

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Thursday, March 16th, 2023 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, Kevin, Darrell, and Roger attended the meeting in person. Barry, Jackie, Ruth, Kathy, and Tom were at the meeting. Lynn attended via Zoom. Also in attendance were Dan Brandt, the new 4-H Youth Development Educator, Mel Masters, County Supervisor.

Motion to approve agenda by Ricky, seconded by Roger. Motion passed.

Motion to approve minutes of the January 19th, 2023, meeting by Roger, seconded by Kevin. The motion passed.

Report from Committee Members – Ricky reported on notes from a recent Board of Visitors meeting, including the challenges that Extension is facing, which include county funding, staff recruitment and retention, equity across the state regarding allocation of positions, and “significant tension” between Extension and some partners (most likely state-wide partners, such as the WI County Association, the WI Town Association, etc). He also shared the Extension long-range planning timeline along with some other interesting notes from the meeting.

AED Update – Lynn began by introducing Dan Brandt, the new 4-H Youth Development Educator. Dan gave a brief report of his background, which includes ten year of teaching at the middle school level. Dan’s official start day will be Monday, March 27th – and he’ll jump right in with a 4-H Leaders Association meeting that night!

Lynn also spoke of changes to professional development for the Extension educators. In particular, in the past, \$500/educator was included in the Extension contract with the county, Iowa balance is approximately \$3,800. After these dollars are used, the State Extension office will provide \$2,000 every 2 years for each Educator. If additional dollars are needed Educators will be asked to seek out scholarship from professional associations, Institutes and/or Deans office. It is important for Educators to stay current with developments in their fields.

There have been several physical/cosmetic updates to the Iowa County Extension Office, including putting up a new wall and a door in the back of the suite to make a new office, where Kathy is now located. That space can also be used for the summer intern and/or a possible state specialist in the future. The office also has a new coat of paint, updated logo signage, and there are plans to put in a computer kiosk in the lobby area where the public will be able to access Extension resources online.

The Regional Agriculture Educator model was enacted last April, 2022 so almost one year now. Josh, Amanda, and Jackie have completed an assessment. They held over 60 individual producer conversations and hosted 3 focus groups consisting of Ag Industry professionals, Bankers, Producers, Nutritionist, Agronomist, and Veterinarians. They are will prepare a final report of the data they collected and present results at May AEE meeting. The purpose was to assess ways we can better serve the needs and priorities of Agriculture in our four county area and how our regional Ag Educators can meet needs.

Highlights from Educator Reports

Regional Ag Educators

Jackie – Jackie briefed the committee on the CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation) meeting that she and Amanda hosted in Darlington on February 16th. 46 people were registered, and although it was a snowy, stormy day, only three people were not able to attend. Participants were informed of updates they

will need to follow to be in compliance, and Jackie presented on factors impacting feed efficiency in dairy cattle. According to the evaluations, the participants found it very worthwhile.

Jackie and Amanda also hosted an “I’m a Farmer, Too” workshop on March 2nd in Mineral Point, a program specifically designed for women in agriculture. There were 17 women in attendance with great participation. There is a second workshop scheduled for March 23rd in Gays Mills.

Jackie’s Regional Agriculture Needs Assessment was the first of the three and was held on February 21st. It involved 10 participants from the four-county region who shared topics and ideas about partnering together with Extension. They had questions regarding how they could learn more about dairy programming through Extension, which allowed Jackie to promote her e-newsletter created specifically for dairy promotion. Barry was a great help in facilitating this and the other assessment sessions.

Jackie also hosted a YQCA training in Cobb for youth who plan on exhibiting animals overnight at the Iowa County Fair. 66 youth and their parents were in attendance!

Health and Well-Being Institute

Kathy – Maggie applied for a food garden grant in February; it sounds like they will be receiving a grant, but they should find out for sure tomorrow. This will support community gardens in the area that provide food for food pantries, schools, etc. There will also be an educational component that will take place at the gardens. They will use FoodWise funds for those gardens that are not supported by the grant(s).

FoodWise developed a handout for Iowa County in response to the ending of additional food benefits for SNAP households that were enacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This handout provides information about local resources that are available to assist these families.

Kathy and Maggie are offering nutrition classes for residents at Homesite Village (Mineral Point), Dodgeville Apartments, Village Green Apartments (Avoca), and Ridgeway Apartments. Participants will learn how to make personal pizzas using items they may already have in their pantry (English muffins, breads, etc). The Ridgeway session participated in a whole grain “scavenger hunt” and learned how to make whole grain granola.

Maggie and Kathy also have scheduled grocery store tours with participants in the Drug Treatment Court. Everyone involved wants these tours to happen, but so far it has been difficult to get people to sign up to attend.

Kathy shared a story about how at a school in Grant County, after a program she did with peppers and sweet peas, which the kids loved, the food service director added these items to the lunch menu, and they are typically the first things to go!

Dan had a question regarding crackers and breads – are they still promoting these items? Kathy said that whole grain wheat thins are very popular, along with other crackers, bread, snacks, etc made with whole grains. She also shared that many of the items featured on school lunch menus are specially made with whole grains for schools and are not available to the general public.

Human Development and Relationships Institute

Ruth – Ruth highlighted several of the programs she has been and is currently offering to members of the community:

The Aging Mastery Program helps older adults improve their well-being on topics such as exercise, sleep, healthy eating, finances, relationships, and more. This is a 10-week program that just ended today. All nine

of the participants who began the course finished it, which is wonderful. The participants plan on staying in touch with each other, which feeds their need for social connections, especially for those who may not otherwise have much social interaction.

Wise Wisconsin is a 6-week series offered state-wide that included topics such as hearing loss, social connections, scams, community engagement, nature, and container gardening. Ruth co-presented the topic on scams with the educator from Waupaca County, who was able to get information from the FBI to present, which was very impressive.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers concentrates on the physical and emotional health of those who are caring for their loved ones. This was a collaboration between Extension and the Green County ADRC (not in competition with them – an important point to note). It was a 6-week course, and they saw 100% participation. They learned that Zoom works great for this, because the caregivers did not have to leave the people they are caring for in order to attend.

Planning Ahead helps prepare people for end-of-life scenarios for themselves or a loved one. This is a 7-week series that began this week, offered via Zoom and also at the Platteville Library on Tuesday evenings. It addresses topics such as finances, advance directives, estate planning, and end-of-life care options. The last session had 35 participants via Zoom and 8 participants in person.

StrongBodies is a progressive strength training program that meets twice a week in person and via Zoom. It helps to increase strength, bone density, balance, and energy. It is led by trained volunteers (Donna Peterson in Dodgeville). There are approximately 40 people who attend these sessions. In April, a new instructor will be trained to help Donna for the Dodgeville sessions.

Community Development Institute

Barry – Barry began by talking about the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The county Health Department asked Barry to organize conversations with stakeholders with the goal of working to improve the health of Iowa County residents. In the most recent CHIP assessment, these areas were identified as priority topics: mental health & alcohol/drug abuse, access to transportation, healthy living, and aging concerns. He has met with three of the four groups since the last meeting.

Barry was asked by Joan Davis to help facilitate some conversations regarding programs, organizations, agencies, and ideas are out there to help deal with the opioid crisis in Iowa County. A group of stakeholders met at the beginning of March to share their ideas regarding prevention, treatment, and recovery. Further meetings on this topic will be scheduled and a report will be developed...stay tuned!

Barry continues work with the Wisconsin PSC regarding a possible federal BEAD grant. If received, Extension will work over the next couple of years to help in various ways, such as creating a community planning toolkit, education and outreach activities, and planning workshops. Extension is looking to people like Barry and other agents to develop materials and tools to be used for these activities and workshops.

Barry helped to facilitate a series of conversations between our regional ag educators and local farmers to help determine programming needs and priorities. These conversations took place in February via Zoom. The ag educators all agreed that Barry did a fantastic job of facilitating these conversations.

Barry also talked about the Mainstreet Bounceback Grant Program, which he worked with to help fill vacant storefronts. The program ended December 31st, and in Iowa County, there were 11 businesses that received a total of \$110k; we gave out the 3rd highest number of grants in our region. About 44% of the grants in the six-county region went to women.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 18th at 5:00 pm. Ricky made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Darrell. Motion passed.