

Agricultural Research Station Committee

Meeting Minutes – October 6, 2017

Present: Barker, Chapman, Combs, Dawson, Dunigan, Esser, Gevens, Luck, Mueller, Gevens, Parrish, Townsend

Members of the committee introduced themselves and were welcomed by Bill Barker who thanked Dwight Mueller for his years of service as ARS Director and introduced Mike Peters as the new ARS Director to the committee. Bill presented a brief explanation of the role of ARS, their recent budget cuts and how they have managed it, and a look at some opportunities ahead, including the West Madison Vision Plans. Bill pledged to be very involved in the work of the committee and ARS as we move ahead.

Directors Report:

- The \$750,000 budget cut to ARS over the past biennium amounts to approximately 18% of the ARS state GPR funding. ARS has managed to absorb most of this reduction through position cuts, increased receipts, increased chargeback fees, downsizing of the Spooner Station with the retirement of the Dairy Sheep Research Program, salary savings, reducing 101 funds for supplies and limited term employees, and by shifting costs to other funding sources within ARS. The college will continue to provide \$50,000 in Hatch support through FY18. Facility and equipment maintenance remains a challenge to ARS.
- ARS cleared 55 acres of land from old forestry plantings on the Arlington Station. This was done as part of the “Log-A-Load” education program conducted by the Great Lakes Timber Association. Approximately 500 students attended this summer field day on the Arlington Station. This past summer we returned approximately 25 acres of this cleared land to cropland. It currently has a cover crop planted on it. Soil testing has been done and it is showing good fertility. This is a unique resource for CALS researchers.
- Scott Evans has been hired as an Assistant Superintendent for Arlington. One of Scott’s responsibilities will be the Nutrient Management Plan for the station.
- There has been a nice overlap between Mike Peters beginning duties as the new ARS Director and Dwight Mueller’s retirement as ARS Director. Mike and Dwight were able to visit all of the stations, attend numerous meetings and field days, and review important files and records together during this transition.
- Since the departure of Bill Meyer as the agronomic manager for the Lancaster Station we have been covering his responsibilities with a temporary promotion of Doug Wiedenbeck. This interim solution will end in early January, 2018. We are still considering how best to proceed. Mike will be visiting with station users and soliciting their input on how to meet the researcher needs as we make a decision on how to proceed with replacing Bill. Any input from the ARS Committee is welcomed by Mike.
- We hired an interim garden manager for the West Madison Station as we transitioned from the retirement of Tom Wright to Janet Hedtcke as station Superintendent. We are gathering input on how to refill the vice-Wright position. As part of this interim period we have increased Rod Denu’s role in the garden and station horticulture programs. We hope to make some decisions soon on how best to move forward. Input from the West Madison Vision Committee will help with these decisions.
- In addition to his office on the Arlington Station, Mike Peters has an office on campus in Room 364A, Moore Hall. His presence part-time on campus should help increase interaction between ARS and CALS faculty and researchers.

The West Madison Vision Committee Report was shared with ARS Committee members. The CALS Deans have received the report as well. The ARS committee will likely rely on this report as we move programs forward at West Madison. Bill Barker indicated he will name a new committee to move on implementing some of the recommendations contained in the report. This committee will include CALS faculty, staff and outside stakeholders close to the station. ARS committee members were asked to review this report for some discussion at the next ARS Committee meeting and consider whether we would like to conduct similar reviews of other stations. It was suggested that animal researchers be included on this committee as the West Madison Station supports campus animal operations.

The Dean's office plans to update CALS Committee charges and by-laws. There were two different versions on the ARS Committee charge and by-laws distributed to committee members causing some confusion on which is the current and correct version. Bill Barker will follow-up and determine which version of the ARS Committee charge and by-laws is the current one. It was suggested that the CALS Dean's Office should provide the charge and function for CALS Committees. Bill Barker agreed, but indicated he would like some help from the ARS Committee. It was suggested one of the responsibilities of the ARS Committee might be to review the annual reports from the stations and provide feedback to the stations.

ARS Crop Chargebacks: ARS Committee members requested ARS define what is/what is not included in the basic crop charges. This information would be especially helpful to new faculty and researchers using the stations. The question was asked whether there should be a separate rate charge for organic crops. Dwight reviewed the current processes of communication between stations and researchers noting the Project Information Request Form (PIRF) begins the process but that ongoing communication between the researchers and the station is essential. It was suggested an ARS Mentor Committee might be formed to meet with new researchers and faculty to introduce them to the stations. Questions continue to be asked on what counts as an in-kind donation and how in-kind donations by researchers are credited by the stations. It was also asked whether animal researchers receive any credit for their in-kind donation to the stations. It was agreed that some minor edits may need to be made to the ARS Crop Research Cost Recovery Guidelines to help answer these questions. The group felt that a plan that allows for flexibility was key.

The minutes of the March 24, 2017 ARS Committee meeting were approved.