



**BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING MINUTES**  
**McIntire Room, Buchanan Alumni Center, University of Maine**  
**Orono, Maine**  
**December 20, 2019**  
(approved at the 3/12/20 meeting)

**Present:**

**Board of Agriculture Members:** A. Beal; D. Bell; S. Belle; H. Carter; J. Dill; D. Flannery (for Gregg Garrison, Maine Potato Board); J. Jordan; E. Mallory; D. Marean; M. Meyerhans; Dale Pierson; J. Smith; H. Spalding, L. Titus; R. Turner (for Eric Seaman, Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association)

**University of Maine Representatives:** R. Brzozowski; F. Dastoor; R. Dumas; S. Ishaq; J. Ferrini-Mundy; M. Hutton; J. Malacarne; F. Servello; M. Teisl; J. Ward

**Guests:** R. Hampson; N. McBrady; F. Morton; M. Pottle-Urquhart; K. Woltemath; D. Yarborough

**Staff:** E. Baker, J. Dieffenbacher-Krall; K. Poulin

**Call to order and introductions – Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair**

Marilyn Meyerhans called the meeting to order. Introductions ensued.

**Review of Board’s Legislative Charge - Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair**

Marilyn reviewed the Board of Agriculture’s legislative charge, to “advise the Chancellor of the University of Maine System and the President of the University of Maine at Orono on matters concerning the operation and management of agricultural research conducted by the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station and university farm-based programs, including those of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service.”

**Approval of April 23, 2019 Minutes - Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair**

**Motion:** Recommended approving the draft minutes of April 23, 2019. **Minutes of the April 23, 2019 meeting were unanimously approved.**

**Board of Agriculture topical discussions**

On the agricultural engineering position proposed to work out of Cooperative Extension, Hannah Carter told the group her intention is to hire a person with an initial three years of funding with the expectation by year four that the position would be self-supporting through revenue generated via fees charged for engineering consulting services rendered. Dean Servello provided background information and further explanation of some of the recent hires captured on the handout titled “University of Maine Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food-Related Faculty Positions.” After several board members commented on the question of how the Board could enhance its effectiveness with the Maine Legislature and Executive

Branch of Maine State Government, a decision was made to create two committees. One will be focused on a broader charge to examine the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture (NSFA), Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station (MAFES), and UMaine Cooperative Extension (CE) current capacity and future plans to support the broad Maine agricultural sector. Dave Bell, Sebastian Belle, Jim Dill, Dale Pierson, Heather Spalding, and Ralph Turner volunteered to serve on this committee. The other committee will be devoted to how the Board can best advocate for identified needs of the NSFA, MAFES, CE, and University of Maine with Maine State Government. Marilyn Meyerhans asked Board Clerk John Dieffenbacher-Krall to send out an email inviting board members not present to volunteer to serve on the newly created committees.

**Introduction of new faculty/professionals** – *Mark Hutton, Associate Dean, College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture, & Associate Director, Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station*

Mark Hutton introduced Sue Ishaq, Assistant Professor of Animal and Veterinary Sciences with a research focus on host-associated microbiomes, Jonathan Malacarne, Assistant Professor in the School of Economics with a research focus on agricultural and development economics, and Chef Rob Dumas, Food Science Innovation Coordinator and Facility Manager of the Dr. Mathew Highlands Pilot Plant. Each person introduced spoke briefly about her/his work and encouraged board members to contact them if they had any questions or wanted to pursue further discussion.

**University of Maine Update** — *President Joan Ferrini-Mundy*

President Ferrini-Mundy thanked the Board of Agriculture for the opportunity to address the group. She pointed to the recent release of the state economic development plan, Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029 A Focus on Talent & Innovation ([https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov.decd/files/inline-files/DECD\\_120919\\_sm.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov.decd/files/inline-files/DECD_120919_sm.pdf)), as a significant development. One of the four themes of the plan is Food/Marine. She asked the board to consider making time available at a future meeting to discuss some specific aspects of the plan.

In regards to the Maine Economic Development Strategy, she cited three recommended strategies or actions. Strategy A focuses on grow local talent. Under this strategy, President Ferrini-Mundy highlighted Action A4 that includes the goal of expanding opportunities for workers to obtain microcredentials. She also drew attention to the plan's recognition for expanded educational pathways.

Observing he was unable to attend the meeting President Ferrini-Mundy conveyed Chancellor Dannel Malloy's eagerness to meet with the board at a future meeting. She mentioned the University of Maine System Board of Trustees has tasked him with examining possible unified accreditation for all campuses within the system.

President Ferrini-Mundy acknowledged budget challenges the university must address. A contributing factor is the lower retention rate of students compared to peer institutions. The University of Maine is working to increase the student retention rate.

## **College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture and Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station Update – Dean Fred Servello**

Dean Servello updated the board concerning the budget situation. He said what makes the budget situation unique is the two-year impact. Two months into fiscal year 2020 (7/1/19 – 6/30/20) he was informed of a recession. While addressing the impact of that decision he was notified of a significant cut at approximately the same level of the highest cut received by the college during his 13 years working in the Dean's Office. Though the budget reduction will require hard decisions Dean Servello told the board the research farms were protected from any significant cuts.

While addressing the spending side, Dean Servello also told the board he has been emphasizing the income side by prioritizing student recruitment. Relatively small gains in attracting more students can yield a positive impact on the bottom line.

Dean Servello announced his retirement effective June 30, 2020.

Dean Servello gave the balance of his time to Associate Dean Mark Hutton who presented some specific updates concerning Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station research facilities. Aroostook Farm, which has five permanent positions, experienced the retirement of two employees early in the year. Mark recognized some changes were needed in order to meet research goals while dealing with the reality of a reduced workforce. He complimented the researchers and staff associated with Aroostook farm for changing how they did business to acknowledge the new labor reality caused by the retirements. Though Mark had anticipated there would be a need to scale back production, final acreage nearly approached typical past levels. Mark reported the new greenhouse is up at Highmoor Farm. An attribute of Blueberry Hill Farm is the consistent operation on an annual basis, a testament to the staff there. Mark cited three successful outreach events held at the Witter Center. The October 25 Trick or Trot event, co-hosted by the Maine Animal Club and Ewe-Maine Icelandic Sheep Club, was attended by an estimated 900 people. November 7 Witter held a Milk-A-Cow event with an estimated attendance of 300 people. On December 8, the farm hosted Witter Wonderland visited by an estimated 500 people.

### **Cooperative Extension Update —Dean Hannah Carter**

Dean Carter noted this was her first report to the Board of Agriculture as she assumed her position May 1, 2019. She praised Fred Servello and Mark Hutton for their assistance as she has worked in the position. She relayed her intent to visit every Cooperative Extension office and meet with all staff before making any budget-related decisions. Her view is you can't make sound decisions affecting facilities and people unless you have seen them. She welcomes invitations to visit farms and other agriculture-related facilities.

She provided an overview of the Cooperative Extension budget. Approximately half is derived from the University of Maine. Twenty percent comes from the federal government. Twenty-eight percent originates as extramural funding. Two percent of annual income comes from county appropriations. She discussed that Extension will be undergoing strategic planning in this next year to develop a roadmap for Extension that will take into account the Governor's Economic Development Plan and also UMaine's Strategic Vision and Values.

### **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Motion:

Recommend electing Marilyn Meyerhans chair and Julie Smith vice-chair. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Next Meeting Date**

The group decided to hold the next meeting in Augusta, likely in the latter portion of March. Board members expressed a desire to meet with Governor Mills again. Commissioner Amanda Beal expressed an interest in addressing the board.

### **Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.