



BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING MINUTES
Cross State Office Building, Rooms 103A & 103B
Augusta, Maine
March 30, 2017

Present:

Board of Agriculture Members: D. Bell; S. Belle, S. Erich; T. Hobbs; J. Jordan; B. Malay; E. Mallory; D. Marean; M. Meyerhans; J. Rebar; E. Seaman; H. Spalding, L. Titus

University of Maine Representatives: J. Leahy; J. O’Leary; F. Servello;

Guests: D. Flannery; T. Gordon; N. McBrady; F. Morton; C. Rector, S. Warren

Staff: M. Rochefort

Call to order and introductions – David Bell, Chair

David Bell called the meeting to order at 10:02 am, and thanked everyone for making the time and coming to the meeting. Reminder that after the morning meeting there will be a lunch reception upstairs in the Legislative Council Chambers with State legislators.

Approval of January 31, 2017 Minutes - David Bell, Chair

Motion: Recommended approving the draft minutes of January 31, 2017. **Minutes of the January 31, 2017 meeting were unanimously approved.**

Review of Priority Faculty Positions – David Bell, Chair

David introduced the discussion of priority faculty position needs to support Maine food and agriculture. He noted the summary information on positions provided to board members for this discussion: 1) Agriculture, Aquaculture, and Food-Related Faculty Positions: Commitments to Fill Positions Since 2014 and 2) Critical University Staff Needs to Support Agriculture and Food Production and progress to date. The objective for the present discussion was to review and prioritize the remaining unfilled positions and discuss new needs on the horizon.

As additional background information for the discussion, Interim Associate Dean Jessica Leahy provided a summary of current faculty expertise in economics in the College of Natural Science, Forestry, and Agriculture’s School of Economics and a summary of the Maine Climate and Ag Network, the latter a faculty collaborative with individuals from the college and cooperative extension.

The board reached the following conclusions: 1) a faculty position in the area of Agricultural Production Economics and Marketing is the highest priority. The board stated that this priority was contingent on the position having focus on outreach (extension position) rather than research/teaching. 2) The board’s second priority is a Food Systems Economics Specialist, but only if the position is focused on economics and not social aspects of food systems. 3) A position in the realm of “Agricultural Scientist – Expertise on Climate Change Adaptation” is presently not a board priority. This position should be removed from active consideration.

A board member suggested there should be an Agricultural Engineer Specialist position within Cooperative Extension. The discussion on this suggestion was suspended due to time constraints.

Update of University of Maine System Budget- *Samantha Warren, Director of Government and Community Relations*

Director Warren indicated that all seven campus budgets were balanced. Any additional funding would be used primarily for student recruitment and retention. Creation of the partnership between the University of Maine and the University of Maine - Machias was a great opportunity and a win-win partnership for all.

The FY17 Supplemental Budget: The budget included the University of Maine's FY17 State appropriation at \$204.1 million. Governor LePage's supplemental proposal included \$4.65m more in funding for campuses/strategic initiatives, which will offset tuition increases this academic year. It also included \$2m to strengthen early college and \$400,000 for the Cooperative Extension Plant, Animal and Insect Lab. The House overwhelmingly supported the Supplemental Budget, and it passed unanimously in the Senate. It therefore did not require the governor's signature. This act was very generous and everyone should make sure to thank state legislators for their support.

2017 Legislative Priority I: Infrastructure Investment: The University of Maine System has 550 buildings, of which nearly half haven't been meaningfully renovated in at least 50 years. The average net asset value of UMS facilities is 57% (national higher education average is 70%). Buildings in poor condition negatively influence out of state recruiting and bring safety concerns. Phase 1 of our data-driven Capital Investment Plan calls for investing \$25M in the next five years on IT infrastructure and \$250M on facilities distributed as 83% renovations, 14% new construction and 3% demo. The goal is to improve net asset value of buildings from 57% to 63%, reduce the UMS footprint by 500,000 sq/ft, and advance priority outcomes. Priority outcomes include increasing enrollment, improving student success and completion, enhancing System fiscal positioning, and supporting Maine through R&D relevant academic programming that supports and meets state's need.

Infrastructure Improvement Funding Mechanisms: Governor LePage has included \$100M in the Maine Governmental Facilities Authority budget for UMS in the FY18-19 biennial budget. General Obligation Bonding requires approval of Legislature and then majority of Maine voters; Rep. Jorgensen has introduced LD 836, which would ask Maine voters to approve \$75m in UMS-related infrastructure investments. The bond bill will support the proposed new University of Maine engineer building and other UMS needs.

2017 Legislative Priority II: Increased State Appropriation: The Governor's FY18 & FY19 proposal for additional E&G funding is \$750,000. UMS is requesting a 2.6% increase for FY17 and 2.3% increase for FY18. The Pest Management Initiative (pesticide safety outreach through Cooperative Extension) is in the budget request at a level of \$400,000 for both FY 18 & FY19.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Update – *John Rebar, Executive Director*

John reported that searches were underway for key faculty positions in ornamental horticulture, livestock and plant pathology. There is planning underway for the search for the next Wild Blueberry Specialist that is expected to occur in the fall of 2017. The crop entomology position that will succeed Crop Specialist Jim Dwyer will occur after the blueberry position. With the excellent FY 2018 budget news, Extension is

planning on investing in key 4-H positions as well including county professional positions in Oxford, Franklin, Aroostook, Knox/Lincoln and Hancock counties. If successful, filling these positions will bring 4-h staffing to a level that hasn't been possible in over a decade.

The search committee is underway for the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture and director of the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station. There are four finalists.

Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station Update – *Dr. Fred Servello, Interim Dean and Director*

Fred reported on research facility planning and improvements. At the J. Franklin Witter Teaching and Research Center, the milking stalls in the dairy barn were redesigned and replaced. The Darling Marine Center's main pier was deemed unsafe. A smaller pier is in construction to provide students, scientists, and commercial growers access to the ocean including aquaculture lease sites. Next steps include upgrades to the flowing seawater system and shore-side laboratory that serves aquaculture and completing external-funding proposals to replace of the main pier.

Next Meeting Date

The fall meeting will be scheduled for late October / early November at the University of Maine Orono Campus.

Lunch Reception and Discussion with Legislators (*At Legislative Council Chambers*).

Susan Hunter, President, University of Maine, thanked the legislators and the Board of Agriculture for their partnership and gave a brief overview of accomplishments over the last year.

Adjourned from Legislative Council Chambers - 12:51 PM