

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Thursday, March 17, 2022 5:00pm
Health & Human Services Center & Zoom
303 W. Chapel Street

Dan Nankee called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

Roll call: Dan, Ricky, Kim, and Don attended the meeting in person (nobody attended via Zoom). Lynn, Barry, Sarah, Joe, Ruth, Jessa, and Tom were at the meeting.

Motion to approve the agenda by Don, seconded by Kim, motion passed.

Motion to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2022 meeting by Don, seconded by Kim. The motion passed.

Reports from Committee Members – Don mentioned an article that was in the Wisconsin State Journal regarding smaller-scale nuclear power plants. They claim to be much less expensive than the older, larger plants and produce only about 1/6 of the waste. They may turn out to be a viable alternative to solar or wind power (eliminating the need for the big wind turbines or high-power transmission lines). Dan brought up an article that was in the paper from Tommy Thompson, who had a message that everyone should have a positive outlook on the state of the UW system...in his words, “Stop apologizing, start bragging.”

Ricky gave an update on the Board of Visitors meeting from March 7th. The theme of the meeting was, “Teach the Teachers.” There was an Extension update from Dean Karl Martin, in which he referenced the National 4-H Conference that will be held in Madison in October, gave an update on the hiring of Ag positions, emphasized engaging via technology and impact storytelling, and spoke about utilizing grants to try new things. There were also updates from each of the institute directors, including Health and Well Being, Positive Youth Development, Community Development, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Human Development and Relationships. Dean Martin also discussed the primary current goals of Extension leadership: funding, connecting the UW campus with the community, and new partnerships and emphases.

Area Update from Lynn – Lynn gave an update regarding the Regional Agriculture Educator staffing model. The model has been approved by all four counties, with one noticeable change: the \$1,000 budgeted for mileage for this year was reduced to \$500 (since many of the counties had not planned for it). It will increase to \$1,000 for the next fiscal year. The goal is for full implementation of the regional plan by April 1st. Lynn passed out a flyer of a program that Josh Kamps is holding in Lafayette County next week. This is the kind of in-person event that could potentially be repeated in multiple locations in order to serve the entire area. She mentioned a Zoom meeting that was held for the area county support staff, in which they discussed what resources they may need to make the regional plan work seamlessly (a list of what types of questions each educator would be able to answer, contact information, etc so the support personnel know how to route calls or walk-ins appropriately. Lynn finished by addressing the need to educate new board members about the value of Extension.

Highlights from Agent Reports

Barry – Barry highlighted and briefly discussed the points from his report, including working with the Mineral Point Chamber of Commerce with regards to strategic planning; there was a session in January, and another session in March. Barry has been working with the Town of Dodgeville with the possible implementation of a room tax, and there seems to be support for it. Mineral Point was also interested in exploring a room tax, so he will work with them and connect them with Andrew Nussbaum from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, who had provided Barry with educational materials regarding room taxes.

Planning for the 2022 Dodgeville Town Square is underway, as is planning for DodgeFest. Barry was approached by a group of artists who are looking to possibly add some public artwork and culture to Dodgeville with the addition of some painted murals. This group has done murals in other Wisconsin locations, and they are impressive. They are currently working on determining locations for possible murals and how these may be funded.

Barry gave an update on the broadband and EV projects. The county board has approved three grant applications for MHTC totaling \$9.5M. In total, they are looking for a total of \$20M to be invested in Iowa County. The recently passed infrastructure bill has made available funds for a nationwide infrastructure of EV charging stations. They are currently working on trying to identify possible locations for these charging stations in Dodgeville. The more quickly they can move on this project, the more funds may be available.

There will be no CLA session this year. Barry also spoke briefly about training and orientation for new county board members.

Joe – Joe reported on the status of the WDNR Surface Water Grant application, which was approved. This \$10k grant would provide funding for soil sampling and stream bank erosion assessment in the Knight Hollow/Meudt Creek watershed in NE Iowa County. Soil sampling will begin later this spring, once the soil thaws a bit more. The soils and erosion data will help identify areas where phosphorus may be transported to surface waters. Once these areas are identified, Joe will put together a plan regarding how to communicate with and educate the farmers/landowners.

Joe is also working with local Land Conservation office, the DNR, and the SW Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to identify priority watersheds, and conservation areas within those watersheds, in order to develop conservation programs to reduce the risk of sediment/nutrient loss.

Sarah – Sarah began by talking about the Agri-Science STEM kits: 26 Iowa County youth received five activities related to the monthly Wisconsin Youth Livestock lessons. The program speakers not only presented the lessons, but also talked about their past experiences (what led them to work in the field they are in, what they had to do to get there, etc).

There have been 78 new youth who have joined Iowa County 4-H this year and 12 new adult volunteers (which brings the total number of adult volunteers to over 100). These numbers could still potentially grow, as people can join 4-H at any time. A new training related to the reporting of sexual misconduct has been added for adult volunteers (required by Title IX).

In other news, WDATCP is proposing that county fairs not require that youth be members of a youth organization in order to exhibit at the fair. However, each county fair board would be able to decide to keep that requirement or not. The State 4-H Youth Conference will go on for 2022, but in a modified format (no overnight stays...perhaps day experiences). Iowa County 4-H will be holding a fundraiser at Culver's of Dodgeville on Wednesday, March 30th.

Ruth – Ruth highlighted several of the programs that she is working on currently. She is working with the ADRC for the Powerful Tools for Caregivers program, which has eight participants from southwest Wisconsin. Topics include self-care, stress management, communications, and more. She stressed that she is not duplicating what the ADRC is doing, but they are working together to enhance the resources that are available. Other programs include Engaging Your Brain (a lesson for the Iowa County HCE members on maintaining brain health through brain activity), Aging Mastery Program (eight participants; topics include healthy eating, community engagement, preventing falls, advance planning, and more), and Financial Coaching (meeting individually with people referred by ADRC, Social Services, and SWCAP to discuss income, expenses, and financial goals/resources).

Upcoming programs include Stand Up and Move (which aims to reduce sedentary behaviors in older adults and will be offered in Hollandale) and StrongBodies, which starts a new series that will be held from March through May.

Jessa – Being her first Ag & Extension Committee Meeting, Jessa began by giving a brief introduction and spoke about her background and education. She discussed the mission of FoodWise and its funding, and explained how she isn't just working with individuals, but also with groups and programs, such as farmers markets. She gave an update about her onboarding and training, meeting with Extension staff and committees in all four counties, and attempting to organize the curriculum and materials housed at the HHS building. She has also been busy building relationships and reaching out to programs in Iowa County, including ADRC, SUN, SWCAP, and the Family Resource Center. They will look to start the process of filling the vacant educator position this summer, once she is a bit more settled in.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 19th at 5:00pm. Don made a motion to adjourn at 6:34PM, Kim seconded, motion passed.