The Southern Agricultural Research Center Advisory Committee, led by Terral Balzer, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Dr. Ken Kephart initiated introductions. SARC faculty and staff members present: Ken Kephart, Tom Fisher, Jim Mickelson, Tammy Balzer, Mike Particka, Niki Flowers and Peggy Lamb. Guests present included: Dr. Sharron Quisenberry, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Director, Ms. Monica Lindeen, House District 7 Representative, Dr. David Bryant, Vice Provost and Montana State University Extension Service Director, Mr. Jim Johannes, MSU-ES Director of Programming, Mr. Jim Reno, Yellowstone County Commissioner, and Mr. Ziggy Ziegler, Yellowstone County Commissioner. Dr. Geoff Gamble, President of Montana State University, was invited as a guest but was unable to attend. Advisory committee members present were: Terral Balzer (Chairman), Mike Bernhardt (Secretary), Kim Nile, Greg Lackman (Vice Chairman), David Kelsey, Rodney Jabs, and Kent Williams, Custer County Extension Agent. Two new committee members representing Custer County, Bill Griffin and Mark Helland, were introduced by Kent Williams. Advisory committee members absent were: Kirk Barnette, Carter Miklovich, Mikol Hjelvik, Darrel Krum, Dennis Newton, Walt Hudyma, Paul Dixon, Tony Zinne, Mike Greytak, Lee Schmelzer, Bill Bergin, and Glen Leonhardt. It was noted that Paul Dixon, Darrel Krum and Lee Schmelzer had a prior commitment to be involved in a pesticide training program at Broadview. Tony Zinne, Walt Hudyma and Mike Greytak also had reported scheduling conflicts.

Old Business:

Dr. David Bryant spoke about the possibility of staffing an Extension Specialist at Huntley. He stated that any FTE’s for Extension specialists located at the MAES research centers, including SARC, would first have to be funded by new moneys allocated to Extension by future Montana legislative sessions. When questioned by Dr. Kephart regarding the MSU-ES promise to provide an extension specialist as part of the SARC restaffing plan, Dr. Bryant indicated that he felt he was not necessarily bound by the Extension commitment detailed in Dr. Mike Malone’s letter to Terral Balzer dated December 26, 1996 [regarding this matter, the Malone letter details Montana State University’s offer to reopen SARC in exchange for local support of a MSU legislative initiative requesting a $1.7 million salary improvement package for MAES and MSU-ES salaries during the FY1998-1999 biennium]. Mike Bernhardt read from notes he made during a 1996 meeting with Dr. Malone, Dr. Tom McCoy, then MAES Director and Dr. Andrea Pagenkopf, then MSU-ES Director, indicating that an extension specialist position would be part of the SARC restaffing plan. Dr. Bryant stated that discussions with others, primarily Dr. Pagenkopf, and Mr. John Ranney, retired Yellowstone County Extension Agent, had left him uncertain as to the exact nature of Extension’s commitment regardless of the content of Dr. Malone’s letter or the recollection of past discussions by the SARC advisory committee membership.

Dr. Bryant asked if extension agents in surrounding counties could interact with SARC personnel to develop marketing programs in the absence of an Extension Specialist at Huntley. He stated that any FTE’s for Extension specialists located at the MAES research centers, including SARC, would first have to be funded by new moneys allocated to Extension by future Montana legislative sessions. When questioned by Dr. Kephart regarding the MSU-ES promise to provide an extension specialist as part of the SARC restaffing plan, Dr. Bryant indicated that he felt he was not necessarily bound by the Extension commitment detailed in Dr. Mike Malone’s letter to Terral Balzer dated December 26, 1996 [regarding this matter, the Malone letter details Montana State University’s offer to reopen SARC in exchange for local support of a MSU legislative initiative requesting a $1.7 million salary improvement package for MAES and MSU-ES salaries during the FY1998-1999 biennium]. Mike Bernhardt read from notes he made during a 1996 meeting with Dr. Malone, Dr. Tom McCoy, then MAES Director and Dr. Andrea Pagenkopf, then MSU-ES Director, indicating that an extension specialist position would be part of the SARC restaffing plan. Dr. Bryant stated that discussions with others, primarily Dr. Pagenkopf, and Mr. John Ranney, retired Yellowstone County Extension Agent, had left him uncertain as to the exact nature of Extension’s commitment regardless of the content of Dr. Malone’s letter or the recollection of past discussions by the SARC advisory committee membership.

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that he will be submitting to President Gamble a request for Extension Specialists at Huntley, Havre, and Sidney. Dr. Bryant asked for cooperation from the MAES in the legislative process to work jointly in developing a plan for legislative funding for an Extension Specialist position at SARC. He asked that Dr. Kephart discuss this matter with the other Research Center Superintendents, and have them develop a “resolution” defining a priority in the order that the three proposed positions should be filled [regarding this matter, Ken has contacted Dr. Mal Westcott, Head of Research Center Department, who has initiated such a planning process]. Dr. Kephart also agreed to review the Extension Marketing and Economic Development position description developed last year and provide Dr. Bryant with an updated description.

Representative Monica Lindeen expressed her thanks for the support she received during the last legislative session. She expressed gratitude for being able to help the MAES and SARC by sponsoring the legislation that will hopefully result in new buildings for the Research Centers. She lauded Dr. Quisenberry’s effort to develop concise plans of action and priorities as part of the funding requests submitted before the 2001 Montana Legislature.

Dr. Sharron Quisenberry thanked Monica Lindeen for her support of the MAES during the 2001 legislative session. Dr. Quisenberry spoke about the success of the 2001 MAES legislative initiatives. The legislature was able to provide an additional $480,000 for capital equipment purchases, reduced mandated salary withholdings from 4 to 1.5% and also reduced the earned income expectations required by the Research Centers to the State General Fund for the current biennium. She indicated the MAES was in a much better financial situation as a result of the 2001 legislative effort. Dave Kelsey asked about recharges applied to the MAES budget by the main campus. Dr. Quisenberry indicated recharges are still a significant concern to the MAES budget situation, but that Dr. Gamble is working on a long-term plan to reduce recharges paid by the MAES. She reiterated Dr. Bryant’s statement that Dr. Gamble recognizes the importance of agriculture to the Montana economy, and has expressed a willingness to help in advocating College of Agriculture/MAES programs. Dr Quisenberry also stated that Dr. Gamble understands the College of Agriculture’s mission and is dedicated to helping the people of Montana.

Mr. Ziggy Ziegler, Yellowstone County Commissioner, stated it is not too early to begin developing initiatives for the 2003 Montana legislative session. He asked for a package of legislative issues regarding SARC and the MAES, if available, for his upcoming meetings with community leaders in Yellowstone County.

Dr. Kephart presented the Superintendent’s report. Dr. Kephart again thanked members of the committee for their time and efforts during the last legislative session, particularly to those who testified on behalf of the MAES budget request before the Joint Finance and Appropriation Committee. Dr. Kephart then spoke about SARC’s operating budget, building and physical plant issues, housing and land leases, and status of the fuel tank abatement program. He also assessed the Center’s field and research equipment situation, and discussed the Center’s 2001 foundation seed production.

As a result of the 2001 Montana Legislature, SARC has received a much needed $5,000 increase in the operation budget. Unfortunately, most of this increase will be consumed in FY2002 to repair damage from three incidences of vandalism and two storms the Center experienced last summer and fall. Insurance is expected to cover only $500 of those costs. Long term, these additional funds will help the Center catch up on deferred maintenance and repair of equipment and some infrastructure items. A small investment has been made to improve the Center’s network capability, and most web pages available on the Center’s server (http://www.sarc.montana.edu/) have recently been updated. Similar to 1999 and 2000, the Center’s 2001 annual report will be made publicly available on the Center’s website.

Dr. Kephart reported that plans for construction of new buildings at SARC have been put on hold until the College of Agriculture and MSU can resolve the sale of property needed to provide the $1 million match mandated by the 2001 Legislature. Dr. Quisenberry stated that both College and University administrators, along with the University’s legal counsel, were working towards resolving this issue so that all proposed research center projects could be initiated as soon as possible. Dr. Kephart stated that SARC is expected to receive $1.25 million of the $2 million that will eventually be allocated for new research center constructions. Discussions with architect firms initially bidding on the SARC project
indicate this amount will not cover the building needs identified during the 2000 audit conducted by MSU Facilities Planning and Management. Priorities will likely have to be developed for construction within the limit of the initial $1.25 million allocation. Anticipating the building plan will proceed in late FY2002 or early FY2003, plans are proceeding for the demolition of the old office and paint storage buildings.

Dr. Kephart reported irrigated land leases held by Mr. Jim Hein since 2000, will be extended one more year. There are no current plans to test the ground water monitoring wells associated with the buried fuel tank basins during 2002. Both residences on the Center are still occupied under lease agreements. Both houses received new hot water tanks and new fuel oil furnaces during the past year. Ventilation systems were also upgraded with central air conditioning to replace the old less-efficient window units that were still in use. Most of the original galvanized plumbing that had been failing, has been replaced with new copper lines.

As a result of the increased MAES capital budget provided by the 2001 legislature, Dr. Kephart reported SARC has received a $61,000 allocation for the purchase of new field and plot equipment. Based on priorities established one year ago, three items have been purchased; a 14’ John Deere Model 960 field cultivator, a John Deere Model 6420 row crop tractor and a John Deere Model 790 plot tractor. Approximately 50% of the purchase price of the 790 tractor was provided by funds from both Dr. Kephart’s and Dr. Mickelson’s research programs. The committee was very pleased to see the MAES invest in new field equipment for SARC, especially the purchase of the new 6420 row crop tractor.

SARC continues to be involved in the Montana State University Foundation Seed Program. During 2001, SARC increased foundation lots of ‘BigSky’ winter wheat (a new release from Dr. Phil Bruckner’s program at MSU), ‘Promontory’ winter wheat (a Utah State University winter wheat that has performed exceptional well in SARC off station experiments) and ‘Sioux’ Austrian winter peas. All three increases have been transported to the foundation seed processing plant at the Central Agricultural Research Center near Mocassin. Dr. Kephart also reported that CARC has received a $60,000 allocation from the MAES for the purchase of a $120,000 large plot/foundation seed combine that will be shared by SARC, CARC and the Northern Agricultural Research Center near Havre. Additional funding to complete this purchase has been requested from the MSU Foundation Seed Program and the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee.

Dr. Kephart asked the advisory committee to comment on the possibility of the Center being involved in foundation seed lot increases of ‘Roundup Ready’ spring wheat varieties being developed by Dr. Luther Talbert, MSU spring wheat breeder, for commercial production. After much discussion, the consensus of the advisory committee indicated the Center’s research programs should continue to work with Roundup Ready crops and similar transgenic or GMO developments provided such research posses no risk to foundation seed increases of conventional crops. It was also the consensus of the group that too many liability issues remained unresolved regarding commercial production of these crops in Montana, and that SARC should refrain from any involvement in foundation seed increases of the Roundup Ready spring wheat lines until these issues have been addressed.

Dr. Quisenberry briefly discussed the Research Center Department’s external review conducted during the fall of 2000. The report gave positive reviews to the Research Center Departments mission and goals and to the productivity of the Department’s faculty and staff. The report also stated that all existing research centers serve a purpose in fulfilling the MAES’s mission to the people of Montana. The report concluded that most problems associated with the Department were the result of funding issues that have occurred during the previous decade and largely beyond the control or influence of the Department itself.

Dr. Kephart reported that the SARC faculty and staff continue to be involved in outreach activities. Future planned outreach activities include: Dr. Kephart and Dr. James Mickelson will be giving presentations January 3, 2002 at Rocky Mountain College’s “January Thaw”. The annual SARC Research Review has been scheduled for February 21, 2002, which will again be held in conjunction with a regional extension crop pest management workshop cosponsored by the MSU-ES. Dr. Mickelson will give a presentation on January 9th at the 2002 Crop and Pest Management School for Producers in Bozeman. Dr. Mickelson also is involved in five Private Pesticide Applicator Recertification workshops that are scheduled
throughout 2002 in Musselshell, Stillwater and Yellowstone counties. July 2 is scheduled for SARC’s 2002 Field Day. The Center conducts several plot tours during the summer for smaller groups and these activities are expected to continue in 2002.

Dr. Mickelson reported briefly on his 2001 weed science field research activities, summarizing “milkweed control” research, “weed management in corn”, “wild oat management in small grains”, “weed management in dry beans”, “weed management in sugar beets”, and “wild oat mortality”. Dr. Kephart reported on his 2001 Field Trials, highlighting soybean as a possible alternative crop for irrigated areas in south central Montana.

Chairman Terral Balzer reported on the State Advisory Committee meetings held during 2001, most of which covered items already discussed by previous speakers.

New Business:

Election of Officers: Terral Balzer, Greg Lackman and Mike Bernhardt have each served three consecutive terms in their respective offices, the limit allowed by the committee’s Constitution and Bylaws. Terral Balzer requested nominations for the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary positions.

*Nominations for Chairman: Greg Lackman nominated **Dave Kelsey**. Seconded by Bill Griffin. Nominations closed. Motion carried unanimously.

*Nominations for Vice Chairman: Mike Bernhardt nominated **Terral Balzer**. Seconded by Kim Nile. Nominations closed. Motion carried unanimously.

*Nominations for Secretary: Mike Bernhardt nominated **Rodney Jabs**. Seconded by Kim Nile. Nominations closed. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion was initiated by Kim Nile regarding SARC representation on the MAES State Advisory Committee. At this time, Terral Balzer is the primary delegate with both Mike Greytak and Kim Nile serving as alternate delegates. Kim Nile stated that he would like to resign from his position as an alternate. Dr. Kephart thought that Tony Zinne would enjoy the opportunity to represent SARC at MAES functions. It was the consensus of the committee that Tony Zinne would be an excellent choice to serve as the second alternate [regarding this matter, Tony gladly accepted this role when asked during a subsequent phone call with Ken].

A discussion followed regarding members who have not attended SARC advisory committee meetings. In Section C of the Constitution and Bylaws, it states “If a member cannot attend a meeting, the individual must notify the Advisory Committee secretary. Failure to do so for two consecutive meetings shall be interpreted as resignation on the part of the member.” Some members have never or seldom attended advisory committee meetings since the Center reopened in 1998. Members who meet this criteria were identified as Bill Bergen (representing Golden Valley/Musselshell Counties) and Mikol Hjelvik (representing Yellowstone County). Dr. Kephart will write letters to these individuals to find out their intentions [regarding this matter, Ken has drafted letters that will be mailed at the same time these minutes are distributed to the committee membership].

Dave Kelsey brought the name of Ervin Schlemmer to the members as a possible candidate for Carbon County. The committee membership concurred and Ken Kephart will pursue this matter as quickly as possible [regarding this matter, Ken has drafted a letter to Ervin that will be mailed at the same time these minutes are distributed to the committee membership].

Incoming Chairman Dave Kelsey thanked past officers [Terral, Mike and Greg] for their years of dedication and service as officers of the advisory committee.

Meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.
Submitted by:
Tammy Balzer
Administrative Assistant-SARC