

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

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MEETING MINUTES  
MASSACHUSETTS AGRITOURISM STUDY COMMISSION

Monday, July 12, 2021  
Via Zoom

**Board Members in Attendance:** Chair John Lebeaux, Erin Williams, James Ostis on behalf of Senator Edward Kennedy's office, Brad Mitchell, Derek Dunlea on behalf of Rep. Fiola, Keiko Orrall, Shannon Emmett on behalf of Rep. Dykema, Matt Douglass on behalf of Sen. Rausch, Karen Schwalbe, Michael Moore (arrived late)

**Absent:** Nathan L'Etoile

**Also in attendance:** Yael Langer on behalf of Senator Gobi

**MDAR Staff in attendance:** Mary Jordan, Ashley Randle, Tina Smith

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting started at 2:03 pm, with full remote participation.
2. **Approval of the minutes from the last meeting on May 17, 2021.**

Karen Schwalbe made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting, which was seconded by Brad Mitchell. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

3. **Industry Updates.**

Karen Schwalbe provided an update regarding the upcoming Barnstable Fair. Ticket sales have been good so far, but it has been difficult to find judges for contests and volunteers. There may be an opportunity for agricultural fairs/fair leadership to work with MDAR for promotional and outreach purposes.

Mary Jordan stated that there is an update to the bylaws that is forthcoming and she would be happy to connect Ms. Schwalbe with Fran Pearson, MDAR Ag Fairs Coordinator. Also, MDAR has a judges list for fairs and will share with Ms. Schwalbe.

Director Keiko Orrall noted that there were recovery grants available with some available for agriculture. There were also destination development capital grants and the opportunity for agritourism businesses to apply in FY2023.

#### **4. Old Business**

There was no old business.

#### **5. New Business**

##### **a. Meeting Sites and Tours**

Chair Lebeaux indicated that it would be beneficial for the Commission members to visit agritourism sites and discuss with them the challenges they have experienced in starting their agritourism ventures. There has also been interest from members and sites that have indicated their willingness to host.

Yael Langer noted that transportation may be an issue for some Commission members that do not have access to a vehicle or public transportation to event sites. She inquired if some members would be interested in carpooling or discussing travel plans more prior to tours.

Erin Williams stated that she has worked with groups to coordinate tours for individuals that reside in cities and connecting them with rental car companies. There is also the opportunity for members to utilize Uber/Lyft to get to tour sites. Accessibility is also a consideration for host sites.

Ms. Langer noted that there are shuttles that may take groups/tours from T stops. It may be an opportunity for the Commission to have a bus/shuttle from a T stop to the agritourism tour site depending on location/accessibility to the T.

The members discussed potential tour sites and Ms. Williams noted that Bogside Acres would be willing to host. She also recommended Scott Sauchuk/Sauchuk Farm, Holmes Homestead, and Just Right Farm.

Chair Lebeaux noted that Bradstreet Farm, Red Apple Farm, and an agricultural fair would also be added to the list of potential tour sites.

##### **b. Subcommittees: National Policies and Regulatory**

Ashley Randle provided an update on the topics addressed in prior Subcommittee meetings, including zoning/40(a), Board of Health codes, definition of agritourism, legislation in other states regarding agritourism, and farmer wineries and breweries. She further noted that Phu Mai will be assisting with organizing future Subcommittee meetings.

Ms. Randle also noted that Rep. Blais has filed an amendment to extend the reporting deadline for the final report of the Commission to 12/31/21.

Ms. Williams indicated that there may be an opportunity to connect with the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association (CCCGA) to host the committees and provide feedback based on their experiences with bog tours, festivals, etc.

Karen Schwalbe noted that she is willing to serve on either Subcommittee, and to assign her where her knowledge and experiences will be most useful.

Chair Lebeaux suggested holding a public hearing for the public to provide testimonials and written comments about agritourism activities in the state. He noted that an early September hearing may be best due to the final report deadline. It could be held in a hybrid model with the public attending in person or virtually. Written comments could be submitted through a later date.

### **c. Final Report**

Chair Lebeaux noted that the Subcommittees will try to meet before the August full Commission meeting. It will be important for them to meet prior to the September meeting to generate content for the final report.

Derek Dunlea indicated that the public hearing would be helpful in generating material for the final report.

Keiko Orrall mentioned that the Tourism Committee just completed their report that could serve as a template for the Commission's final report.

Ms. Randle inquired about other topics beyond those that had previously been discussed by the Commission and Subcommittees to incorporate into final report.

Ms. Schwalbe suggested racial equity and diversity as topics to consider including in the final report.

## **6. Next Meeting**

Chair Lebeaux suggested August 23<sup>rd</sup> for the next meeting date. He stated that a notification would be sent out, as well as information regarding another tour for Commission members to attend. The tour at Carlson Orchards will be rescheduled to September.

## **7. Adjournment**

Karen Schwalbe 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 2:41 pm.