Farm Star Committee Meeting Minutes
November 10th, 2015

In Attendance:
Fred Wirth (Chair, NS)
Beth Hooker (Director of Food, Farm, and Sustainability)
Nancy Hanson (CSA Manager)
Annie Rogers (CSI)
Brian Schultz (NS)
Mark Feinstein (CS)
Kara Lynch (HACU)
Grace Adzima (Staff Representative)
Josh Minot (Div III Student)
Owen Aptekar-Cassels (Div II Student)
Alice Grendon (Div I Student)
Jess Marsh Wissemann (Minute Taker)

Meeting Times:
• Pete can never come on Tuesday late afternoons.
• Fred will put out a doodle poll for December meeting looking at Tuesday afternoons and Fridays.
• If at lunchtime, lunch will be provided.
• “Skyping In” is permitted if committee member cannot be present

Fred: One of our primary charges is to create a 5 year plan, which can serve as a framework for the work and decision-making of this committee.

Beth: Providing an overview of where we are starting from

Strategic planning process of the last year produced a working/living document and mission statement. Goal now is a 5 year strategic plan- distributing work in a way that is useful, having the committee as a touchstone, interacting closely with the plan. We have grant funding in several areas, that could be a good place to jump off from--

Lydia B. Stokes foundation grant: provided seed funding to create a center for New England food and agriculture here. Grew out of work in the first year with Farm Policy Committee and the STAC committee. Included in the grant: more faculty research, internships, and scaffolding for the program. Perhaps we should look back at this to think about moving forward since we have funding for it.
**Kendall Foundation Grant** - 100% local campaign, helps support student internships

**NSF advanced technology education grant** - summer program, infrastructure improvements for the farm related to clean energy

This committee should identify student groups that we work with or are on our radar

Farm has been closely involved with the healthy food transition and the solar project - how does this committee want to interact with that might go on under the solar panels.

Updating div and course information for accounting reasons - AASHE Freds students will work to update this.

**Farm Budget:**

Beth and farm staff have been working closely with the new CFO on budget projections. We are at a good place to make projections and track how we match those moving forward.

Fred: Our committee has an unclear relationship with the farm budget - we will address that.

Beth: my job description says that I’m responsible for the farm budget, but it’s important for the committee to be closely involved/informed

Brian: we should be involved with it so that we are able to “defend it” to other faculty

**Discussion about Curriculum/Academic Component of the Farm:**

Mark:

I’m hoping to design and articulate a curriculum that bears on and responds to the demands of the 5 year plan that incorporates the academic program at the heart of it. We really need to pay considerable attention to what we see as the kinds of courses and academic opportunities that we want to develop and support. Different than collecting a list of the things that remotely connect. What we want the content to be, the animals we study to be, the resources we have etc.

Fred:
We want to strengthen the academic side. We want to create a route toward interacting fruitfully with the farm, creating a path for faculty to add to the curriculum.

Brian: Need to upgrade the research component.

Beth:
Students find their way here, but we should discuss how to create more avenues. The faculty piece (i.e. how faculty engage with the farm, design courses etc) is really up to the faculty

Annie:
What interests me is some vehicle to make the farm a space of inquiry in a way that is isn’t right now. A classroom space that is functional. Gathering spaces where people can work comfortably. People don’t register that the farm is connected to the academic program. How do we foster a spirit of inquiry?

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Larry Archey arrives to talk about the Hitchcock Center - Trails and academic connections

Larry:
The Hitchcock Center wants to work closely with the farm committee to make sure that everyone who uses the woods and fields can be involved in creating a trail system. Bringing their young pupils to the farm, teaming up, sharing the space
The farm committee will be asked to provide input at some point on the cultural village (museums and Hitchcock center) - President Lash has met with leadership from each organizations about making physical connections with sidewalks and trails.
Pete Westover is involved.
The long-term vision is to create larger network of trails into Amherst, into the conservation land. There are potential grants available to help with construction of this sort of project. So far they have concepts, but not plans.

Brian is interested in being involved. Suggests Larry Winship to also be involved.

Annie: This could be a beautiful opportunity to create movement across campus for students

Mark:
Small, habitable woodlands exist here on campus- too many trails could cause negative impact and change the nature of the place. Important to understand the impact this might have.

Nancy: We are a working farm, there are some areas that the kids shouldn’t go

Alice: Students might prefer undeveloped spaces as a way to get away from the fray, as a solitary place. Understand the desire to encourage interaction with the land, but having trail systems formalized might take away from the appeal. Would be wise to use similar forums and surveys to the way that the students were engaged over the solar project- Alice says that was a good example of “appropriate student engagement”

Grace: Hitchcock is bringing money to the table? (Yes) Perhaps some space could be set aside to stay pristine, and other areas could be developed with trails.

**Conclusion:** Maybe a few representatives from this farm committee could participate in a Hitchcock partnership committee. Larry will be in touch.

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**Discussion on mission/vision and elements of 5 year plan:**

Fred: Need to identify major divisions of the 5 year plan. And identify people to work on those areas.

Alice: Why is producing food for the campus not included in the 3 main points of the mission?

Mark: this is a longstanding argument/discussion. The idea that this is a liberal arts institution, that it’s easy to lose sight of what a liberal arts institution is supposed to be, by putting the production goals of the farm at the front and center. A college is not about producing food- it’s not a training ground, for people who want to become farmers. It’s not at the heart of the goals here.

Brian- Don’t expect the farm to support itself- do a little of both production and academics

Mark: The list looks the way it does because it’s putting forth the goals of liberal arts education.
Nancy: Half of our budget has to come through in sales. Production goals can be folded in to any of the 3 mission points.

Kara: The production element seems to be what manifests through the teaching, research, living lab etc...

Fred: We should emphasize the synergies and be very careful of pushing into the areas where there are potential conflict. Refocusing on these questions:

- What are the ways that the academic program can be strengthened by working at the farm, vice versa?
- How can academic opportunities provide funding for the farm through grants etc...

Mark: the plan is not the mission

Kara: The "three things" presents an opportunity for the farm to take leadership campus-wide. All of the things could be leadership opportunities in terms of where the rest of the campus is going- whether it’s sustainability, social justice, etc

3 points capture dimensions of the mission but, **what are our strategic goals**

**Fred asks to suspend critical discussions, and put forth ideas of things we would love to see at the farm in the next 5 years**

Ideen:

- Research area (Brian: Goal to start a small area for research, because there are biological questions that didn’t need to interfere with the CSA.)
- Long-term commitment to particular livestock that will have continuity at the farm – long-term sustainable groups of animals used for multiple purposes with reproductive cycles, breeding etc (animal husbandry) that overlaps research
- SPACES
  - Good classroom space
  - Living learning facility, place for students who work on the farm to live
  - Work space/library space/physical space/ didn’t have the feel of an office
  - Lab space?
- Land use plan, certainly before we start deciding on what animals will be here – this ought to be one of the primary projects
  - Sugar bush too!

Comments (D2): Do you want to include the image of the notes on board that Kara did? It’s on moodle site...
• Continue to produce maple syrup - let’s make sure it gets sustained
• Bees
• Inventory of equipment
• Fundraising
• Learning that happens at the farm outside of classwork - if you want to learn something from the farmer, come and harvest. Where student groups and political activities fall into this space.
• Josh (working with students who to applied mathematics, applied design) refining the process for having access to space – leveraging interdisciplinary
• Refurbishing and adding to this building, [Thorpe House]
• This is an important piece for students, student groups, to have a space so that they have a place to be part of everything. A way to support student groups.
• Strengthening the educational pathways…not sure what form that takes
• Scaffolding for a “program” – important that it be open. Inquiry at the heart of it.
  o Optimum of having enough things going on, but not so much that it overwhelms

Next Steps:
• We will categorize the items on this list and come up with the skeleton of a five year plan.
• Fred will create a Moodle that everyone can access
• Fred will create a doodle poll to schedule the next meeting