



Agricultural Research Stations Committee Meeting  
Friday, January 29, 2021  
1:00pm-2:30pm  
Virtual meeting via Zoom

**Attendees:** Francisco Arriaga, Bill Barker, Julie Dawson, Phil Dunigan, Nancy Esser (joined at 2:03pm), Luiz Ferraretto, Claudio Gratton, Brian Luck, Deena Patterson, Mike Peters, Jamie Reichert, Valentin Picasso Risso, Doug Sabatke, Phil Townsend

**Not present:** None

**Minutes by:** Erica Flyte

**Attending as public meeting:** None

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## MINUTES

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The meeting was called to order by Brian Luck at 1:01 pm.

### **Welcome and introductions**

Committee members introduced themselves. Deena Patterson was welcomed as new committee member, rounding out the committee as a university staff member from the Agricultural Research Stations.

### **Approval of October 27, 2020 meeting minutes**

Jamie Reichert made a motion to approve the October 2020 meeting minutes. Luiz Ferraretto seconded the motion. The motion was passed with 6 votes in favor, 0 votes not in favor, and 3 votes abstaining.

### **ARS Director's report**

There will be a base budget cut of \$120,000 to the ARS program. There should be very few full-time equivalent reductions to the ARS staff. One FTE reduction will be suggested regarding a vacant carpentry position at the Arlington farm shop. Specifics of how the cut will be addressed will be forthcoming, and a report will likely be available at the next ARS committee meeting.

The purchase order to collaborate with the enviroweather network has been issued. Equipment for the weather stations is en route to the sites and will be deployed this spring.

The Marshfield station will likely sell land to the city. This decision was a land purchase option that was executed 19 years ago. The city provided a down payment on the land purchase; thus, no further discussion in shared governance can ensue. The city has reserved the right to purchase the land and their right to purchase ends with calendar year 2021. The CALS assistant dean for facilities, planning, health, and safety is working with Facilities Planning & Management on the potential rezoning of the land before the sale.

The Legislative Audit Bureau has asked the university to review all houses and house leases. Professional home inspections were performed, and everything is in good order. All leases have been reviewed by campus and a new process is in place for collecting payments from tenants.

With the exception of CALS Greenhouses, it was agreed upon that the Agricultural Research Stations will not be utilizing the Safer Badgers application for COVID-19 testing and will not require an updated Badger Badge for building access. ARS will follow all other campus guidelines.

The superintendent of the Walnut Street Greenhouses will likely be retiring, and the plan is to fill this position and maintain the greenhouse labor force.

Comments and questions:

- How many carpenter positions remain at the Arlington station?
  - There are three facility maintenance specialist positions at Arlington.
- Is the land sale at Marshfield the south land site?
  - Yes. We have worked to reallocate affected faculty members to different land.

### **Louise Hemstead Leadership Award**

The ARS committee is charged to review award nominations for the Louise Hemstead Leadership Award and to recommend the award winner. This is the second year the award has been available. Details can be found in the call for nominations.

The following process was proposed:

- 1) A subcommittee of three members will be formed to review applications and recommend the recipient.
  - a) Membership of the subcommittee will be on a voluntary basis unless the membership requirement is not met. In this case, the chair of the ARS Committee will appoint members.
  - b) Membership of the subcommittee will consist of at least one faculty member and least one academic or university staff member.
- 2) Application review process will be determined by the subcommittee and the recommended recipient will be selected.
- 3) The recommended award recipient will be presented to the ARS committee for review and final vote on selection.

Francisco Arriaga made a motion to discuss the proposed process. Jamie Reichert seconded the motion.

Comments and questions:

- The final vote may take place electronically.
- Is there an expectation for the committee to create a rubric to use in the review process?
  - No rubric exists at this point.
  - It may be difficult to compare faculty nominees with staff nominees without a rubric.
- Has there been discussion regarding the relative weight of the accomplishments required to receive a nomination? Is there a way to balance the different dimensions? How do we compare faculty to staff?
  - Could the subcommittee design the selection criteria and bring it to the full committee?
    - The feedback from the committee toward this idea was positive.
- Timeline:
  - Nominations are due by February 12, emailed to Erica Flyte.

- Members interested in serving on the subcommittee should contact the chair by February 12.
- The subcommittee will be confirmed the following week and would meet to review the nominations.
- The subcommittee will send the final choice to the full committee before March 12.
- Final choice is due to Therese McHenry by March 12.
- Interested subcommittee members should discuss the criteria for nomination review before the nominations are in hand as to avoid bias and to be equitable.
  - The final subcommittee of three can be formed after the nominations are in so that nominees are not selected to serve on the subcommittee.
- Could the call be updated to alternate eligibility of faculty one year and academic staff the next?
  - We can investigate to make this revision for next year, but the current call must be followed for this year.
- The ARS committee chair can facilitate subcommittee meetings.
  - The committee is in favor of having the non-voting ex officio chair handle the nominations prior to passing them to the subcommittee for review.
  - The chair will select the final three subcommittee members, aiming to avoid having subcommittee members from the same department as nominees
- Is there funding or a financial bonus associated with the award?
  - We will investigate.

The motion to form a subcommittee to develop nomination review criteria prior to receiving the award nominations, and thereafter to create a final 3-member subcommittee by the ARS committee chair ex officio to review the Louise Hemstead Leadership Award nominations and select the nominated recipient, all prior to March 12, 2021, was passed with 6 votes in favor, 0 votes not in favor, and 3 votes abstaining.

Members interested in serving on the subcommittee were asked to email the chair and will meet prior to receiving the award nominations.

### **CALS Associate Dean for Research – CALS update**

The pandemic has continued to bring unprecedented challenges and has forced us to reevaluate how to do our work, our extension, and our research while keeping each other safe and while facing budgetary impacts at every level of the economy. The entire college is facing cuts, including administration, departments, and centers. ARS is facing a 101 base budget reduction of \$120,000. ARS was disproportionately cut during the Act 10 reductions and is not being disproportionately reduced this time. The ARS director and associate director have worked hard to advocate for ARS.

We aim to provide access to COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible. We will try to prioritize animal care staff to maintain staffing at animal facilities. This recommendation is supported by institutional officials and has been sent to the emergency operations committee's vaccine group. There are more transmissible variants of the virus in existence now, so risk is still very present. While we have been able to work safely, there may be the need to reestablish higher levels of precaution. Have contingency plans ready in case they are needed, and make sure research protocols and paperwork are in order.

Planning for field seasons has begun. Please plan for the same level of activity as last year rather than moving ahead as normal. Two items can be offered that will help to achieve a successful field season:

- We hope to continue having hourly undergraduate students physically participating in research. There are currently over 220 undergraduate students physically participating in research with precautions and guidelines in place, so you may plan to have hourly student employees.
- Research has emerged that supports 2-person vehicle occupancy with safety guidelines regarding masks, open windows, and passenger location. CALS associate deans will share these updated guidelines and supporting articles.

Comments and questions:

- Does the approval process for research requests go to department chairs or to the associate dean for research?
  - The current process of researchers communicating details to departmental research committees and department chairs is working well and we will continue in this manner unless revisions are required.
- Will the guidelines regarding vehicles be communicated to department chairs?
  - Yes, the guidelines will be shared through eCALS.
- If we are doing the same field trials as last year, should we do them again?
  - Communicate with your department chair to make sure your field trials are current and accurate.

### **West Madison land swap proposal – first discussion**

A packet has been shared with ARS committee members regarding details of the land exchange proposal. The land exchange policy was also shared with committee members.

A developer is interested in acquiring a parcel of land within the West Madison Agricultural Research Station (WMARS) that is 2.1 miles from the headquarters. The developer would like to exchange that parcel for a smaller parcel at the WMARS to be developed as multifamily housing. Discussions were held with CALS deans, campus, and Facilities Planning & Management about the legality of a potential swap before the developer created the proposal. The WMARS superintendent relayed which land would be considered as a net gain to the station.

The desire is to have land that can be used to support the research mission of the ARS and tools to help researchers succeed. The developer will improve the land before the trade. We would like to have a structure that includes restrooms and a heated storage space. A key item to consider is that the land we are being offered for a potential swap has irrigation capabilities, which is important to our research mission.

The decision is not completely up to the college. CALS must work with campus hierarchy and UW systems. Campus has not approved the trade at this time. We sought authorization to have this conversation with the ARS committee and faculty first, knowing that nothing is certain. No decision has been finalized and no commitments are in place. The developer is aware that this meeting is the first step in governance to determine interest. There are pros and cons to having land that is not all congruous and connected.

Comments and questions:

- Can we include in this land trade some of the buildings and services that were being discussed in the 2018 potential land sale? If not, is there an option to sell some of this land in the future if we want to use the revenue for another purpose?
  - In 2018, the item under consideration was building a structure that would provide for more shop space, horticultural space, and agronomy space. These concerns are being addressed, although the facilities would not be on the headquarters.
- The 2018 potential land sale discussion included the topic of replacing the seeds building, which had significant cold storage. This is currently an area of major shortage on campus. Could this swap proposal be a way to improve the cold storage seeds building? We are unsure where in the process that proposal is now.
  - The CALS associate dean for research and the CALS associate dean for external relations and advancement have been working with federal relations contacts on campus for three years to advocate for a building that all the plant breeders can use that would have all of those resources. The understanding is that this proposal is moving forward.
  - The CALS dean wants the seeds building to stay on main West Madison property, not on the land further from headquarters.
- There is concern about the land being discontinuous because of the danger to field vehicles while crossing roads. Is there a possibility of building a transportation corridor or a stop sign near Pleasant View Road so small vehicles can safely cross?
  - A corridor cannot be built because of the homes that have already been developed.
- Concerns were expressed about the usability of the border land for research.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the water absorption potential of the land and where the water may go if the land is impermeable.
- Do we insist on water mitigation and fences? The land north of this parcel is for small-scale vegetable work and could be harmed by rabbits, people, and birds. This is certified organic land and these plots would be hard to move. These potential dangers could result in having less research land even though we would have more acres.
  - Water mitigation should be included. The city is holding developers accountable for existing issues.
- Is there a possibility for fencing?
  - Fencing should be built on the new land to create clear property lines before the swap.
- Does the WMARS superintendent or staff have any opinions about the potential pros and cons of managing a distant site or about the advantages of the potential trade or hurdles to overcome?
  - Discussions have occurred between the WMARS superintendent and the staff.
  - Cons:
    - Having to cross Mineral Point Road to reach the new land. The desire is to have facilities at the new land where people can arrive and stay for the day without traversing back and forth. We would like to be able to store vehicles at the new land.
    - Far from the headquarters; lack of scales and shop on new site. Some of these resources can be replicated at the new site, such as a basic shop and building, but there will not be the full gamut of lifts and tools.
  - Pros:
    - Enhancement of irrigation capacities, better research abilities, opportunity for plots with linear irrigation systems controlled by GPS.

- Committee members would like to discuss with department colleagues before making a recommendation.
- Are there any alternatives? Can we sell WMARS land and use the money for something else? Is there any other undeveloped land around WMARS available to purchase that may be closer to headquarters and would not require investing in buildings?
  - No, the fact that this land is available is rare. We can investigate having Facilities Planning & Maintenance actively search for land to do trades, but it would be a long shot to find land closer to the station to buy.
- Are we gaining or losing in soil attributes?
  - The WMARS superintendent used the National Resource Conservation Service's soil maps to analyze and evaluate the soil quality and it met expectations.
- Is this the philosophical decision we want to commit to? Do we confirm ourselves as an agricultural enclave within a growing metropolitan area? Or do we redefine ourselves as an urban experiment station?
- Are we giving up 24 acres of land?
  - Yes, that is the current proposal. There is the potential for counteroffers.
- Is this the land with drainage problems that is not used much for research now? Would we receive about 52 acres?
  - Correct. Yes, we would double our acres and receive improvements. The developer will build what we ask at no cost to us, which will be negotiated in the proposal.
- A concern was expressed about the transport of tractors, planters, and equipment.
- Does the building need to be on the new land?
  - Yes.

Please discuss the concept of trading land for improved land with your colleagues. Nothing has been approved by the university yet; this is part of our internal process.

The ARS committee will meet in early March to discuss department feedback on the potential WMARS land trade. Resources will be shared with committee members to facilitate discussions with departments.

**The next regular ARS committee meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2021, from 10:00am-11:30am.**

- CALS Dean VandenBosch will be in attendance to provide remarks.
- Other agenda items?
  - ARS committee annual report

### **Adjourn**

Valentin Picasso Risso made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Francisco Arriaga seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:37 pm.