

## Minutes

### UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers Meeting – 12/13/18

**Members Present:** Jack Angley, Jody Jellison, John Lee, Michael Lueders, Ted Wales, Matt Barron

**Members Absent:** Patricia Bigelow, John Lebeaux

**Guests:** Dave Timmons

**Staff/Faculty:** Michael DiPasquale, Dwayne Breger, Heather Lohr, Joe Shoenfeld, Sonia Schloemann, Sherrie Guyott, Sandy Thomas

Meeting commenced at 9:15 with introductions. The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Chairman Angley noted that attendance at the February 2018 meeting was quite low. Jody Jellison followed up with a comment on the need to elevate attendance because of the importance of these meetings. John Lee passed edits to minutes from prior meeting to Joe Shoenfeld. Minutes were voted on and accepted.

#### **News:**

##### *Hemp:*

Jody Jellison began her report by noting that the new Farm Bill does allow movement forward on hemp production.

##### *Budget:*

Jellison discussed the Extension budget, which remains stable but highly constrained. Funding from USDA under the Smith-Lever Act, the largest source of federal funding for Extension nationally, has remained stable and relatively level for the past 30 years. During this time Extension has struggled with staffing costs which have increased about 3% each year while funding remains stagnant.

Jody provided a funding spreadsheet for review, highlighting current projections for FY19. She discussed the importance of a portion of the state funds—so-called ‘non-extension state’--which do not have to follow federal guidelines because they are not used as part of the required 1:1 match for the federal funding.

Matt Barron inquired about the totality of the budget for Extension. Jody explained that the entire budget for CAFE, including funding for other units, includes peripherals and said that the total budget is about \$17M. Matt asked for further explanation of the difference between the non-extension state and the extension state lines. Jody explained that the extension line is required by USDA to provide a 1-1 match to the federal Smith-Lever funds, sometimes known as ‘capacity funding’ or ‘formula funding.’ At one time in Massachusetts, there was a separate state government line item; that was easily trackable. The situation now is that state funds go into the University as part of the overall University budget, and then it is up to the University to ensure that Extension is achieving the required match. At least 99% of the state match comes through in salaries. Joe pointed out that that when used for salaries, the state funding is extremely valuable since Extension does not have to budget for the cost of fringe benefits on those salaries. Salaries paid with the federal funding and any funding other than the state funding must pay for the fringe benefit costs, as well as the costs of mandated raises, from the same funding sources.

Jody noted that when and because raises are mandated, we have to come up with those raises for folks on each of the budget lines, fringe costs tend to increase even more rapidly than the salaries.

Matt asked if non-extension state money goes from higher education budget line to the University. Jody said yes and provided clarification. Barron asked whether a separate line item that is easily trackable would be preferable. Jody noted that there are advantages on both sides. Joe commented that Extension only had a line item for about 15 years, replacing the funding that previously came from county governments and that that separate line item was not intended to take the place of the University providing funding at the state level. Jellison added that the loss of the counties has hurt Extension because of the loss of money as well as the partnerships that the older arrangement had offered.

*Cranberry Station:*

In news from the Cranberry Station, Jody mention that the Station has two recently-hired extension faculty. She told the Board that the decision to fill these positions underlines Extension's commitment to cranberries and to agriculture in the state. In other news, the state provided \$250K this year for the design phase for an addition to the Station, and the University pledged \$1.1M in infrastructural repairs.

*Extension Agriculture Program:*

In news from the Extension Agriculture Program, Jody thanked Sonia Schloemann and Mary Owen for their willingness to fill in as interim co-directors of the program since the retirement of Kathy Carroll last summer. Jellison noted that the search has begun for replacement at the ordinary slow pace.

*Waltham:*

Joe Shoenfeld added an update on the Waltham facility...UMass announced that the one remaining open building on the site will be closed at end of 2019. The occupants have been offered equivalent places at the same rent at the Mt. Ida campus. The future of the Waltham land is undecided. The management of the transition is being handled by the Chancellor's office at the University without CAFE involvement. CAFE is involved with the transition of Extension staff that had occupied the Waltham building, most of whom are in the 4-H Program. 4-H Director Sherrie Guyott commented that 4-H is excited about the move and new space at the Mount Ida campus.

Extension Faculty member Michael DiPasquale asked if Mount Ida might become the same sort of horticultural and agricultural testing facility that Waltham once was. Joe said there may not be the space for an agricultural or environmental sustainability center at Mount Ida. In terms of people and offices Newton presents a lot of possibilities.

Ted Wales asked if CAFE having space at Mount Ida will translate to a larger Extension presence in eastern Massachusetts? Jody told Ted that "we are aware that we are a small presence there, and we are hoping to increase our visibility and relevance in eastern Mass. but it won't be easy or quick or the type of transformation you would hope to see due to the constraints of our finances. The need is greater than the resources. Waltham in its heyday was a vibrant agricultural center." Ted said for industry it had been a very exciting place to go, you could bring questions to Waltham and the excitement generated by the facility was contagious.

Wales commented that we don't see the funding we need because the legislature is so disconnected from what Extension knows and does and offers. Jody noted there is talk of test samples to be dropped off in Newton and shuttled to labs here at Amherst for diagnosis. (She speculated that maybe the tick lab would want to be a part of that and assume some of the cost.)

*Food Policy Council:*

Joe noted that the state Food Policy Council published a white paper with recommendations for Extension to do new things, and one of the recommendations was for a permanent seat for the Extension director, which will help elevate our visibility to the legislature.

**Presentation by David Timmons:**

Extension Clean Energy director Dwayne Breger introduced David Timmons, an associate professor of economics from UMass Boston focusing on energy systems and renewable energy. He just returned from sabbatical in Mauritius in the South Indian Ocean.

Biomass energy and biochar are his concentrate interests...exploring how can biochar be an added value for agriculture in Mass., both from technological and economics perspectives. Timmons' own Biochar Project ran from 7/16 – 7/17. He explained that biochar is just charcoal with many benefits as a soil amendment, evidence that it can improve crop yields, production can yield heat and other energy sources. Biochar once introduced to soil is durable and can sequester carbon. Biochar's main function is to act as a sponge in the soil. It holds water and nitrogen and can make nutrients more available to the plants. There are lots of different kinds of biochar which contributes to how variable the value is, also different crops experience different degrees of effect.

There remain lots of uncertainty about the material. A recent meta study showed that biochar gives 10% increase in yield, again with many variables depending on crop. One of the problems with the meta study is that it looked at older studies, and the knowledge base keeps changing and increasing.

Biochar comes from the same waste stream as pellet production. Anything organic can be turned into biochar. It doesn't have much nutrient value itself, it just has the potential to bond to nutrients and keep them from leaving the soil. Massachusetts has examples of different paths for making biochar.

- Charcone – combustion in cone, douse it with water then you have biochar. Low tech, labor intensive and polluting. (Easthampton, Mass.)
- New England Biochar has a more contained farm scale plant, uses mostly landscape residue (Eastham, Mass.)
- Nextchar uses a biochar processor, provides heat and biochar, Amherst, MA.
- Biogen Roberts Energy Renewables in Ashfield, Mass. are planning to purchase, may have already purchased. This is the only one will produce electricity.

John Lee asked if there was a market for biochar in water filtration. Timmons said there was.

Problems with soil quality are something that Ted notes people in his industry often inherit, and so they have to amend the soil, he thinks biochar would benefit his industry.

**Presentation by Michael DiPasquale**

Make-it Springfield is a collaborative workspace, community arts center and makerspace. DiPasquale explained that his teaching is focused on legacy or gateway cities, typically smaller former manufacturing centers. The kind of places with a rich history that we are trying to leverage as we make them sustainable and revitalize them. Springfield, 25 miles from campus, is rich with opportunity for faculty, students and staff and provides many things that students are looking for. Springfield has a history of being a vibrant manufacturing center. Population peaked in the sixties, but never plummeted like many midwestern manufacturing cities. Many other numbers put Springfield at the bottom in the state, higher poverty rates, lower median incomes and more urban sprawl. Another thing Springfield

experienced was an urban renewal track from the late 1960s that exemplified poor planning, typical of many manufacturing cities...with department stores closing, malls opening, increased vacancies, bigger blocks taking up space, but taking away from the vitality of the downtown scape. Springfield does have strengths. Solid and historic building infrastructure. Smaller loss of population. Michael began bringing students in to work on urban design projects in large vacant spaces, which were another legacy of the 1960s, in his work with students they began inhabiting those vacant spaces with both permanent and temporary installations.

Mass. Development helped to find space to activate for Make it Springfield. It was originally intended to be a 1 month pop-up. That was 18 months ago. Almost instantly popular, because it was welcoming to everyone, and the community has really become involved and attached to the Make-it space.

Make-It has become an unexpected business incubator as well, 3-d printing, bicycle repair, photography. Future plans are to find a larger space.

Joe Shoenfeld asked if there have ever been individuals coming in that are a problem. Michael said he has had to escort people out, never had to call police. Very loose supervision in the make it space, mostly due to lack of staffing. Push button system to get in, members and staff have the code, so very loose structure.

Mike Lueders asked what the impact of the casino has been thus far. Michael DiPasquale said it is a little too soon to tell. He said there do seem to be a lot of benefits built in to the structure of the contract with the casino to benefit the city and its population. The population using Make-it and those who visit the casino are two very different populations.

### **Kelly Erwin risk assessment project**

UMass has launched a campus wide risk assessment process and CAFE as followed suit. CAFE will be doing a workshop with just its employees around this subject. The current assessment process is not employee-specific, but rather an information gathering function, then to be used to address areas that seem important both long and short term. Risk can be financial (funding), or environmental (such as ticks for employees in the field), volunteer supervision (4-H) etc. Kelly has high expectations for finding there is much that we (CAFE) do well, though of course there will be much that we could improve as well. Matt Barron recommended a book: Michael Lewis – the Fifth Risk.

### **Program reports**

#### *Sherrie Guyott for 4-H Youth Development*

The Big E: 163 4-H members participated the fall. 4-H visual presentation and speaking presentations are a big part of the participation at the Big E. Livestock 4-H Club members participate in competitions, exhibit photography, animal sciences, goat, sheep, dog horse and beef presentations and competitions. Big E provides passes for 4-H members, and access to the dormitories and meals, so that youth from all over the state can attend.

The 4-H Stem Ambassadors Program hires college students to work with partnering programs to teach kids about science. Kim Pond is the coordinator and puts together kits and sends them across the state to facilitate this with the support of donors and sponsors throughout the state. Summer programs are in high demand and it is a challenge to try to be accessible to underserved communities. The Grange also funds this program, in addition to banks and other donors.

National 4-H Congress – young people from across country apply to become part of the design team for congress for the coming year.

4-H presence at Ag Day at the Statehouse – 4-H visits legislators to educate about agricultural issues. The annual speakers program alternates between teen speakers from FFA and 4-h each year. There is a contest coming up to select the speaker, Sherrie said if anyone were interested in being a judge to let her know. Also kids will be able to see a farm bill demo this year.

*Nutrition Education Program:*

No report for NEP this meeting, though Jody Jellison had strong praise for Lisa Sullivan-Werner as the leader of the NEP program.

*Sonia Schloemann for the Agriculture and Commercial Horticulture programs:*

Sonia mentioned that reporting season has just wrapped up for the teams in her program and that her Fruit Program team has just wrapped up an 18 page report.

Biggest thing happening in the Agriculture/Commercial Horticulture program is filling the director's position made vacant by Kathy Carroll's retirement. Schloemann said that the process has engaged the program staff in a larger process of strategic thinking about the program as a whole. Because of the leadership transition and some pending retirements, there is a good opportunity to lay groundwork for the next generation of the program. Skills they are looking for in the new director include being a good ambassador to the Extension community as well as to the public.

When Kathy Carroll was stepping down she brought up the importance of a transitional process, as there are many stakeholders involved. Ted thought that industry and extension should get together before Agriculture Day to discuss what needs to be communicated to legislators, because industry can do it and Extension staff cannot. Joe Shoenfeld commented that there is definitely a good opportunity with so many new legislators from western Mass.

Sonia commented that one of the challenges we have because of funding is supporting and sustaining the soil testing laboratory. There is a tax on all fertilizer sales in the state. That money goes in the general fund and we never see it. Maine on the other hand, contributes some of that money to support the states soil testing lab – "retained revenue" to support it. Mike Lueders said the Green Industry Alliance is meeting early next year to discuss what they will be communicating to legislators so it would be good if Extension could offer some language around support of the soil testing lab.

John Lee agreed that flower and vegetable growers' associations could include that cause in their discussions as well. Kelly suggested that perhaps Steve Kulik could draft some wording to help us present this idea to legislators. Simple changes to make the soil testing lab more commercially viable could easily be funded.

*Dwayne Breger for Clean Energy Extension:*

Dwayne Breger discussed two activities that intersect with Extension agricultural work:

Solar program – SMART was launched 3 weeks ago. It will be interesting to see how that program manages itself. Amongst many other portions of this program is the provision with regard to solar on agricultural lands, dual-use solar. Solar collectors placed up high and spread apart. Work being done in this area sporadically around the country and the world. Massachusetts is a leader in this program.

Clean Energy Extension provides review and comments back to farmers and solar developers in support of the program when they apply to DOER to participate in the dual-use solar project. The projects must meet technical specifications and cannot provide more than 50% shading on any of the land. Also, in coordination with agriculture programs, Extension faculty/staff Masoud Hashemi, Katie Campbell-Nelson, and Sonia Schloemann provide feedback. In their applications, farmers must provide details for

machinery needs for 20 years into the future. Breger commented that it will be interesting to see how the SMART program develops in the coming year and how quickly it moves and how much dual array solar gets put in place.

In addition, Clean Energy Extension has taken the initiative to look at developing a non-governmental certification program for solar arrays to create wildlife-friendly photo-voltaic arrays. Friendliness to pollinators is the primary target but they want to broaden that to wildlife in general. Other states have lent ideas and processes to the program Clean Energy Extension is putting in place. UMass and other universities doing controlled research on pollinators and other wildlife will help with development of more rigorous scientific inquiry as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon by John Lee in the absence of Jack Angley, who had left the meeting early due to illness.