



## OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

### **MAELC Board Meeting December 19, 2024 Zoom Virtual Meeting**

*The December 19, 2024 MAELC virtual board meeting was called to order by Senator Putnam at 10:01 a.m.*

**Members Present:** Rep. Paul Anderson, Patrice Bailey, Pat Dingels, Nikki Flaaen, Julie Grossman (on behalf of Brian Buhr), Sen. Heather Gustafson, Michelle Kamenov, Steve Olson, Chris Ovrebo, Craig Peters (on behalf of Terry Gaalswyk), Rep. Kristi Pursell, Sen. Aric Putnam, Eric Sawatzke, Amy Smith, Rep. Brad Tabke

**Members Not Present:** Sen. Gary Dahms

*Quorum was established.*

**Staff:**

Sarah Dornink (Executive Director), Kari Schwab (Program Coordinator)

**Guests:** Winona Anderson (Minnesota Farmers Union), Lindsey Brockberg (Minnesota Department of Education), T.J. Brown (Minnesota FFA Association), A.J. Duerr (MAAE), Sue Knott (MAITC), Tina LeBrun (Southern Agricultural Center of Excellence), Mike Martin (University of Minnesota, Crookston), Claire Meyers (VantagePoint Marketing, LLC), Keith Olander (AgCentric), Keri Sidle (MAITC), Ann Marie Ward (MAITC)

**Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

*Olson moved to approve the agenda and minutes. Ovrebo seconded. Motion prevailed.*

**Financial Report**

Executive Director Sarah Dornink provided an overview of the financial report. She explained that the University of Minnesota has transitioned to the new PEAK system, a centralized model for handling finance and human resources. Both Dornink and Schwab attended trainings and began implementing these changes. They also attended a webinar from the Office of Grants Management (OGM) to learn about some of the legislative changes that happened last session.

Operating Budget

In reviewing the operating budget, Dornink noted that typical expenses were on target. She highlighted specific line items, including expenses to purchase items to celebrate National Teach Ag Day (line 16), conference registrations for the National Association of Supervisors for Agricultural Education (NASAE), Minnesota AgriGrowth, and the CTE Summit (Line 19), travel expenses to Indianapolis for NASAE (line 32), and Blueprint expenses which include the remaining costs for committee meetings and the final contractor payment to True North. Remaining Blueprint expenses will include printing and mailing costs (line 34).

### Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)/Special Project Budget

Dornink reviewed the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)/Special Projects budget, explaining grants are awarded in two categories: Common Fund and Strategic Initiatives. Recipients receive 75% of the grant upfront and the remaining 25% after submitting final reports and invoices. The paperwork and invoice for reimbursement have been submitted to MDA for the final payment for FY23 and second payment for FY24. Ogilvie High School's grant project came in under budget (line 30); this was not claimed from MDA for reimbursement. Letters for the upcoming December 15, 2024 deadline were sent (FY24 Common Fund-Round 1 and Round 27). Four grants have submitted final paperwork since September (lines 9, 22, 30, 31) and the remaining organizations turned in their first 75% requests for grants approved in June with all payments being made (lines 34-46). The final payments were paid for the 2024 Agricultural Education Internship (line 54).

### FBM Budget

This budget includes funds for FBM Challenge Grants, FBM Additional Instructor grants, Mentor Program grants, and FBM evaluation. Payments since September were detailed, including initial Instructor Capacity Building grants, mentor programs, and professional development grants. The second of three payments was also made to evaluation specialist, Doris Mold.

*Ovrebo moved to approve the financial report. Smith seconded. Motion prevailed.*

### **Common Fund Grant Committee Report**

Ovrebo provided a brief overview of the Common Fund applicants. Two applications were received, and both were recommended for funding.

- **Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (MAITC) – Professional Learning Community Cohort**  
The committee recommended partial funding of \$12,755, excluding \$1,875 requested for t-shirts and backpacks.

Sue Knott and Keri Sidle, Education Specialists with MAITC, presented their proposed project. MAITC will be hosting the National Ag in the Classroom conference in Minnesota in June 2025, with 500 educator attendees coming from across the United States. The goal is to offer 25 scholarships for Minnesota K-12 teachers to attend this conference (\$1,500/teacher), then extend their learning through a Professional Learning Community (PLC) Cohort to integrate agriculture into their curriculum and explore agriculture, food and natural resources with their students.

*\*See presentation for more information (included in board packet).*

*Ovrebo moved to approve the MAITC Common Fund grant at the recommended amount as presented. Olson seconded. Motion prevailed unanimously.*

*\*Bailey abstained.*

- **Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation – Climate Education in Action**  
The committee recommended full funding in the amount of \$18,330.

Winona Anderson, Education Director with Minnesota Farmers Union, presented their proposed project. This project aims to build a year-long cohort of fourteen Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) instructors who integrate climate-related curriculum into their classrooms.

*\*See presentation for more information (included in board packet).*

*Ovrebo moved to approve the Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation Common Fund grant project at the recommended amount as presented. Grossman seconded. Motion prevailed unanimously.*

*\*Bailey abstained.*

### **Grant Committee Report**

Flaaen provided an overview of the proposed 2024-2025, Round 1 Strategic Initiatives grant projects (Round 28). There were 20 applicants requesting over \$195,448. Thirteen were recommended for funding, totaling \$79,996. Flaaen noted a significant number of applications related to equipment purchases for welding and metal shops.

*Flaaen moved to approve the Strategic Initiatives grant winners as presented. Olson seconded. Motion prevailed unanimously.*

*\*Kamenov abstained.*

### **Scholarship Committee Report**

Smith presented the 2024-2025 Graduate Scholarship recipients. Recipients will receive \$3,000 for their student teaching in Spring 2025 and are eligible for an additional \$2,000 if they sign a contract to teach Agricultural Education at an approved Minnesota Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) program within one year of completing student teaching.

Smith also updated the board on the Diversity Scholarship, which has been renamed “Agricultural Education for All.” In September 2024, MAELC staff reached out to the University of Minnesota General Counsel for guidance on the Diversity Scholarship program after the Supreme Court ruling on admission decisions based on race-based affirmative action (SFA v. Harvard). The University's position is that the Supreme Court ruling applies equally to scholarships. Therefore, it is illegal and unconstitutional for race and ethnicity of applicants to be a factor in awarding scholarships. The same applies for gender identity and expression. Smith highlighted the changes, which include updating the title, adjusting the purpose to better meet the criteria and removed references to race from the application

*Smith moved to approve the Agricultural Education for All scholarship program and application. Olson seconded. Motion prevailed.*

### **Teach Ag Communication Project Presentation**

Dornink provided background on the Teach Ag communications project. This has been a special project as part of the FY24 & FY25 special one-time legislative funding in efforts to ramp up recruitment efforts of future agriculture teachers. Claire Meyers of VantagePoint Marketing presented on their work with MAELC to build a roadmap and increase social media engagement across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. They have also been working on revamping the teachagmn.org website. This work is ongoing with the goal of launching it by March. Content will continue to be added and updated regularly to promote teaching agriculture in Minnesota.

## **University of Minnesota Update**

Dr. Julie Grossman, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, provided updates on the University of Minnesota and the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS). The University as a whole welcomed one of the largest freshman classes in its history. CFANS is developing programs to engage students earlier in their academic careers and redesigning the first-year experience to help students explore college offerings. Finally, Grossman shared that CFANS is developing an Office of Strategic Outreach and will be hiring a director in the coming months.

*\*See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

## **Executive Director Report**

Dornink thanked everyone for attending the meeting and being flexible with the winter weather causing a change to virtual. She thanked Pat Dingels for her two years of service as the Minnesota FFA Foundation representative on the MAELC board; Julie Tesch will be replacing Dingels. Dornink also recognized Representatives Anderson, Pursell and Tabke, thanking them for their service and dedication. Finally, she expressed appreciation to Olson and Ovrebo as it is their last meeting as governor appointees. Two new appointees will be made by the Governor in the coming months.

Dornink reviewed recent events, including attending the Minnesota Agri-Growth Food & Ag Summit, the statewide Ag Literacy Networking Group meeting, the Ag in the Classroom Annual Meeting, and the CTE Summit. Dornink and Schwab both also assisted with the Winter FFA State Leadership Conference and hosted the Team Ag Ed fall meeting. Dornink attended the National FFA convention and the National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education (NASAE) conference and presented a grant writing workshop to the UW-River Falls students. Most staff time has been spent on the Teach Ag website launch, as well as the finalization of the 2030 AFNR Education Blueprint. The 2025 Agricultural Education Internship will again be offered for the summer of 2025. Interviews have been complete and offers will be made soon. Funds have been secured, which include legislative and outside sponsor dollars.

Upcoming events include sharing a booth with Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (MATIC) at the Minnesota School Board Association from January 16-17. Dornink will present a roundtable along with Lindsey Brockberg from the MN Department of Education and Natasha Mortenson with the MN FFA about the 2030 AFNR Blueprint and how to support AFNR programs for success in the next five years. Dornink and Schwab will be attending the MAAE Ag Tech Conference in St. Cloud January 17-18, where MAELC will have a booth, assist with the Future Agriscience Teacher Symposium (FAST) and present a workshop on advocacy and preparing instructors for the upcoming AFNR Education and FFA Days at the Capitol.

For legislative events, AFNR Education Day at the Capitol will be held on January 29. This event will highlight the instructor and student success stories for all areas of AFNR education, including school-based agricultural education, post-secondary education, and Farm Business Management. This event will include a meet-and-greet in the Capitol and legislative meetings focused on MAAE and MAELC's requests, as well as building relationships with legislators. Dornink and Schwab will continue to be involved with FFA activities at the capitol including Ag Policy Experience, February 23-25, with the Legislative Meet & Greet being on February 24 and FFA Day at the Capitol on February 25.

Dornink reminded everyone the MAELC office will be closed December 24-January 1.

### Blueprint Update

Dornink provided an update on the 2030 Minnesota AFNR Education Blueprint, summarizing the process which included listening sessions in June, committee work in August and September, then finalizing the strategies this fall. The design work is close to being done for the final product. Dornink shared the final strategies around the three goals of supporting students, programming and instructors within each category (School-Based Agricultural Education, Agriculture Teacher Preparation, Post-Secondary AFNR Education and Farm Business Management). Each committee had to narrow their work to four strategies per goal area.

### **Minnesota FFA Association Presentation**

Dr. T.J. Brown, Executive Director of the Minnesota FFA Association, introduced himself and provided an update about FFA in Minnesota. The Minnesota FFA staff also include Ashely Crowson, Leadership Development Coordinator, and Natasha Mortenson, Career and Alumni Program Coordinator.

On a National level, FFA is chartered through the federal government which makes it an integral part of AFNR education. In 2019, updates in congress more clearly defined the three circle model and clarifies that FFA is different than an extracurricular activity or club. FFA membership can only be garnered through a classroom experience/intracurricular instruction. Dr. Brown compared it to a high school band program. An upcoming initiative of National FFA is 100% membership across the nation. This change is proposed to come to Minnesota for the 2027-2028 school year. This also coincides with Minnesota FFA's 100 year anniversary.

Dr. Brown discussed budget constraints and the need for legislative funding to support 100% FFA membership and staffing growth. With 100% membership there will be a large increase in chapter fees; some other states have earmarked legislative funds to help cover membership costs. Minnesota is also not keeping up with surrounding state's Career and Technical Education Student Organizations (CTSO) funding. As expenses have increased, the funding has not kept up.

The Minnesota FFA State Convention will see changes. It typically was a three-day event at the UMN/MN State fairgrounds. In 2025, it will be a two-day event, with some events moving to St. Cloud State University for a separate two-day event held this December. This allows Minnesota FFA to better serve members with space limitations at UMN/State Fairgrounds.

*\*See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

### **Legislative Discussion**

#### Legislator Update

Legislators shared that the upcoming biennium will be more fiscally constrained, with limited opportunities for funding increases.

#### MAELC Appropriation Discussion

MAELC currently receives \$2.25M for Farm Business Management (FBM) through the Agriculture Committee, plus a separate \$250,000 for agricultural education grants and special projects. Last biennium, MAELC requested \$500,000/year and ended up receiving \$350,000/year, including \$100,000 in one-time funds. Dornink stated MAELC hopes to maintain or increase this to \$500,000. Sawatzke noted there has been special funding for meat processing through the MDA grants, and suggested reallocating prior meat grants earmarked funds to broaden support for AFNR programs. Senator Putnam emphasized the importance of funding FBM and mental health. Board members expressed general support for maintaining MAELC's \$350,000 in special project funding.

### Other Agricultural Education Legislative Priorities

A.J. Duerr, lobbyist for the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE), reported on other agricultural education legislative priorities, including FBM and rural mental health, farm transitions, and increasing the CTE levy cap from 35% to 50%. He will be working with the Minnesota Association for Career and Technical Education (MnACTE) as this levy positively affects all of CTE.

### **Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE) Update**

Flaen updated the board on the AgTech Winter Conference, recent NAAE awards, regional realignment efforts, and ongoing support for early-career teachers. MAAE is working to reduce barriers for professional development and membership fees.

*\*See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

### **Minnesota State & Farm Business Management (FBM) Update**

Dr. Craig Peters reported that enrollment across Minnesota State institutions is increasing. Implementation of the Workday system related to HR, payroll and finance continues system wide. FBM is entering the second year of MDA-supported farm succession and transition retreats.

*\*See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

### **University Agricultural Education Updates**

#### Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU)

Dornink highlighted a few pieces from the written report.

*\*See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

#### University of Minnesota-Crookston (UMC)

Dr. Mike Martin reported on program growth, student quality, and revisions to degree plans. UMC has 19 teacher-education students. Four will student teach in Spring 2025 and one in Fall 2025.

#### University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Smith reported on faculty awards, FFA events, and a successful 4-H and Agricultural Education exchange event, which was funded through a MAELC Common Fund grant. She will be on sabbatical in Spring 2025, focusing on work-based learning.

*\*See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

### **Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Update**

Dornink summarized the MDA report.

*\*See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

### **Other Business/Announcements**

The next board meeting will be held in June 2025. Upcoming dates of events and activities were highlighted (included on the back of agenda).

*Sen. Putnam adjourned the meeting at 1:13 p.m.*