

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

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Commissioner

MEETING MINUTES
MASSACHUSETTS AGRITOURISM STUDY COMMISSION

Monday November 22, 2021
Via Zoom

Board Members in Attendance: Chair John Lebeaux, Sen. Edward Kennedy, Katelyn Parsons on behalf of Mass. Farm Bureau, Michael Moore, Nathan L'Etoile, Derek Dunlea on behalf of Rep. Fiola, Keiko Orrall, Shannon Emmett on behalf of Rep. Dykema

Absent: Sen. Rausch, Karen Schwalbe, Erin Williams

MDAR Staff in attendance: Christine Smith

1. Call to Order: The meeting started at 1:05 pm, with full remote participation.

2. Approval of the minutes from the last meeting on October 18, 2021.

Motion made by Derek Dunlea, seconded by Keiko Orrall. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Industry Updates.

Chair Lebeaux noted that the end of the calendar year Agritourism event would start this Friday with "Green Friday" which celebrates the start of the Christmas Tree season sales. The event will be at Seekonk Tree Farm in Great Barrington. This year's harvest is from trees planted during the 2008 recession (2009 planting) which caused farmers to plan less. There are also supply chain issues for those that are shipped in from elsewhere. Derek Dunlea asked if the local planting issues are just for that year or if it will carry forward. Chair Lebeaux said it is dependent on a number of factors, but it could take a couple of years to even out.

Keiko Orrall announced that there are Travel and Tourism marketing grants that are opening in December and will close in January.

4. Old Business

None.

5. New Business

a. Final Report Assignment Updates and Discussion

Chair Lebeaux noted that the report contents have been sent around based on what has been received to date. Farm Bureau, Travel and Tourism, MDAR Introduction and Legislative Report have been received. Nathan L'Etoile had sent in a report as well but it may not have made it to the staff person at MDAR for getting into the report.

Michael Moore stated that the DPH piece has been drafted and revised and that they are waiting on Commissioner's sign off.

As Karen and Erin are not in attendance, the Chair noted that MDAR will reach out to them for their reports.

Chair Lebeaux noted that Keiko Orrall had asked about public comment. If we had drafts by November 1, there would have been time to have public comment before Thanksgiving but that did not happen. He stated the Commission could discuss whether they want to go beyond the December 31 legislative mandate. The plan is to get a draft report for everyone to review before the next meeting.

b. Guest Speaker

There was a discussion about having speakers come speak to the Commission. Chair Lebeaux noted that it depends on whether the Commission sunsets at the submission of the report.

c. Next Tour Location and Date

Chair Lebeaux apologized to Nathan L'Etoile as they have not been able to get the attendance for people to visit Four Star Farm in the western part of the state as had been planned at the last meeting. He noted that they could try again but that finalizing the report was the first priority.

6. Next Meeting

Chair Lebeaux noted December 20 at 1 pm for the next meeting date.

Sen. Kennedy announced that Lowell has a 20-acre Christmas Tree Farm and that it could be the only Gateway City with a Christmas Tree Farm and that they would be selling Christmas trees starting the day after Thanksgiving.

7. Adjournment

Sen. Kennedy made a motion for a vote to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Derek Dunlea. The vote to adjourn was unanimous. Meeting was adjourned at 1:26 pm.