

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

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CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO  
Lt. Governor

MATTHEW A. BEATON  
Secretary

JOHN LEBEAUX  
Commissioner

### Meeting Minutes Board of Agriculture

**Date: 7/20/15**

**Time: 10am**

**Location: Shrewsbury Town Hall, 100 Maple Ave, Shrewsbury, MA**

**Board Members & Guests in Attendance:** Judy Leab, Chairwoman, Laura Abrams, Donald Chase, Alison Carr, Kim Stevens, Michael Smolak, Noli Taylor, Michelle Harvey, Fred Dabney, Lydia Sisson, Richard Canning, Glynn Lloyd, and MDAR's John Lebeaux, Commissioner; Tara Zadeh, General Counsel and Alisha Bouchard, Chief of Staff.

- 1. Call to Order & Introductions:** Chairwoman Leab called the meeting to order at 10am.
- 2. Welcome Ag Board:** MDAR staff provide the Board introduction packets that included; Board Member's Biographies and hiring package checklist; state policies (summary conflict of interest law, open meeting law, state ethics advisory 13:01, restrictions on political activities, refusals and disclosures). MDAR staff provided members a summary of state policies concerning conflict of interest, open meeting law and state ethics. The Board also received applicable statutes and regulations and Board by-laws. Chairwoman Leab noted that all members should review the by-laws and send any comments to MDAR two weeks in advance of the September meeting. **Action Taken:** None.
- 3. Report from the Commissioner:** Commissioner Lebeaux provided a report to the Board regarding the status and activities at the Department since his appointment in February 2015. The Commissioner provided information regarding personnel changes including the hiring freeze and the Early Retirement Incentive Program (ERIP) that resulted in ten employees with over 250 years experience separated from state service effective June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015. MDAR identified critical backfills to replace 5 of 10 ERIP backfills and was approved. The Commissioner further explained his decision to put forward to the Board Jason Wentworth subject to the Board's approval for appointment of Assistant Commissioner. **Action Taken:** None.
- 4. MA Ag Economic Snapshot and Overview Report:** The Board reviewed Department generated reports with Commissioner Lebeaux which assisted in educating members about Massachusetts agriculture and economics, current trends and cash receipts based on 2012 agricultural commodities. MDAR's Agency Overview report provided members with the Department's mission statement and information on agency Divisions, funding, spending and programs. **Action Taken:** None.
- 5. Consideration and Possible Action on Commissioner's Candidate for Assistant Commissioner (vote required):** Commissioner Lebeaux presented information on Jason Wentworth for the Board's consideration regarding the position of Assistant Commissioner. A discussion ensued relative to Mr. Wentworth's experience, education, job description and reasons that he feels Jason is the best candidate for the position. **Action Taken:** On the motion of Board Member Donald Chase, seconded by Judy Leab, the Board voted 12 to 0 to approve the appointment of Jason Wentworth as Assistant Commissioner.

6. **FY2016 State Conference Committee Budget:** Alisha Bouchard, COS reported on the release of the Conference Committee budget relative to MDAR's operating funds and indicated MDAR did well throughout the budget process. The Board was provided information on MDAR's total state funding expectation for the new fiscal year, FY15 spending and a review of state funded earmarks with a comparison of funding amounts between the two fiscal years. Commissioner Lebeaux updated the Board on the Cranberry Task Force and pending nominations; a discussion ensued regarding market conditions. **Action Taken:** None.
7. **FY2015 Programs/Grants Budget Reports:** Commissioner Lebeaux and Ms. Bouchard provided a report on MDAR's capital funds and grant programs to the Board. Members asked questions about the APR program and federal matching funds and the impacts of not spending out capital funds allocated for land acquisition. Updated reporting with a five year historical spending by county was requested. In addition, the Board would like to see what projects the Farm Viability spent funds on. Chairwoman Leab stated that farmers should be involved in the selection process as part of the procurement team. Mr. Canning noted that the Ag Board could possibly be helpful. Ms. Bouchard noted that the Department is working on improving collaboration among programs to better track projects and grants. Mr. Smolak noted perhaps a review of the APR Improvement Program (AIP) could look at including more technology projects and succession planning. Mr. Dabney asked how MDAR resources are going to be able to absorb requirements of the Food Safety program to which Commissioner Lebeaux responded that the Department is trying to better coordinate what the Commonwealth Quality program (CQP) does to assist with food safety requirements. Mr. Lloyd noted, to let the Board know if they can help in coming up with metrics and measurables. **Action Taken:** None.
8. **Plant Nutrient Management Regulations:** General Counsel Tara Zadeh provided a review of the new regulations and informed the Board that the Department is in the processing of establishing an internal task force to help rollout the new regulations and assist the agricultural community and others with compliance. A brief discussion on how the number of acres was determined was followed up by Mr. Dabney adding that the record keeping was an unfunded mandate. Commissioner Lebeaux noted that the lawn care industry in the marketplace had already taken phosphorus out of their products. It was noted that with the regulatory freeze went into place and that every regulation is under review. **Action Taken:** None.
9. **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI):** Commissioner Lebeaux reviewed a Department generated report on Avian Flu activity in other states, MDAR response plans and inter-agency meetings. It was noted that the USDA would assist however, they have limited resources. Mr. Chase stated that many fairs are substituting what they are doing at the fairs to ensure safety. **Action Taken:** None.
10. **Update, Boston Public Market:** Commissioner Lebeaux provided a background document on the Market and reported on the Commission's activities. The Market opening is and ribbon cutting is schedule to take place at 11:00 am on Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 with Governor Baker and Mayor Martin Walsh in attendance. **Action Taken:** None.
11. **Public Comment/Input Period:** Chairwoman Leab commented on the Massachusetts Building and noted at the BigE the Department should work to promote a better image of Agriculture when you walk through the doors. The Board had a brief discussion on bills including GMOs, Cow Shares and Raw Milk. **Action Taken:** None.

**12. Date, Time and Location of Next Board Meeting:** Farm Tour Hadley Area on August 26<sup>th</sup> in the Amherst Area. September 24<sup>th</sup> at 10am at the BigE in Springfield.

**13. Adjournment: Action Taken:** On the motion of Board Member Fred Dabney, seconded by Member Michael Smolak, the Board adjourned at 1:15pm.