiting for the legislature to finish their two-year decision making process. Jody thanked the board because they can advocate for us. She told the Board that Extension can say what we see as opportunities and look for other funding for these pursuits, but not with the legislature. Extension wants to do more, and we want to do what is meeting our stakeholders' needs. We need BOPO to offer that guidance.

A discussion of a development person for Extension arose. Jody told everyone that we go through the College and University for development, and that we could try to facilitate having a development person come to the next meeting. Mike thinks that would be helpful and went on to say that there seems to be a need for someone to chase funding for Extension and CAFE. Karen Heymann commented that non-profits can be great partners with Extension. They can not only lobby the legislature, but can motivate their members to support a particular cause.

Jody explained the challenge we face as compared to a state like NY. We've lost capacity in the last few decades, but the expectations have increased. And the number of educators has decreased dramatically.

5. Joe asked the Extension professionals present to discuss their funding.

Lisa Sullivan-Werner spoke about the Extension Nutrition Education Program. She explained how NEP receives its funding, and what they provide to stakeholders. She explained how the funding is used. NEP has a relatively robust presence around the state. Christine Hatch spoke about her area, geoscience and rivers. Funding for culvert replacement and DPW training on river processes has been good. Regional DPW training programs planned. Lynn Adler – pollinators – talked about her Pollinator Health Grant and hiring of the honeybee Extension educator, who has put together a website and is offering training and site visits, all funded on a grant that will end. Hilary Sandler explained what is going on at the Cranberry Station, and talked about how people even in the Cranberry industry were unaware of how many of the staff working at the Station are soft-funded.

She commented that IPM is going to become a greater and greater issue as we try to create more healthy soil to combat climate change.

Linda Horn spoke about the evolution of 4-H...still agriculturally based, but it is becoming more difficult to do that with a population that is less engaged in agriculture, and that things have been trending toward STEM. John Lee asked if the issue for 4-H is not enough kids, or not enough educators? Linda said that it's really that they don't have the volunteers to spend the time as traditional club leaders. John praised the clubs that are beyond agriculture, and the caliber of youth that such clubs produce. Linda: we need the leaders to run these different sorts of clubs, and they are in short supply.

Mary Owen talked about the challenge in funding. Funding in commercial horticulture extension does not depend on grants, it depends on revenue from providing workshops to tools such as management guides. Now industry professionals are competing with Extension to offer these workshops. She said commercial horticulture extension brainstorming how to position themselves as unique and as the best option for industry professionals wanting to stay current on the latest information available. Sonia Schloemann said that there are challenges for supporting all of the activities that the program offers; while there is some grant funding and other revenue streams, it is a struggle.

River Strong said that Clean Energy Extension is still running on its initial founding grant. They are working on solar friendly pollinator certification, dual-use solar agriculture review process, supporting the state's Green Communities Program, battery energy ecosystem report. They are also developing an offshore wind professional certification program. They are part of a new energy transition institute within UMass, a multi-disciplinary effort across the campus.

6. John Lee mentioned Mass. Ag. Day in six months, and the fact that BOPO could go and speak with legislative aides about how important it is that they get the picture that Extension needs more funding.
7. Joe asked about interest in another meeting in December and most members seemed to think that would be good.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00.