



BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING MINUTES
Meeting held via Zoom
February 9, 2021

(approved at the 11/10/21 meeting)

Present:

Board of Agriculture Members: A. Beal; D. Bell; S. Belle; J. Bickford; H. Carter; R. Causey; J. Dill; G. Garrison; B. Malay; E. Mallory; D. Marean; M. Meyerhans; D. Pierson; B. Pluecker; J. Smith; H. Spalding; R. Turner

University of Maine Representatives: K. Bell; R. Brzozowski; G. Criner; F. Dastoor; J. Ferrini-Mundy; C. Gerbi; M. Hutton; J. Malacarne; E. Miller; M. Teisl; J. Volin; J. Ward

University of Maine System Representatives: D. Malloy; S. Warren

Guests: D. Flannery; R. Hampson; B. Hayslett; E. Horton; N. McBrady; F. Morton; C. Rector; J. Tapley; E. Venturini; C. Weymouth; K. Woltemath

Staff: E. Baker, J. Dieffenbacher-Krall

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 March 12, 2020 Minutes — *Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair*

Motion: Recommended approving the draft minutes of March 12, 2020. **Minutes of the March 12, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.**

Introduction & University of Maine Update — *John Volin, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost*

John Volin introduced himself to the group. He earned a Ph.D. in forestry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a M.S. in Agronomy from South Dakota State University. He also held a Postdoctoral Research Fellow position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a considerable portion of his research devoted to climate change. Provost Volin has a considerable background in land grant universities as a student, faculty member, and administrator. He referenced a number of searches underway in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture and in Cooperative Extension. He mentioned the search for a dean of the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture with the expectation of top candidates being identified by mid-April and a new person beginning by July 1. Provost Volin cited the opportunities presented by the Harold Alfond Foundation's \$240 million gift to the University of Maine System.

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

President Ferrini-Mundy noted considerable portions of her career have been spent at land grants (UNH and Michigan State University). She described her experience giving the Seaman A. Knapp Memorial Lecture on October 28, 2020 sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). Her talk was titled "Positives in Pandemics: The Increased Need and Importance of Extension During Times of Crisis." She touted the work of the University of Maine during the pandemic specifically citing the contributions of Cooperative Extension and the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture.

University of Maine System Update — *Chancellor Dannel Malloy*

Chancellor Malloy stressed the importance of developing human capital. He cited the increase in research funding obtained by the University of Maine in recent years. Chancellor Malloy noted the significant achievement of the University of Maine System instituting unified accreditation for all its campuses, a long-sought goal. The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) voted to accredit the University of Maine System as one entity starting July 1, 2020. Chancellor Malloy also mentioned the Harold Alfond Foundation's \$240 million gift to the University of Maine System and opportunities it presents to the University of Maine.

Dialog, Q & A with Provost Volin, President Ferrini-Mundy, Chancellor Malloy

A board member remarked that returning money to students must be painful for UMaine given all the budget pressure it is experiencing. In addition, this must be a challenging environment to retain students. Chancellor Malloy responded that the University of Maine System has only experienced a .3% decline in enrollment in contrast to reports of some community colleges experiencing double-digit declines in students matriculated.

Another board member asked the leaders what do you see in the future to enhance and to support people being off-site including students, faculty, and staff? Chancellor Malloy answered some students have excelled in an on-line learning environment while others have not done as well. President Ferrini-Mundy added the pandemic has heightened the University's sensibility to meet students where they

are. She expressed a desire to get back to the good things that existed prior to the pandemic while embracing the positive changes reacting to the pandemic has created.

A board member asked how can the University be more resilient and better able to absorb future shocks? President Ferrini-Mundy cited the President's Commission on Excellence and Equity at the University of Maine. It is co-chaired by Kirsten Jacobson, chair and professor, Department of Philosophy, and alumnus Matthew Rodrigue, co-head and managing director of Miller Buckfire and member of the UMaine Board of Visitors. The group is tasked with planning how to better serve students, the community, and the state as higher education evolves in the face of convergent crises.

A guest inquired about the possibility of separating the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture position from the director of the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station. Provost Volin responded for experiment stations across the country only about 20 have the responsibilities for the dean of the college and director of the experiment station combined in one position. How UMaine will ultimately approach the assignment of responsibilities will be determined by the dean of the college's experience.

A board member who serves on a local school board expressed concern about student preparedness and how the pandemic has adversely affected high school student college readiness. Chancellor Malloy stated we are having conversations about that issue. Each campus will prepare in their own way. Possible remedies include summer programs and earlier assistance to students who may struggle instead of waiting until the traditional mid-term point of the semester. A board member observed the University of Maine System Board of Trustees did an exhaustive study exploring the general issue of high school students unprepared for college-level work. Remedying the poor preparation is very expensive. Chancellor Malloy said we are already responding to the pandemic. Early College enrollment has increased 70%. Provost Volin stated he is a big fan of Early College. He noted the University of Maine has a high rate of student acceptance. Not all accepted students are at the same level of college preparedness. If we are going to accept students, we need to be prepared to assist them.

A board member asked what was the impact of the pandemic on research? President Ferrini-Mundy responded stringent safeguards were initially instituted with some relaxation as the year progressed. Mark Hutton told the group he belongs to the UMaine COVID-19 Research Continuity Task Force. The initial two plans approved by the Task Force included work involving the Witter Center and the Analytical Laboratory and Maine Soil Testing Service. Mark said work is analyzed for seasonality and how it conforms with the Plan for Phased Continuity of the Research Enterprise. Agriculture generally falls under phase 1.

A guest inquired given the prevalence of food insecurity are there new programs you will stand up? President Ferrini-Mundy replied we have been expanding programs already in place. We do know where food insecurity is within the student body. Provost Volin added this is a national problem. Some surveys have found up to 38% of students enrolled have some level of food insecurity. Housing is also a problem for students. Dean Carter mentioned the Maine Hunger Dialogue. It is system wide. Chancellor Malloy stated a number of our universities set up funds to support student needs before the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) dollars arrived. Chancellor Malloy noted the severe impact on foreign students many of whom are not eligible for domestic relief programs.

A board member asked if the responsibilities for the Experiment Station are separated from the individual holding the dean of the college position will the funding/budget authority go to the person with the Experiment Station oversight authority? Provost Volin replied the person with oversight responsibility for the Experiment Station will also hold budget authority.

A board member asked will agricultural stakeholders/BOA board members have an opportunity to speak to the dean candidates as was the case for Dean Carter's position? Provost Volin said yes for the three finalists.

College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture and Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station Update — *Mario Teisl, Interim Dean & Director & Mark Hutton, Associate Dean & Associate Director*

Interim Dean Teisl introduced himself and gave some brief background of his career. He presented a PowerPoint presentation of the proposed Life Sciences Building and 6-year Campus Master Plan. The proposed 6-year Campus Master Plan includes Roger Clapp Greenhouse modernization, work at the Aroostook Farm Research and Education Center, construction of a new Life Sciences Building, renovation of Balentine Hall, updates of Deering Hall, and removal of Murray Hall.

Mark Hutton expanded on the work at Aroostook Farm and the Clapp Greenhouse. He told the group that the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) did a study in 2015 that estimated nationwide the total of deferred maintenance of infrastructure at \$9 billion. Five years later the deferred maintenance had grown to \$11 billion. APLU and its member universities will be making a full-court press on Congress to address this deferred maintenance. In terms of particulars related to the 6-year Campus Master Plan, college leadership hopes the new greenhouse would be sited between Hitchner Hall and Nutting Hall. The vision for Aroostook Farm unites research and extension under one roof facilitating synergies.

Interim Dean Teisl concluded the presentation by pointing out another benefit of the proposed Life Sciences Building would be creating a space to have all related staff together in the same building. The total cost of the plan is estimated at \$88.1 million.

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

Dean Carter announced the creation of an Extension Agricultural Engineer Professional position. The Extension Agricultural Engineer will support Maine's farm-based, producer community by providing civil and mechanical engineering advice. She proclaimed the challenges of the pandemic caused Cooperative Extension to up its game. Dean Carter and the Extension management team are examining the future of Extension and how to best position it to continue serving the people of Maine. A board member asked about the timeline for hiring the Extension Agricultural Engineer, where the person would be situated in the UMaine organizational structure, scope of position, and job description. Dean Carter responded that the search committee will seek a generalist engineer ideally with strong connections to the State of Maine who wants to help agriculture. The position will be a partnership between Cooperative Extension and the Advanced Manufacturing Center. The search will begin in the early spring.

BOA Annual Report to Maine State Legislature & Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System
— *Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair*

Marilyn told the group the report went out February 1, 2021.

Proposal for Possible New BOA Committee — *Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair*

Marilyn proposed adding a responsibility to the committees formed last year that included a group charged with making the public aware of the importance of the University of Maine's support of agriculture and a capacity committee modeled on the past BOA effort from 2012-2014. This additional mission would involve examining lessons learned from COVID-19. Ralph Turner commented he had suggested the capacity committee that would update the Excel spreadsheet created years ago documenting positions and agriculture stakeholder priorities. He asked for University support for the initiative and that it go out to the commodity groups. Dave Bell expressed a willingness to serve again as he did on the previous effort. Discussion ensued with people agreed the group on lessons from COVID-19 should be a separate committee with the goal of issuing a report before the beginning of the next growing season. The capacity committee should strive to complete its work for the fall BOA meeting. Dick Brzozowski volunteered to assist with the COVID-19 assessment. Commissioner Beal also offered assistance with the effort.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion: Julie Ann Smith to serve as Chair. Dale Pierson to serve as Vice Chair. **Motion unanimously approved.**

Next Meeting Date

Julie Smith said we might want to hold a third meeting in addition to traditional fall meeting held on the UMaine campus. She thanked Marilyn Meyerhans for her service to Board of Agriculture while she served as the Chair.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.