

**UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers
Thursday, January 27, 2022, 2:00-3:30
Virtual Meeting Conducted on Zoom**

MINUTES

Original Agenda

- 2:00 Welcome, introductions, approve minutes of previous meetings,
Matt Barron, Chair
- 2:05 Situation with Sunny Rock 4-H Club, Jody Jellison
- 2:55 Extension overview: Jody Jellison
- 3:10 Program reports
Clem Clay, Agriculture
Tracie Gillespie, Nutrition Education
Linda Horn, 4-H Youth Development
River Strong, Clean Energy
- 3:30 Adjourn

Members Present: Ted Wales, John Lee, Karen Heymann, Matt Barron, Deb Phillips, John Lebeaux, Chris Dunn, Mike Lueders

Members Absent: Patricia Bigelow

Staff and Faculty Attending: Jody Jellison, Kathleen Geary, Bill Miller, River Strong, Molly Vollmer, Tracie Gillespie, River Strong, Jody Jellison, William Miller, Joe Shoenfeld, Cynthia Bushey, Clem clay

Guests: Ed Bourgeois, Bill Mote, Jess Sanna, Paul Sullivan, Phil Pitha, Thomas Darr, Madhavi Gorrepati, William Titus, Brie Travaline, Maria Cataldo, Bob Ward, Heather Buder, Ann Marie Young, Bailey Woods, Sophie Frishkopf, Steven Bonauto, Andrea Hume, Lois McCallin, Allison Schnipper, Carrie Myers, Barbi Woolf, Elizabeth Sullivan, Sue Dennen, Katherine Munz, Taryn LaScola-Miner, Jennifer Gibbons, Allison Bishop-Mote, Dawn Low, Shari Ackerman-Morris

There was a motion to approve minutes of meeting on 11/18/2021. Moved and seconded. [It was stated that the minutes are] "In order with a couple of minor typos."

Moved to approve minutes, none opposed, minutes of 11/18/2021 accepted.

Sunny Rock 4-H Club

Jody Jellison gave opening remarks and thanked members of the board of public overseers, staff members, and visitors. She stated CAFE's continued commitment to youth programming. She apologized, stating that [she] was "beyond lacking in transparency" at previous meeting, and thanked those present for understanding.

Bill Miller reviewed "events and milestones" presentation document regarding Sunny Rock 4-H club. It was noted that 4-H staff began to work with Sunny Rock to identify a new location due to National Grid work being done at the location. Staff members subsequently identified important policy violations and problems at Sunny Rock.

Bill said that he may not be able to do [full] transparency [due to confidentiality protocols].

Bill stated that the assessment was made that activities at Sunny Rock presented an unacceptable level of risk. The club leaders were informed that the club needed to move into compliance. Subsequently, a lack of demonstration of willingness by Joe Major to move Sunny Rock into compliance resulted in the removal of Mr. Major as a 4-H volunteer.

PROCESS: **Matt Barron** asked people to raise their hands to speak, and asked speakers to limit their speaking time to 3 minutes each.

Paul Sullivan

Thanked the BOPO members for their attention. Mr. Sullivan stated that they will continue to meet until UMass Extension apologizes and reinstates Joe Major. He stated that he needs the "board members" to ask the questions. On one side: "they" are done with Sunny Rock. On the other side: there are 50 families with kids with no club. The noncompliance that UMass Extension said was going on: Paul stated that UMass Extension knew about it previously (using as an example that Joe Major was given an award). They [UMass Extension] say that the 4-H former employee knew about it, as did the former director for 4-H. In her leadership role with UMass Extension, Jody Jellison should take responsibility.

Paul said: What are we asking for? Sunny Rock is not saying we are not going to comply, rather, Sunny Rock was not given a path to comply by UMass Extension employees. Paul quoted the purpose of the Board of Public Overseers (from the website) Paul seemed to suggest that BOPO send a letter to the Chancellor saying that they are displeased with the way that UMass Extension handled the situation.

Matt Barron said, in response to the purpose of BOPO being read aloud: "between the legislative intent and reality falls a shadow."

Phil Pitha

Phil Pitha identified self as a parent, from Sharon. For six years son has been a member of Sunny Rock. Agrees with what Paul Sullivan says and is dissatisfied with what he has read/heard from UMass Amherst. He stated that he doesn't know all the issues, but he sees the "victim," he sees what has happened with his child. He understands that there was an agreement with the volunteers to be compliant by the spring. He doesn't accept that this was all Joe Major's fault, as Mr. Major cares for the animals, and cares for the kids. Mr. Pitha stated that the people from "the outside" administering this program, did not take into account what the impact would be of shutting down the program. These actions are "killing the program" that Joe and others have set up. He thinks that throws away a ton of hard work and is against the spirit of 4-H.

Maria Cataldo

Maria is from Walpole. Maria stated that it is "still untrue a large portion of what they are saying" (they being Mass 4-H). Joe Major reached out to Carrie Chickering-Sears regarding concerns with email messages. Maria stated that "the plan was set in their minds." They [4-H staff members] didn't want to come look at the animals because they would have had to admit that the animals were fine. Maria also stated that 4-H staff members wanted to "build a case to shut the farm down and to kick Joe Major out" and did not check the facts with any of the animal club leaders. Maria noted their role as the president, stated that they had to choose titles in order to register [not clear with whom they were registering]. Maria stated that "we were grandfathered." Maria stated that "we are ready to comply" and that they were given no time. Maria also said that "we thought they were putting a plan together" but that "they [UMass Extension 4-H staff members] only wanted one thing, to get him [Joe Major] out." Maria offered to shared emails with anyone who wanted them.

Matt Barron spoke before calling on the next speaker. He disagreed with minimizing of noncompliance as related to animal health. Matt wants to get to a place where Sunny Rock can find a new home, and wants to move forward to a place of resolution.

Ann Marie Young

Thanked the members of BOPO for the opportunity to speak and stated town of residence is Attleboro. Noted that two daughters who were members of the Sunny Rock 4-H club since 2016, and that she has never worked with a more committed group of volunteers. The club "functioned beautifully for years." Ann Marie stated that Joe Major & other volunteer leaders met the parent volunteers right where they were, no matter what their limitations were. Ann Marie also said that Joe always had the vet checking the livestock. Regarding the concern raised about the livestock having worms, Ann Marie feels that the people took good care of the animals. Ann Marie is disappointed because the program meant a lot to her girls. It was noted that there is an inherent risk when your kids are working with animals. It was clarified that Rosario was

the veterinarian who worked with Sunny Rock. Ann Marie thinks there should be more of these groups out there right now, and feels fortunate that her daughters were able to participate in Sunny Rock. Thinks it is exactly what is needed at this age when kids are in crisis. Looked forward to seeing the joy on the face of the kids at Sunny Rock. Ann Marie talked about special needs groups that came in: where do they go now? Ann Marie is hoping that something can be done to continue the program in some way, particularly as there is not a lot going on right now because of the pandemic. It is unfortunate [that this happened] at a time when we need more of this type of programming.

Matt Barron said that before calling on the next speaker, he wanted to clarify that there are many other livestock clubs who are ready to mentor Sunny Rock to return to programming. Matt listed several clubs in Western Mass that are willing to help.

Madhavi Gorrepati was called on and did not speak at that time.

Matt Barron called on **Jody Jellison** to answer some of the questions asked up to this point. Jody recognized how emotional this is for many people, and recognized the impact that this may have had on youth participants.

Carrie Chickering-Sears

Carrie stated Dr. Rosario Delgado was brought into the conversation because of the concern with animals. There were a large number of animals giving birth. In 2020, 33 lambs were born, and 17 died, which is a large percentage. Dr. Delgado documented mastitis in multiple animals since 2018. It was also noted that parasites is the reason a lot of the lambs passed, and that lambs were not being given correct doses of the appropriate treatment.

Carrie has a list of animals who had to be euthanized, and has observed that animals were sold out of state without health certificates.

On goats: with the mastitis, Sunny Rock was selling raw cheese without it being tested. In other cases, two animals were sold to private owners. One was sold a ram, and shortly after they received it had major diarrhea, while the other animal died.

Carrie noted that we do take pride in our animals in 4-H in our animals. Carrie again mentioned that when just about half of the lambs die in one year, that is a lot.

Madhavi Gorrepati

Madhavi noted that her daughter has been part of the sheep club since 5th grade. They haven't had any issues with Joe Major. Her daughter is upset because she received an email saying that the [Sunny Rock 4-H] program is shut down. There are a lot of kids who are affected. This program will be useful for kids in the future, and will keep kids motivated.

Deb Phillips

Deb said that everything she is hearing is disturbing on both sides, and there are

certainly issues around the whole process, that may not ever be resolved. Thinks that what Madhavi said is the most important thing we should be talking about: how to move forward? How to make sure that the kids have a program? Deb doesn't think that this board is going to act as judge and jury as to who was right and who was wrong. There are internal processes being followed. Deb noted that whatever happened with the communication, is sorry it happened, as it seems to have created a lot of hard feelings. Deb would like to spend BOPO's time trying to be constructive about what is needed to get this program up and running, and to rebuild and repair relationships. Need to develop something to build the programs that are needed. Wants to see how the time available today could be used constructively.

Allison Schnipper

Allison identified as a resident of Sharon, MA, with a daughter who has been part of the rabbit club for 5 years. Sunny Rock has been a place that is restful, and is not competitive. The process [of disbanding Sunny Rock] has caused a lot of anxiety for her daughter. Her daughter asks about the bunnies: will they lose them too? Hopeful that can come to a resolution in the near future so that the kids don't have to live with this additional anxiety, which seems unnecessary.

Dawn Low

Dawn identified as a resident of Mansfield, MA. Dawn has a 12 year old who started her association with Sunny Rock when she was 5, and has been a member of poultry and sheep clubs over the years. Dawn's daughter was "fiercely loyal" to 4-H, and it was deeply upsetting when Sunny Rock was closed. Dawn would love to see another program in the same geographic area. Dawn stated that they have reached out to the leaders at UMass to ask about what other opportunities are available, wants to know what programs kids can take advantage of in that part of the state. Dawn would like to see the program continue and is concerned about the leadership for it. How will it be made equitable for kids in a suburban/urban area who can't have livestock in their backyard?

Bill Miller

Bill echoed what Deb said about moving forward, getting past the rancor. UMass Extension needs to improve communication with the families and let them know what the opportunities are in the area. Bill stated that 4-H staff will be working proactively on that in the next couple of weeks.

Paul Sullivan

Paul said that "We come in peace" and that "We only get listened to when we come here." Paul stated that the group [from Sunny Rock] wants to move forward but "there is an open wound." Paul also offered that there is a group of people who have "rallied around Joe Major," and that the UMass Extension 4-H Youth Development program needs to let him [Joe Major] back in as a volunteer. Paul called on representatives from

UMass Extension to apologize to Joe in order to move forward. Paul noted that “this is Norfolk County, not Hampden County,” and that it is “not easy to run a program like this.” Paul also said that Joe Major brought honor to the 4-H program for decades. Paul said that this can’t move forward without UMass making apologies to Joe Major.

Ed Bourgeois

Ed’s concern is the process and communications. There are certainly concerns about how the process works. Ed doesn’t want this to happen to other clubs with other issues, or to other people who are served by Extension.

Ed stated that he is not clear if the process and communications were proper and adequate. He needs to understand more about why folks are concerned about the process. Why weren’t they met by a proper process by a state land grant university? How could a similar situation be better handled in the future?

Matt Barron noted that the Board of Public Overseers is scheduled to hear reports from Extension staff leaders. He said that he is willing to hear more testimony if the speakers don’t “keep going round and round.” He asked that any additional testimony “cover new ground.”

Annie Sullivan

Annie noted that they are a former 4-H youth member, and that it is important to “clear Joe’s name.” Annie stated that there are so many people here today to say how important Sunny Rock and Joe are. Annie also said that the speakers are able to tell [BOPO members] the truth, and that the group wants to make sure that they have been heard. Annie stated that she wants to make sure that Joe’s name is cleared in the end, and said that “It seems like you guys suddenly turned on him.”

Matt Barron asked if Clem Clay had an update on Ag Extension programs, and **Joe Shoenfeld** noted that the agenda called for Jody Jellison was to give an overview before program leaders provided their reports.

Jody Jellison

Jody Jellison noted that UMass Extension continues to focus on longstanding commitments, including research and extension projects and summer scholars. Jody also provided an update on the current state of the university, noting that students were back on campus as of Tuesday and that all were operating under Covid restrictions, including testing, vaccination status, and mask compliance. Jody also stated that the University is looking at some budget concern related to tuition freezes

and pandemic impacts, and including flat (at best) revenue while contractual obligations have increased.

Jody noted that the area of HR continues to be challenging, with fairly significant

delays in the process, as well as low applicant numbers. Jody noted that this has been particularly challenging in the UMass Extension Nutrition Education Program.

Jody announced Joe Shoenfeld's retirement at the end of March, and stated that Bill Miller will step up as liaison to BOPO. Note was made of Joe's commitment to agriculture, and of Joe's honesty and integrity. It was also stated that this will be Joe's final BOPO meeting.

Deb Phillips

Deb asked to circle back to the Sunny Rock issue, as she is looking for a way to move forward. Deb stated that a big sticking point is for the board to better understand the issue around Joe Major. Deb wants to know if there is a path for Joe to continue to be a volunteer. Deb said that she appreciates Bill's commitment to communicating with the families, and thinks if UMass Extension can do those two things, then this can move forward.

Jody Jellison

Jody noted that there are some significant differences in opinion about what has transpired, and about the path forward. UMass Extension 4-H Youth Development has a commitment to work toward providing an animal-based club for children in the area, and information on the plan can be shared with the board prior to or at the next meeting.

Program Reports

Clem Clay, Ag Extension

Clem referred to the recent announcement that Sue Scheufele was selected for Production Agriculture Leader position. Sue will continue Veg Team Leader work and will also work with the people on the Fruit Team. Clem stated that Sue was the strongest candidate, and he feels positive that "one of our own" was the best choice. Clem noted that the HR situation is challenging, and added that the good news is that the team is in rebound mode to build capacity.

Clem is hoping that in the coming year that there will be more announcements about staff levels going up rather than down, resulting in the Ag Extension team being able to do more for the people of the Commonwealth.

Clem talked about the recent Jumping Worms conference, which was a two-day virtual event with about 700 registrants. The registration numbers show the degree to which science based knowledge is in demand. Deb Phillips asked how to get access to the information; Clem to circle back.

Joe Shoenfeld explained what the "jumping worm" is and noted that it is very destructive, especially to woodlands and to native species. The jumping worm has moved into the Northeast of the US.

Ed Bourgeois asked about the Soil Labs on campus, and about soil research going on in Stockbridge, asking if there was any Extension connection. Clem noted that he could invite folks to speak to this Board. There are people in Stockbridge School of Agriculture who are not Extension faculty, and with whom we do coordinate; several of them are on the working group for the Healthy Soils Action Plan. There are multiple points of engagement on this topic. Clem noted that these individuals have heavy teaching and research loads, and that one thing he hopes to do is to develop more capacity to bring the work that they are doing on the research side in Stockbridge into Extension work. Clem stated that Ag Extension needs increased capacity on both the research and the outreach side, and that he is hoping that in a year it will be an easy question to answer.

Tracie Gillespie, Nutrition Education

Tracie stated that the Nutrition Education Program is up and running and that staff members are delivering programs in person when requested. Tracie noted that all of the schools are open and are requesting programs, thus staff members are busy. Tracie added that NEP was recently able to hire a new supervisor for the Springfield NEP office, and that there are other positions still to fill.

Tracie stated that the NEP staff learned how to reach people in alternate ways during the pandemic.

Tracie said that NEP work with food service departments, which are very often part of the now-mandated wellness departments.

Tracie added that many schools receive farm-to-school grants. NEP staff members work with school gardens, and they have worked with schools to garden specific crops that then become part of the school meals.

Deb Phillips asked: how do you choose which schools to engage with?

Tracie responded that the grant guidelines direct that: at least 50% of the students have to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Tracie added that NEP's services tend to be most wanted when the whole district qualifies, if only one or two of the schools qualify it tends to be less desired.

Steven Bonauto

Steven introduced himself as a resident of Sharon, MA, and spoke about Sunny Rock. He noted that his daughter was a member of 4-H. Steven stated that the animal care seems like the big complaint, and asked if anyone from UMass had produced the documentation about animal care. Steven stated that UMass Extension 4-H Youth Development staff members were working to find another location for the Sunny Rock club, relatively recently, and was interested to learn if the staff members knew about

the alleged violations when they were working toward that goal. Steven agreed with the idea to orient energies toward moving forward, and also stated that "UMass Extension has inflicted trauma on the Sunny Rock 4-H membership," and that the "trauma is perpetuated by the fact that UMass Extension continues to fabricate" stories. Steven

said that “UMass Extension has the power, and seems to be writing the history.” Steven said that [the process] has been a “gross violation of trust” and that “it will take time for people to heal from that.” Steven also stated that “healing is slowed when UMass Extension does not take full accountability.”

[Returned to Program Reports per agenda]

Linda Horn, 4-H

Linda stated that a great number of youth have re-enrolled and that there are 168 clubs in operation. Linda is very happy with membership numbers.

Linda then talked about the 4-H HR situation, including a new 4-H educator starting in the Northeast, covering Middlesex, Suffolk and Essex counties. At Matt Barron’s request, Linda talked about Heather Thibodeau’s background, and noted that Heather is excited to bring new energy into the program. Linda also noted that Tom Waskiewicz was retiring this week, after working as an educator in Western Mass (all four counties) for 40 years. Linda will be moving forward to look for Western Mass educators, which is in the beginning stages of the process. Two current educators are helping out to keep Western Mass 4-H programs running.

Linda noted that a number of teens who will be doing some national trips, including two teens from Plymouth County who will attend the Agriscience summit. There are seven teens from across the state who are candidates to be delegates to the national 4-H conference in March, which is sponsored by the USDA. The youth delegates speak to legislators, and they work on what they want to see in Massachusetts when they return.

Matt Barron asked: with 168 clubs, do you offer a Zoom meeting, or any kind of meeting for professional development? Matt added, how do you make sure that the clubs are doing best practices and complying with rules, etc? Linda responded that 4-H staff and volunteers have been doing a lot of things on Zoom. 4-H staff members created “4-H 101,” which is a series of 6-8 sessions where 4-H staff present on policies, procedures, programs offered, where funding comes from, and more. Linda noted that this opportunity is advertised on the website and in the newsblast. Linda also said that each presentation leaves time during the session for volunteers to ask questions.

Linda said that 4-H staff members are holding meetings with the Western Mass volunteers tonight to introduce them to the educators, talk about programs, and answer questions.

River Strong, Clean Energy

River noted that he would speak on the highlights of the CEE program. He noted that they are still engaged in dual-use solar for DOER, and still working with Ag Extension. River said that there seems to be lots of interest, with 35 applications to date.

River also stated that the Pollinator friendly solar certification program is going strong. A question was asked about acres and volts, numbers will be provided.

River also mentioned a recent \$1.8 million grant that is funding a 3 year project. River noted that the project is in planning stages, and that the first concrete step is to put together an advisory committee. Several names have been put forward, and the CEE staff will be reaching out shortly to vet names.

River stated that CEE is wrapping up final stages of strategic plans for the next five years, and will make that public over the next few months.

River noted that no word has been received on the energy grant submitted in November.

[Sunny Rock]

Bill Miller

Bill made a statement for the Sunny Rock parents on the call, noting that he doesn't normally communicate directly with parents/members, as this is usually within the domain of the 4-H staff members. Bill said that he will be proactive about this, and that if BOPO likes, he can and will provide documentation of the timeline and communications. Bill added that there is nothing that UMass Extension 4-H Youth Development expects from Sunny Rock that is different from what is expected of other 4-H clubs.

Sue Dennen

Sue asked if there was an implication that volunteers were withholding information from members. Sue noted that she has sought answers, and the staff have "kept us [Sunny Rock volunteers] in the dark. Sue stated that "Joe Major is an awesome person, [and] only someone who doesn't know him would say otherwise."

Matt Barron said that he would like the documentation to which Bill referred as an addendum to the minutes, for the board.

Jody Jellison stated that she recognizes that we are coming to the end of our session. Jody stated that UMass Extension staff has not been guilty of lying to this group, while acknowledging that some in the group feel that they have been lied to.

Matt entertained a motion to adjourn, it was moved and approved.

Meeting adjourned at 3:38PM.