



Maine Board of Agriculture



Board of Agriculture

October 6, 2023

Final Meeting Minutes

Approved December 1, 2023

Meeting Details:

Date: Friday October 6, 2023, 9 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.

Location: Darling Marine Center, Damariscotta, Maine

Board Members in Attendance: (12)

Julie Ann Smith, Executive Director Maine Farm Bureau

Hannah Carter, Assoc. Provost Online and Continuing Education, Dean of Cooperative Extension

Marge Kilkelly, Owner/Operator Dragonfly Cove Farm

Eric Venturini, Executive Director Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

Sebastian Belle, Executive Director of Maine Aquaculture Association

Ryan Dennett, Programs Director, Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Assoc.

Nancy McBrady, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry

Justin Gray, Farm Manager (Produce Division), Pineland Farms

Mary Castonguay, Castonguay Ayrshires

Amber Lambke, Founder & CEO, Maine Grains, Inc.

Robert Causey, Associate Professor of Animal and Veterinary Sciences

Jeannie Tapley, Maine Potato Board Director of Operations

UMaine/UMS attendees: (5)

Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President at University of Maine, and Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, University of Maine System; John Volin, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost; Samantha Warren, Director of Government & Community Relations at University of Maine System; Diane Rowland, Dean of the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture, and Director of the Maine Agriculture and Forest Experiment Station; George Criner, Associate Dean College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture, and Associate Director of the Maine Agriculture and Forest Experiment Station

Other attendees: (2)

Carol Woodcock, State Office Representative to US Senator Susan Collins; Carol Weymouth, Executive Director Maine Association of Conservation Districts.

Meeting Minutes (taken by G. Criner):



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Board of Agriculture Chair, Julie Ann Smith: Called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and welcomed the attendees and led the introductions of all BOA members, guests, Darling Marine Center staff and IT support. Board members were present both in-person and on Zoom. Tim Miller, Lab manager and Interim Director of the Darling Center, gave a welcome and introduction to the facility.

Dean/Director Diane Rowland presented the MAFES update ([slides link](#)). Major areas discussed included sources of funding, recent changes in funding, open positions, farm budgets and adjustments, and updates on earmark projects for the farms. Dean Rowland discussed projected hires, research and other activities, new partnerships, PFAS research, the Patch House and the non-farm MAFES facilities (pilot plant/commercial kitchen, soils lab and sawmill).

Q and A followed surrounding the BOA being more informed and engaged in the UMaine budget process. Clarification was provided on certain positions being filled and the status of facilities.

Dean Hannah Carter presented the Cooperative Extension update ([slides link](#)): Major areas of discussion included sources of funding, updates on positions including possible split position with the UMaine Advanced Manufacturing Center, 4-H and fair activities, grants, update on earmarks, the diagnostic lab, urban agriculture and a forthcoming state-wide needs assessment.

Q and A followed surrounding the statewide needs assessment exercise. The process was explained, and it was agreed that there would be a comment period.

President at University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias, and Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, University of Maine System, President Joan Ferrini-Mundy:

The President thanked the two Deans, the Board of Agriculture and the Congressional Representatives for their support and vital work. She suggested a process for moving forward with UMaine providing the necessary budget information to the Board. The President highlighted the State's Economic Development strategy, and how UMaine and the Board of Agriculture might contribute to the creation of agricultural hubs of excellence. She highlighted a few of her statements in testimony for the Farm Bill and provided an update on the impact of the Harold Alfond Foundation's \$240 million award to the University of Maine System. One focus of the funds is student engagement and retention, and the President introduced John Volin, the UMaine Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost to provide more information.

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, John Volin: noted that across all 7 universities in the system, there are over 900 students, this semester right now doing a research learning experience (RLE). There has been an increase in the number of sections and total



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number of students enrolled in these special courses over the past three years. Students form cohorts and they may follow their project over their four years of college. The College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture has the highest number of these courses. Some of the titles are: “Work in the Forest”, “Understanding Wood”, “Hunt for Viruses”, and “Explore Maine's Marine Environment”.

Consideration of revisions to the Board of Agriculture Statute language. The Board and the University of Maine attendees engaged in a broad discussion on possible revisions to the BOA statute language. Thoughts expressed included:

- The BOA is unlike any other advisory board in Maine and there are other advisory boards with more modern structures.
- Concerns included public access and the administrative burden on UMaine.
- The BOA is a product of a different time and its structure was intentional.
- Any changes should bear in mind UMaine’s responsibilities to the UMS Board of Trustees.
- Members were encouraged to express their thoughts and preferences early in this process in order for the BOA to move forward with one voice.
- There is a timeline for changes that needs to be considered
- There was consensus to move forward with a clean-up version that proceeds discussion of substantive changes.

Lunch Break:

Sam Warren: presented ([slides link](#)) and briefed the BOA on the importance of congressionally directed spending (CDS), and how the University of Maine System selects the projects to move forward to the delegation. It was noted that ideal CDS projects are more one-time, such as facilities, than proposals that are more personnel based. Maine’s Congressional Delegation was complimented for its effectiveness in supporting University of Maine System proposals.

Q and A on the CDS followed. One area of interest was the decision process, from CDS idea to the award and then the implementation. Improving communication between the University of Maine System and the Board of Agriculture was emphasized. The BOA would like to be as supportive as possible in the CDS process.

It was noted that CDS projects rarely if ever change in the Congressional process, and if there are changes it is usually due to ineligibility. When changes are made there is communication with the applicant.

BOA Tour:



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Damian Brady, the Agatha B. Darling, Associate Professor of Oceanography, led a tour of the Darling Marine Center research facility. He and others from the DMC gave an impressive tour, with many interesting experiments to view.



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Executive Summary:

1. The Clerk was charged with:
 - a. Surveying BOA members regarding their willingness to join a committee.
 - b. Assisting in arranging subcommittee meetings, if needed.
2. The Governance Committee agreed:
 - a. solicit nomination for BOA Chair and Vice Chair, and
 - b. meet to develop a slate of officers to present at the December 1 meeting election.
3. It was suggested that a “Budget Task Force” be created to help move the discussion and agreement of budget information forward.
4. There is interest in having a future session of a BOA meeting devoted to “agricultural needs assessment”.