

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING

Zoom

Orono, Maine

March 14, 2022

Approved at the December 2nd, 2022 meeting

Present: D. Bell; S. Belle; K. Campbell; H. Carter; R. Causey; J. Gray; M. Kilkelly; R. LaGarry; A. Lambke; J. Leahy; B. Malay; E. Mallory; D. Marean; M. Meyerhans; J. Pierson; W. Pluecker; D. Rowland; H. Spalding; J.A. Smith; T. Sullivan; J. Tapley; K. Woltemath

Call to Order – *Julie Ann Smith, Chair*

Julie Ann Smith called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. Following opening remarks, the first order of business was to review a concern raised during the Fall 2021 meeting. A former seat holder had been surveying commodity groups to identify their needs from the University of Maine. The surveys had seen limited engagement, Julie Ann asked the Board to consider what their commodity groups need from the University.

Long vs. Short-term Needs – *Open Floor*

Marylin Meyerhans began the discussion by asking about the status of a survey that was brought up at the previous meeting. They suggested that a lack of responses from commodity groups likely indicates a disconnect between the Board and agricultural producers in the field. Heather Spalding responded that it can be difficult to perform additional survey work, so there may have been a lack of context for producers. She went on to explain that the Maine Organic Farmers and Growers Association (MOFGA) responded to the survey and listed several short and long-term needs for her organization. Jake Pierson brought the discussion back to increasing connectivity between the Board and the producers they represent. He suggested that a survey is likely the easiest way to reach out, that the Board may need to go knocking on doors. He also suggested reiterating that the University won't be able to meet the needs of farmers without knowing what those needs are. Along the same vein, another board member suggested attaching UM to the survey. Hannah Carter, dean of Extension, informed the Board that Extension is undergoing a statewide needs assessment this year, and could assist with distributing the survey.

It was proposed that the Board of Agriculture could also develop and distribute a survey, with the University supporting the logistics. Attaching the names of people who producers are already familiar with may increase participation. This proposal was supported by Robert Causey, Don Marean, and Ellen Mallory. Justin Gray expressed concern that we are already utilizing the

involved commodity groups and recommended that outreach focus more on under-represented groups of producers. Jessica Leahy suggested a two-pronged approach to outreach, first identifying which producer groups are being under-represented, then reaching out, from the University to the identified demographics. Julie Ann suggested sending out a press release featuring Highmoor Farm, which was established in part due to the Board of Agriculture and sending physical copies of a survey to producers who may have an unreliable internet connection. Julie Ann called for volunteers to develop survey questions, Marge Kilkelly, Jake Pierson, Ellen Mallory, Robert Causey, and Marilyn Meyerhans volunteered. Jessica Leahy will assist with coordinating.

Preparation for a Board of Agriculture Meeting with Governor Mills – *Julie Ann Smith*

The Board of Agriculture has a meeting scheduled with Governor Mills on March 24th from 12:00-12:30. This is an opportunity for the Board to speak with Governor Mills, to discuss funding, and to go over priorities for the commodity groups. Each representative will introduce themselves, briefly discuss issues within their respective groups, and the floor will be opened to the Governor to discuss her ideas and to discuss possible funding opportunities.

Closing Remarks – *Open Floor*

Marilyn Meyerhans updated the Board on the available Agricultural Engineer position. A possible candidate interviewed, and hopefully an offer can be made in the next couple of days. David Bell reminded the group to be organized prior to the meeting with Governor Mills. Tade Sullivan introduced himself, he is the new holder of Seat 10, which is reserved for the representative from the Maine Dairy Industry Association.

Meeting Adjourned – 11:30