



### **Agricultural Research Stations Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

3pm-4:30pm

250 Ag Hall

**Attendees:** Francisco Arriaga (arrived 3:15pm), Jarred Chambers, Jeff Endelman, Luiz Ferraretto, Christelle Guédot, Brian Luck, Deena Patterson, Mike Peters, Jamie Reichert, Troy Runge, Erin Silva (via Zoom)

**Not present:** Amaya Atucha, Doug Sabatke

**Minutes by:** Katie Datka

**Attending as public meeting:** None

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### MINUTES

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The meeting was called to order by Brian Luck at 3:02pm.

#### **Welcome and introductions**

Brian Luck welcomed the committee and introductions were made.

#### **Approval of April 3, 2023, meeting minutes**

Jamie Reichert made a motion to approve the April 3, 2023, meeting minutes. Luiz Ferraretto seconded the motion. The motion was passed with 6 votes in favor, 0 votes not in favor, and 1 vote abstaining.

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

- Crop yields for corn, beans, and potatoes looking good for all stations now that rainfall has increased despite mid-summer concerns
  - In good position as we move into fall to feed the animals
  - Good revenues to maintain infrastructure
- Ashley Blackburn hired at the Marshfield station after two failed searches
  - Terrific skillset to apply to the Marshfield station
- Bruce Schweiger from OJ Noer retired, and position has not been filled
  - Research needs were still met despite the vacancy and the position is now posted with several high quality applicants
  - Irrigation blow out will be next week
- Close to end of fire recovery at Arlington
  - Equipment and infrastructure have been replaced
  - New building at Arlington by 2024 is the last step of fire recovery
- Capital equipment investments – case IH loaner program, great programs but worry that we are relying on donations for harvest and time sensitive needs
  - Added new/used equipment and being able to move between ag stations
  - Need to invest in capital equipment and not rely on loaner or donations to make sure we can meet research needs
  - Important to hear from all members to meet all needs
  - Places with multiple needs get priority for funding

- Green house operations need updated lighting – estimate one year until we can no longer service/repair current lighting
  - Beta testing LED lights and possible solution (\$500,000 investment) Focus on Energy and Campus Green credits to get some funds
    - Soliciting other funds to make this replacement
    - More details will come later but would like to do this as a onetime project instead of room by room
  - King Hall, West Madison, and Walnut greenhouses
  - If need be, we can move lighting from Walnut to another location
  - WCIC is going through the same lighting upgrade
    - Project is in the works
- Wisco Net project: ARS got this started but it is no longer part of ARS
  - Mesonet will be maintained at the stations, but all technical aspects are handled by Mesonet specialists
- Ag Stations struggle with internet connectivity
  - Rhinelander and Peninsular are getting a fiber upgrade
- 3 facilities that are USDA/UW shared facilities:
  - New farm in Prairie du Sac, set to go out for bids for construction (\$76 million)
    - Want to break ground in 2024 for this agronomic facility and animal care
  - Marshfield office building – \$6 million, functional statement has been accepted
    - Hire architect this winter and move on building in late 2024
  - West Madison Plant Germplasm building discussed later in meeting

## Renewable Energy

- Renewable Energy goals on campus include using land near Stoughton for solar power
- Campus could be a net zero which means we generate as much energy as we use
- Approached about putting in solar panels at Arlington, wanted 800 acres and where they wanted the panels. It was not going to work for the research station, so it was declined.
- Signing leases in the area with several farms
  - This will impact land prices as land gets harder to find
- Alliant Energy approached UW to put wind turbines up in Marathon county
  - Wausau power plant to be closed and wants to replace with wind turbines
  - Loss of land due to turbines is minimal and this could be a potential for the Marshfield station
  - Could be 40 acres and ARS will tell them where the turbines will go
    - Alliant was agreeable to this
    - UW would be compensated for the turbines and receive \$1,000/acre/year
    - This can be a political and there will be feelings about this
    - Mike is pursuing the potential of getting a lease in place with the legal team
      - Total acreage 477 acres and ARS would have to sign a lease for all acres
      - Turbines have to be in the middle and must have access points and transmission lines (underground)
      - Commission still applies even if only using a portion of the land
      - There is a potential to sign a lease and never get a turbine, but still get some payment
  - Alliant would upgrade the access roads as they do this project and will manage the project

- Alliant would also cleanup after they are done - place crane, lay netting for compaction and pick it up once done
      - This would protect research and not disturb any experiments going on
- Sustainable agriculture is a big push from the Provost hiring initiatives
  - Is that something that is a research area interesting to the faculty?
  - Takes up land and impacts research
    - What will the farmland be moved towards?
- UW-Oshkosh has digesters and are shutting this program down
  - Is Madison interested in assets or space?
    - If someone is walking away it may not be worth it

Questions/comments from committee:

- How does might turbines impact UAVs?
  - There may be rules for drones and Mike will look into what the rules and regulations would be. The turbines would be scattered.
- Does UW get credit for renewable energy?
  - Both Alliant and UW will take credit (UW- PR credit and Alliant- monetary credit)
- Will this bring people to the stations? New opportunities for experiments?
  - There could be a potential for new environmental studies

### **CALS updates**

- West Madison Germplasm – we are proposing new options as they have not agreed to a scope of work
  - Discussions with Dean and USDA leaders to get this done quickly and still meet research needs
- Mike has been working very hard to make sure UW-Madison gets what it needs
  - Jeff Endelman – communication on this project has been poor despite lots of work going into the effective statement. We should utilize research faculty to make sure the facility meets the needs
- Only priority spaces are going to be considered and this is the conflict
  - Greenhouse space was in the functional statement, but it was communicated that this would be pared back
    - UW priorities went away as conversations progress and USDA is making priority decisions
    - Jeff Endelman to share original faculty list that was contacted to work on the functional statement
  - How much access would UW-Madison get with USDA controlling facility?
    - If potato seed bank is moved needs to be accessible to UW-Madison
- UW-Madison will control internet access so no need for link pass

### **Crop Chargeback**

- There is a need to show campus numbers of dollars from crop chargeback and grants that are enabled due to research
  - Trying to do IT system where this is easier to use
  - The more big grants that the stations use the better as this will enable more research with more resources
- There is a need some money that comes from crop chargeback to go back into infrastructure

- Requesting feedback on how this can be phased in
- How much is reasonable? How much lead time?
  - Need working infrastructure to get money from donors and campus
- Something for committee to think about between now and the next meeting
  - Other institutions charge a lot more to factor this in (Iowa State)
- Crop chargebacks are cheap in the end
  - Everything else we get charged for is expensive (equipment moved, person who drove, mileage, both directions plus time they sat there, plus surcharge, plus time)
  - Bumping up the charges to cover what they are using would make it easier to budget this into grants
    - A simpler model that could be built into these charges would be easier to work with and better for collaboration
    - It is easier to put in research grants if there is a specific number per acre
- This is the opposite of what committee said last spring
  - Previously wanted to have a la carte to be charged for service
  - Building a la carte model was not easy and this is per station and per crop
    - Might not be possible to charge per acre since crops are so very different
      - Land fees are established but needs to be coupled with a la carte
- The committee requests an additional meeting to address this item
  - There was a preference expressed for the second week of December
    - Katie to send when2meetpoll for this additional meeting
    - January meeting will still be held for a general update
  - When model is built each station will manage their own model so revenue goes to each station
    - Difficult to distribute back out to each station
      - This was remodeled for budget cuts back in 2010 but may be worth redoing
      - Station managers should have this authority and part of revenue comes back to headquarters and CALS
  - Modify a la carte version because crops are different but include the fees that go with the specific crop
    - Mike presented a model to superintendents already and has some feedback from station leaders
      - Not an easy task and will continue to revise the system
    - Current model in existence will remain in existence for 2024 growing year
    - If a large change is proposed, there will be revisions and no sudden changes
  - Looking at what research crop chargebacks will enable
- People are frustrated with UAV flights at Hancock
  - A student UAV flight interacted with crop duster flight
    - This is a conversation for another time
- Difficult to tally how much research money each station has
  - Stations are an investment and show the research impact and money can be a reference point
    - We would like to show all the grants we have because we have this building/station
    - Show VCRGE/Provost why it is worth investing in the Ag Stations
  - If we can get the amount of research dollars of all the grants this can show the impact of UW research on the economy

- If we can tie to all those big grants, we can come up with a big number including all the grants that have a crop chargeback number
- Project request forms for 2024 will ask total grant dollars generated to make it easier to track
  - Small changes to get this information and keep it simple

### **General questions & feedback**

- The next meeting will be TBD in December 2023 to discuss crop chargebacks. A preference for the second week or later of December was mentioned. The January ARS meeting will still be held in January.
- Send future agenda items to Brian Luck and Katie Datka.

### **Adjourn**

Luiz Ferraretto made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Francisco Arriaga seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:16pm.