

MSU Extension and Experiment Station Council October 17-18, 2006

Members present: Don Coe, Chris Goddard, Kathleen Hawkins, Don Howard, Becky Killarney, Dick Leach, Jennifer McEldowney, Mike Moore, Dale Oeschger, Ricardo Olivarez, Mark Ptaszek, Allen Russell, Daune Smith, Warren Suchovsky, Bill Weisgerber, Char Wenham, Steve Yanni

MSU personnel: Tom Coon, Steve Pueppke (10/18), John Baker (10/18), Steve Lovejoy (10/18), Mike Kovacic (10/17), Beth Moore, Gwen Skinner

Tuesday, October 17

The council meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by Chairperson Mike Moore. He welcomed new member Pat Killingbeck and members introduced themselves.

The group welcomed Dr. Steve Lovejoy, the new MSUE Associate Director for Programs.

Special presentation--Mike introduced Mitch Irwin, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture, who presented a letter of congratulations to Jim Nugent for his excellent leadership at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station. The commendation was presented on behalf of the governor, MDA, and the Commission of Agriculture. Commissioner (and council member) Don Coe shared in the presentation.

Dean's update—Dean Jeffrey Armstrong shared information about recent events and work in the college. He particularly talked about Create 21, an initiative at the federal level that will be part of the discussion as a new Farm Bill is debated. The plan calls for a mix of formula dollars and competitive grants to fund Extension and Experiment Stations, hopefully being able to generate better access to money from the National Institute of Health as well as from more traditional funding sources. The dean talked about the expansion of certain programs in the college, the exciting possibilities related to the focus on the bio-economy, and the great support from President Simon. He also thanked council members for their interest and support.

MSU research initiatives: The council visited two sites on the MSU campus to learn about applied research efforts related to the bio-economy and forestry.

- Tour of the Biomass Conversion Research Lab—Dr. Bruce Dale explained his research related to converting renewable plant materials into fuels.
- Visit to the Tree Research Center—Faculty members from the MSU Department of Forestry spoke to the group about their research initiatives:
 - Randy Klevisckas described this research facility and later took the group on a short tour.
 - Dr. Pascal Kamden talked about his research in wood science, exploring how to better utilize all forest products
 - Dr. Hyung-Hwan Han talked about his research that focuses on learning more about the molecular biology of trees.
 - Dr. David MacFarlane described his efforts to better measure our supply of forest resources, particularly in more urban areas.

Learning about our partners: Great Lakes Fisheries Commission—Chris Goddard, Executive Director of the Commission and council member, described the organization and work of this group. Established in 1954 principally to control the spread of sea lamprey in the Great Lakes, the commission brings together provinces and states and the U.S. and Canadian governments. They develop a joint strategic plan for Great Lakes management and their decision-making has to be by consensus. Chris described the close connection between MSU and the commission.

Council business meeting and Director's update (evening)

Nomination slate for new members: Jennifer McEldowney, on behalf of the nominating committee (Jennifer, Beth Moore, Dick Leach, and Char Wenham) shared the listing of six nominees for two-year terms beginning January 1, 2007. Members nominated were:

- Sedgwick Harris—Calhoun County
- Judy LaCross—Leelanau County
- Janice McCraner—Manistee County
- William Menge—Baraga County
- Illona Varga—Wayne County
- Nancy Waters—Muskegon County

Three open at-large positions will be filled by the two directors and there is still one vacancy in the eastern part of the north region.

(Becky Killarney and Rob Zeldenrust agreed to serve a second two-year term.)

The nominating committee carefully worked to achieve a balanced council in terms of geography, gender, interests and ethnicity. Committee members have called all of the selected nominees to see if they had any questions about council membership. They reported that all nominees were very enthusiastic about serving on the council.

Extension Director's Update: Tom Coon talked about the outstanding 2006 MSUE fall conference in Grand Rapids. There were over 500 attendees; President Simon speaking at the luncheon. The keynote speaker was Dr. Ernesto Sirolli talking about entrepreneurial efforts. The conference was held in Grand Rapids as a "trial run" because MSUE will be hosting the national conference of agricultural agents at that location in July 2007.

Tom talked about some particular programming/research efforts:

- Dr. Ian Gray, MSUE V.P. of Research has announced that one of the four major research areas for the university will foster more research focused on families. There will be money for new faculty positions.
- The Land Policy Institute was formally established in July under Dr. Soji Adelaja's direction. It includes the Citizen Planner Program and the Planning & Zoning.Center (Mark Wycoff).

Tom described the recent discussions and decisions focused on making MSUE a better place to work:

- Raised starting minimum salary to \$35,000; MSUE salaries were lowest in North Central region.
- Effective October 1st, MSUE will require a master's degree for all educator positions.

- Plans to create and implement a more deliberate mentoring program for new MSUE employees.
- Better utilize college interns
- Discussion about a type of “educator-in-training” position
- Considering an ombudsman position.

The participation fee for 4-H involvement was recently implemented and many counties are finding ways to raise the necessary money to pay for all participants.

There are currently two search processes underway for MSU Extension:

- Southeast regional director
- Associate Director for Operations

From all indications, the state is likely to be facing a budget deficit for 2006-07 and therefore the budget process for next year is likely to be a major challenge.

There was a little discussion about county funding situations: Van Buren has had very strong support from the county (\$500,000) but it is being drastically reduced for 2007 (\$197,000). Gratiot County agreed to continue funding for the next year but they are discussing other financing options. There has been some talk about the idea of a dedicated millage for MSUE. Tom talked about the concerns because this approach completely changes the nature of the partnership between MSUE and county government.

Leelanau County has placed a general operating millage increase before voters; if the issue fails, board members have said that programs such as Extension will need to be cut.

During Q & A there was some talk about whether or not MSUE had considered regionalizing their offices. Tom explained that it had been considered; however, in doing so they would lose their county influence and so it is not considered an option.

Wednesday, October 18

MSUE/MAES issues identification process----Scott Loveridge, MSUE state leader for community and economic development and a member of the issues id team, reviewed the comprehensive process used to gather public input during the past year. He talked about the State of the State telephone survey of a 1000 residents. There was also an online public survey that elicited about 20,000 responses and there was an extensive community involvement process at the county level

The overall theme for MSUE and MAES is to help strengthen Michigan’s economy and improve the quality of life in Michigan. In essence, our goal is to bring research to bear at a community level. Tom talked about the handout in member’s packets that summarize the five new priorities that resulted from the issues identification process. These priorities cut across Extension’s program areas and the MAES areas of emphasis. We have the responsibility to be a partner in the knowledge economy. These priorities give us a way to frame what we are doing in a way that has impact on every legislator.

Discussion points:

--Don Coe noted that there seems to be more recognition in economic circles about the importance of agriculture.

- discussion about possible uses of our water resources
- the possibilities of more community based health related programs—possible NIH funds
- Tom mentioned that a special energy team has been formed to provide Extension and research to address some of the current discussions about alternative energy approaches.
- Char asked about what issues might not be emphasized as much in the future

There will be a set of regional meetings with MAES and MSUE staff during the next 6 weeks to discuss these findings and talk about the local implications. A more detailed report will be distributed to council members and other decision makers.

The federal POW (Plan of Work) was jointly submitted in June and the newly identified priorities will be part of the 2007 update. The only criticism of the recently submitted POW was that it did not include 1994 institutions such as tribal colleges.

For the next budget year, MSUE/MAES will ask the legislature for a cost of living increase and also emphasize how our work will help foster the new economic initiatives in the state. Questions were raised about this related to the projections for a tight budget.

Member Updates:

- Dale Oeschger – reported that Huron County has a new CED, Frank Gubow, who has more of a community development focus. Dale is active on the Agri-PAC committee for Farm Bureau. Wind energy is an issue of particular interest at the present time.
- Kathleen Hawkins– The beef cattle industry is establishing an endowment at MSU. As part of the 100th anniversary of Animal Science; they are hoping to raise \$100,000 by Autumnfest. Another important issue for the industry is mandatory electronic identification; it will be required by the animal health traceability program; Michigan is leading the nation on this. She also participated in a managing animal health disaster exercise.
- Bill Weisgerber – Ionia County has a lot of growth in some areas but it is facing major economic slowdown in other parts; very high unemployment due to the pullout of some manufacturers. Extension can play an important role.
- Char Wenham –She talked about the loss of county funding for MSUE in VanBuren County. Berrien County is in a state of flux--the county is moving out of manufacturing into agri-tourism; also looking at entrepreneurial efforts around the wine industry. The county sponsored a very successful all-day program for county commissioners in August –focused on “ag secrets” in the county—MSUE and MAES.
- Patricia Killingbeck –She talked about the role played by the relatively new CED, bringing together new facets of entrepreneurial efforts and leadership. The county looks to MSUE.
- Steve Yanni—Bay Mills Community College and MSUE are promoting healthy living and a strengthened economy; working to change long-held attitudes. People are asking for information on renewable energy sources. They are working on efforts to motivate children to be involved.
- Warren Suchovsky–He expressed concern that the central Upper Peninsula extension staff is spread too thin; need to explore how to better utilize staff. He talked about Extension workshops for small sawmill owners.
- Chris Goddard– The MSU Fisheries & Wildlife Department is working to raise \$350 thousand to establish an endowed chair in big game management; this will have a large MSUE assignment. There is also work taking place on a Quantitative Fishery Center funded by other states and Ontario.

- Allen Russell—Youth involvement was identified as very important during the issue id process.
- Rick Olivarez– Migrant labor force is down in Michigan this year due to immigration law enforcement.
- Becky Killarney – The issues identification process has given MSUE staff a new sense of purpose.
- Don Coe – Farmers in the area had crops that didn't get picked due to lack of migrant work force availability. He also talked about the millage in Leelanau (see above). Concerns about zoning issues vs. new energy opportunities. The county is becoming a retirement destination.
- Don Howard – His area is expected to grow 4 times faster than the rest of Michigan. Growth is in two sectors: 20 – 29 year olds and retirees. He is concerned that there are no tax incentives for new businesses.
- Dick Leach—He talked about how glad he was that the council had visited the Saginaw area in June; also talked about how depressed the economy is because of the problems at Delphi etc. Saginaw County has an interim Extension director. Saginaw got a MDA grant to turn the Carlton sugar company into a bio-diesel plant. We need to take special efforts to help new legislators understand what we do.
- Jennifer McEldowney—She talked about the role of MSUE in the county; gave an example of a very entrepreneurial dairy farm. She also talked about the 10-year plan to end homelessness; money from MSHDA.

Update on biomass economy—Steve Pueppke, MAES Director, talked about the interest and activity and the immense opportunities focused on this topic. Some of the points included:

- MSU President Lou Anna Simon is very consistent and articulate in her effort to promote the bio-economy and portray MSU as a “modern land grant university”. We have some of the best assets to provide technology for the world; will be releasing report in November related to assets.
- Michigan needs capital, leaders and entrepreneurs. In addition, we need to maximize the benefit of MSU research in our own state, oriented to the needs of private industry.
- Need to consider the issues of sustainability; need to think holistically; not think in terms of a “magic bullet.”
- We aren't in this effort alone—other states and other universities also involved.
- MSU is submitting a proposal to be one of the DOE bio-energy super research centers.
- There will be a need for congressional support; council members talked about the value of having some type of fact sheet so that they can discuss the issues when talking with policymakers.

Final Discussions

Outgoing members were asked to share reflections about their tenure on the council:

- Bill Weisgerber talked about how he had become more passionate about the importance of our two organizations as his tenure on the council continued. He gained a breadth and depth of understanding and better appreciated the different applications in different parts of the state.
- Rick Olivarez appreciated the opportunity and learned a great deal about the world.
- Don Howard recalled how we had experience particularly hard times in terms of the budget situation. He commended the past strong leadership and the exciting new leadership. He valued the spirit of association.

- Duane Smith said that this had been an outstanding opportunity and he emphasized his strong support for Extension.
- Mike Moore talked about how he had learned the Extension approach through his work in the Peace Corps. He especially appreciated the broad interests represented on the council.

The two directors presented gifts and certificates to the outgoing council members, thanking them for their interest and dedication.

Char Wenham nominated Allen Russell for the 2007 chair-elect and the 2008 chairperson position. Allen accepted and a unanimous ballot was cast in support.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45, prior to lunch

Notes written by Elizabeth Moore; corrected, 12/12/06