

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114  
617-626-1700 fax: 617-626-1850 www.mass.gov/agr



CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO  
Lt. Governor

MATTHEW A. BEATON  
Secretary

JOHN LEBEAUX  
Commissioner

## FINAL

### Meeting Minutes Board of Agriculture

**Date: 12/02/2015**

**Time: 10am**

**Location: Boston Convention & Exhibition Center (BCEC)  
415 Summer Street, Room 206A, Boston, MA**

**Board Members & Guests in Attendance:** Judy Leab, Chairwoman, Laura Abrams, Fred Dabney, Michael Smolak, Laura Sapienza-Grabski, Michelle Harvey, Lydia Sisson, Donald Chase, Noli Taylor and Alison Carr. From MDAR: John Lebeaux, Commissioner; Jason Wentworth, Assistant Commissioner; Tara Zadeh, General Counsel and Alisha Bouchard, Chief of Staff.

1. **Call to Order & Introductions:** Chairwoman Leab called the meeting to order at 10:36am.
2. **Minutes Summary:** The Board considered for approval the meeting minutes of 09/24/15.  
**Action Taken:** Donald Chase made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Michael Smolak and the minutes were unanimously voted for approval.
3. **Commissioner's Report:** Commissioner Lebeaux briefly explained the swearing in of the new board members that occurred this morning prior to the opening of the board meeting. Following board members introduced themselves. The Commissioner continued by providing the Board an update on MDAR staffing including the status of backfills following early retirements. Reporting on the FY2017 state budget development MDAR submitted its request 2% below the agency's FY17 approved spending plan in accordance with ANF guidelines. The Commissioner provided further details as to the activities supported in MDAR's line item account with no anticipated changes in revenue receipts. Next, the Commissioner reported on FY2016 recent grant awards including the Ag Food Safety Improvement Program, Matching Enterprise Grants and the Agricultural Improvement Program. Grant award projects for Ag Energy and the Ag Environmental Enhancement Program were also discussed. Updates on MDAR's top priority - High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) were provided including ongoing response plan preparations and surveillance testing, MDAR's work with MEMA and sister agencies, current outreach and national updates on the status of HPAI. The Commissioner continued with a brief report on the cranberry harvest and the status of the Cranberry Growers Task Force. The public release of the MA Food System Plan was unveiled on October 23<sup>rd</sup> at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Food Day event at the statehouse. Information on the status of apiary legislation and the pollinator plan development was also reported. The Commissioner noted the Governor's office request for MDAR to take the lead on the Governor's Christmas Tree Lighting Event which took place on 12/2/15. Commissioner Lebeaux concluded his report to the Board by announcing the 2016 Ag Day event at the statehouse is scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup>. **Action Taken:** None.

4. **Urban Agriculture Report:** Noli Taylor shared with the Board her experience with field trips designed for students to look at urban agriculture along with youth empowerment programs and activities to provide low income communities with access to fresh, health food.
5. **Ag Board By-Laws:** Board members were provided the by-laws and with updated comments/ draft changes submitted to MDAR's General Counsel. However, no vote taken as the by-laws require board members receive them 15 days in advance. **Action Taken:** None.
6. **Nominations for Board Officers:**
  - **Action Taken:** Laura Sapienza-Grabski made a motion to nominate Judy Leab for Chair. The motion was seconded by Donald Chase and the Board voted unanimously to approve Judy Leab as Chair.
  - **Action Taken:** Fred Dabney made a motion to nominate Laura Abrams as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Donald Chase and the Board voted unanimously to approve Laura Abrams as Vice Chair.
7. **Regulatory Review Update:** MDAR provided the Board an update on the status of the regulatory review and a general discussion of the process ensued. **Action Taken:** None.
8. **Update on Plant Nutrients Management Regulations:** The Commissioner provided the Board an update on rollout efforts by MDAR staff including a meeting on 11/9/15 with representatives from the New England Golf Course Superintendent Association as well as a few dealers to discuss the plant nutrient regulations. Further, MDAR anticipates receiving written comments reflective of the discussion, which focused on organics, UMass guidelines, and general regulatory interpretation. Additional meeting requests from various industry groups continue to roll in. **Action Taken:** None.
9. **Hoisting License Update:** MDAR reported that the hoisting regulations fall under the Department of Public Safety; a discussion ensued regarding Ag exemption. Comments on Public Safety's regulations could be provided through the Governor's website portal as part of the regulatory review process. **Action Taken:** None.
10. **Other Business:** Board members provided industry updates from their various sectors.
11. **Date, Time and Location of next board meeting:** January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at MDAR's Amherst office at 10am. **Action Taken:** None.
12. **Adjournment: Action Taken:** Michael Smolak made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Laura Sapienza-Grabski and the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting 2:30pm.