



BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING MINUTES

Augusta, Maine

March 12, 2020

(approved at the 2/9/21 meeting)

Present:

Board of Agriculture Members: A. Beal; D. Bell; S. Belle; H. Carter; R. Causey; J. Dill; C. Hickman; E. Mallory; D. Marean; M. Meyerhans; D. Pierson; J. Smith; H. Spalding; L. Turner (for R. Turner)

University of Maine Representatives: R. Brzozowski; M. Hutton; M. Teisl; J. Ward

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

Guests: D. Flannery; E. Horton; N. McBrady; F. Morton; E. Venturini; C. Weymouth

Legislative Guests: Sen. Russell Black; Rep. Michelle Dunphy; Rep. Randy Hall; Rep. Mary Anne Kinney; Rep. Ted Kryzak; Rep. Tina Riley; Rep. Tom Skolfield; Sen. Jeff Timberlake

Staff: J. Dieffenbacher-Krall

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

Marilyn Meyerhans called the meeting to order. The meeting initially convened at the Welcome Center in the Statehouse. 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 December 20, 2019 Minutes — *Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair*

Motion: Recommended approving the draft minutes of December 20, 2019. **Minutes of the December 20, 2019 meeting were unanimously approved.**

Preparation for meeting with Governor Mills — *Marilyn Meyerhans, Chair*

Marilyn Meyerhans asked for board member input on how the Board of Agriculture should best use the time it has available with Governor Mills. Several people offered their suggestions. Preparation for the meeting with Gov. Mills was suspended to hear from Samantha Warren.

Legislative/Budget Update — *Samantha Warren Director, Government and Community Relations, University of Maine System*

Samantha Warren explained the Maine Legislature flat funded the University of Maine System during the second year (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021) of the biennial budget after a 3.35% increase in FY20. The current supplemental budget proposal includes a 3% increase for the University of Maine System in FY21. She distributed a graph (UMS Tuition & State Appropriation As Percentage of E&G Expenditure Budgets) showing the long-term trend in funding for the University of Maine System provided by Maine State Government and tuition. In 1972, approximately 66.8% of the University of Maine System's budget originated from State appropriation and 31% from tuition. By 2020, the State contribution had fallen to a little more than 40% and the share provided by tuition had increased to more than 50%.

An individual asked when representatives of the University of Maine System speak to members of the Appropriations and other legislative committees do they mention the economic impact of the University of Maine System? Samantha answered yes. Another person commented the State of Maine is not fully promoting the Maine Opportunity Tax Credit. She responded that feedback the University of Maine System has received is that the tax credit is not user friendly.

Samantha Warren informed the Board that Governor Mills is proposing a \$15 million bond to support expansion of broad band service. She told the group that the University of Maine System has consistently supported such initiatives. She also stated the University of Maine System wants to be more of a resource to the Maine Legislature. One example is the contract between the Maine Legislature's Education and Cultural Affairs Committee and USM to provide research and analysis. The University of Maine System hopes to increase the number of such arrangements.

A new source of funding for the University of Maine is Public Law, Chapter 548 An Act To Establish a Fund for Portions of the Operations and Outreach Activities of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Diagnostic and Research Laboratory. It establishes the Tick Laboratory and Pest Management Fund. The law imposes a fee of 15¢ per pesticide container. The law sets aside some of the generated revenue for specified administrative costs. Fifty percent of the revenue is designated for the tick lab. Twenty-five percent goes to Cooperative Extension to conduct "outreach and education initiatives on pest management and pesticide safety and pesticide application and use, particularly for homeowners and other individuals using pesticides." The 25% balance is reserved for pest research with the subject of investigation determined by a "pest research committee designated by the University of Maine at Orono, the University of Maine System and the department" with the exception that the first study will be focused on browntail moth.

Samantha Warren told the group with the recent adoption of the Strategic Vision and Values: Defining Tomorrow at the University of Maine a conscious decision was made to not seek increased funding for the Maine Economic Improvement Fund (MEIF) in the supplemental budget request. The plan is to seek increased funding next session.

Meeting with Governor Mills

Governor Mills was joined by Commissioner Amanda Beal of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Two of Commissioner Beal's staff, Nancy McBrady, Director of the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources, and Emily Horton, Director of Policy & Community Engagement, also attended the meeting.

As board members introduced themselves each person highlighted how the University of Maine supports their personal business and/or industry. Board members cited University of Maine support for critical research, workforce training and development, conducting variety trials to identify plants best suited for growing in Maine, the collaborative faculty and staff, targeted support for specific agricultural sectors, and technical assistance.

Governor Mills touted the work of the Climate Council. She declared a vision of Maine as the breadbasket for New England and the Northeast. She expressed concern about the University of Maine and Community College System budgets. Governor Mills cited her recent appointments to the University of Maine System Board of Trustees as an example of her support for higher education. She also mentioned attending the February 28 kickoff for the Oakhurst and Full Plates Full Potential program to help schools and qualified after school enrichment programs provide more after school meals for Maine students. She stressed the importance of supporting the Land for Maine's Future program remarking now is an excellent time to borrow money with interest rates so low. She expressed a desire to meet with Board of Agriculture again after the Legislature goes home.

A board member expressed a concern about LD 2112 An Act To Limit the Use of Hydrofluorocarbons To Fight Climate Change and its potential impact on farmers who rely on refrigerated trucks to transport their products to market. Governor Mills asked her staff to investigate the issue.

University of Maine System Update — *Chancellor Dannel Malloy*

Chancellor Malloy stated he had a great relationship with the agricultural community in Connecticut where he served as governor. He understands the importance of agriculture in Maine. He cited the potential benefits of unified accreditation for all campuses within the University of Maine System to agriculture.

A board member said she expects the University of Maine to lead on research and development. Chancellor Malloy said he believes that the University of Maine needs to move to a R1 ranking. A board member asked what the designation R1 means. Chancellor Malloy explained it derives from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. In the category of doctorate-granting universities, there are the designations R1, R2, and R3. The R1 designation encompasses research universities with very high research activity followed by R2 institutions with high research activity and R3 schools comprising doctoral/professional universities. When asked how UMaine would benefit from a R1 designation Chancellor Malloy responded it would mostly make it more competitive for research funding.

A viewpoint was expressed on the importance of modern, well-maintained facilities to attract people. Chancellor Malloy agreed. A recent report (Report of the Task Force To Recommend a Sustainable Funding Model for Maintaining Maine's Public Higher Education Infrastructure) found the average effective age of buildings at Maine's public universities is nearing 50 years. Nearly half of the University of Maine System's building have not had meaningful renovations in at least 50 years compared to around

27 percent of higher education facilities nationwide. Chancellor Malloy asserted there is a need to make strategic investments in infrastructure.

A concern was expressed regarding retirement transitions and possible gaps in research and support to critical agriculture sectors. The Board of Agriculture has promoted in some instances overlap between the person retiring and the person hired to facilitate the transmission of knowledge and contacts. The Board of Agriculture has not promoted this practice as necessary in all instances but something to consider. Chancellor Malloy responded the University of Maine has a unionized workforce that presents certain possible constraints.

Ensuring faculty expertise matches what the agricultural community needs is changing rapidly with the added challenge of serving traditionally important crops while also positioning the University of Maine to support emerging sectors. Chancellor Malloy was asked how do you serve current stakeholders while positioning UMaine to support evolving and new food systems? The Chancellor responded I get it. He stated Maine should be spending more on research. He stressed the importance of the Maine populace being more vocal on the need to increase investments in research. Concern was expressed about the competitiveness of salaries offered by UMaine compared to peer institutions. The Chancellor asked Jake Ward to compare salaries across comparable land grant universities.

Conversation with members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee

The Board of Agriculture was joined by seven members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee along with legislators seated on the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Energy and Utilities and Technology Committees and a member of Senate Republican leadership. Representative Craig Hickman, House Chair of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, provided an overview of bills the committee is addressing. A board member raised a question about the growing number of municipalities passing ordinances regulating the use of pesticides. Another board member reported that the Integrated Pest Management Council has no funding for public education.

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

Dean Carter reported that Cooperative Extension did receive a budget cut for FY 2020. No staff reductions were made as a result of the cut. Three positions are open in Aroostook County: an agricultural entomologist, an agronomist, and an agricultural professional. She continues to explore how to fill the agricultural engineering position. Her challenge remains how to structure the position to ensure its success and long-term funding.

One example of Dean Carter's service outside of Cooperative Extension is her membership on the Natural and Working Lands Working Group within the Maine Climate Council. All information connected to the Maine Climate Council is accessible at <https://www.maine.gov/future/initiatives/climate/climate-council>.

She relayed her prioritization of building relationships with county officials. Dean Carter refers to this initiative as "my year of the county." She noted county governments contribute to the financial support of Cooperative Extension.

Dean Carter observed that within goal 1 of the University of Maine's Strategic Vision and Values an objective is to create an "(a)uthentic experience in research, scholarship and/or creative activity" for

every undergraduate student. She asserted Cooperative Extension is a perfect entity for student research experiences and internships.

UMaine is applying for the Innovation & Economic Prosperity (IEP) Designation from the Association of Public Land-Grant Universities (APLU). It is an intensive three-year application process. Dear Carter is a member of the team guiding UMaine's application. To quote from a document prepared by APLU, "The IEP program recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity." A board member asked what benefits would UMaine derive should it receive an IEP designation. Dean Carter responded it would provide a funding advantage, necessitates UMaine creating an improvement plan that can strengthen the university, and enhances communicating the story of the institution.

Follow-up to December 2019 Board of Agriculture Meeting Formation of Committees to Examine UMaine Capacity to Support Agriculture, Communicating the Work of UMaine Benefitting Agriculture

Marilyn Meyerhans asked Lisa Turner to update the Board. Lisa informed the group Ralph Turner is sick and was unable to attend the meeting. She referred to an email Ralph had sent the previous day.

Several years ago we (a small committee in BoA) did this exact exercise. We put together a list of the categories where the University has capacity to support us, and we sent the list out to all commodity groups with the request for them to evaluate the list, respond with an amended list showing the categories on the list most important to each commodity, and finally any area where the University does not have capacity that a commodity feels they need.

I propose that we resurrect this exercise for our purpose now. Since this is certainly on the agenda for the meeting tomorrow, I suggest that we use this premise to kick off a brief discussion tomorrow and then fine tune this concept among ourselves over the next month or so.

And yes, I volunteer to take the lead on this effort. (Ralph Turner email, 3/11/2020)

Dale Pierson expressed appreciation for the clarification of the two committees' purposes. He resigned from the Capacity Committee. Dale volunteered to lead the group charged with making the public aware of the importance of the University of Maine's support of agriculture. With Dale Pierson's resignation from the Capacity Committee, the group's membership includes Dave Bell, Sebastian Belle, Jim Dill, Greg Garrison, Heather Spalding, and Ralph Turner. Lisa Turner suggested an initial task for the Capacity Committee is to review documents that were assembled when this work was previously done from 2012-2014. In terms of soliciting input from various commodity groups, Lisa Turner stressed the importance of surveying farmers and other producers who derive most of their income from agricultural activities.

College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture and Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station Update – Mark Hutton

Mark Hutton conveyed Dean Servello's regrets for being unable to attend the meeting but he needed to remain on campus to deal with actions the University of Maine is taking to respond to COVID-19. Mark noted Interim Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Faye Gilbert has created a process to hire an interim dean with the expectation of the position being filled by April. Dean Servello will retire June 30, 2020.

Several hires were made in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, & Agriculture during the last year. They include:

Sue Ishaq, Assistant Professor of Animal and Veterinary Sciences
Rachel Schattman, Assistant Professor of Sustainable Agriculture
Phil Fanning, Assistant Professor of Agricultural Entomology
Rob Dumas, Food Science Innovation Coordinator and Facility Manager
Jonathan Malacarne, Assistant Professor in the School of Economics
Angela Mech, Assistant Professor of Forest Entomology

Mark Hutton said UMaine is doing educational work on hemp but no research. Modernization plans continue to advance for each of the research farms and Clapp Greenhouse.

Next Meeting Date

The Board of Agriculture agreed to hold the next meeting in Orono during November.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.