

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Thursday, May 18th, 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, Darrell, and Roger attended the meeting in person. Kevin was an excused absence. Barry, Ruth, Maggie, Joe, Dan, and Tom were at the meeting. Lynn attended via Zoom.

Due to time constraints, the Regional Ag Educator Assessment Results Presentation that was on the agenda will be rescheduled for the next meeting. A motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Ricky, seconded by Roger. The motion passed.

Motion to approve minutes of the March 16th, 2023, meeting by Roger, seconded by Ricky. The motion passed.

Report from Committee Members – n/a

AED Update – Lynn briefly touched on the “Division of Extension – County Partnership Agreement” handout that was included in the meeting materials. This document was created in 2021 and offers guidelines regarding the partnership and responsibilities between the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension and the counties. The items in this document are not letter-of-the-law, but rather guidelines to be used as a resource when needed. Lynn encouraged the committee members to review this document, and any questions or thoughts can be explored more closely at a future meeting.

Dan asked for clarification regarding the funding of professional development for the Extension educators (a topic in the minutes from the March meeting). Lynn confirmed that in the past, \$500/educator was included in the Extension contract with the county. Beginning this year, the state extension office will be providing up to \$2,000 every 2 years for each educator to attend professional development opportunities. This is a way to ensure that the educators stay current with developments in their fields.

Highlights from Educator Reports

Human Development and Relationships Institute

Ruth – Ruth has announced her retirement, effective July 14th. For this, her final Ag & Extension Committee Meeting, she shared a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted many of the programs she has been a part of and the impact they have made.

Stand Up Move More – encourages older adults who sit more than six hours per day to be more active. Participants report fewer aches & pains, more energy, being more socially connected, and better self-esteem.

Planning Ahead – helps prepare people for end-of-life scenarios for themselves or a loved one. It addresses topics such as finances, advance directives, estate planning, and end-of-life care options. Those who participated indicated that this is a very worthwhile program, with 95% saying they learned enough to move forward with their planning, and 100% setting a goal to accomplish at least one of the tasks discussed within 3 months of completing the series.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers – concentrates on the physical and emotional health of those who are caring for their loved ones. Zoom was a great platform for this, because the caregivers did not have to leave the people they are caring for in order to attend. On a 10-point scale, the overall program and the class leaders

were both rated 9.6. Participants also expressed increased knowledge of community resources and confidence as caregivers.

Wise Wisconsin – a 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. 96% of participants said they will use at least one of the skills/tools/ideas from the sessions, and 80% said that the sessions made them feel more connected to others.

Aging Mastery Program – helps older adults improve their well-being on topics such as exercise, sleep, healthy eating, finances, relationships, and more. 83% of participants rated the quality of the content as “excellent”, while 100% said that it helped them deal more effectively with their physical health, emotional well-being, social connections, and personal finances. 100% would recommend AMP to a friend.

Work n Wheels/Financial Coaching – a program that offers 0% interest car loans for those with a need for transportation in order to work. As part of this program, participants are required to go through one-on-one financial coaching with an Extension educator, addressing topics such as spending plans, crisis spending, banking, and credit. In addition to Work n Wheels, Ruth also provided financial coaching to individuals referred to her through other agencies.

Community Development Institute

Barry – Barry began by giving an update on the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The goal is to work to improve the health of Iowa County residents. These areas were identified as priority topics: mental health & alcohol/drug abuse, access to transportation, healthy living, and aging concerns. Discussions are on-going.

Opioid Task Force Update - A group of stakeholders have been meeting to share their ideas regarding prevention, treatment, and recovery of the on-going opioid crisis in Iowa County. They are working to identify what programs and ideas are out there that can be utilized. They are also trying to determine how to move forward and where funding should be focused: prevention, treatment, or recovery.

Barry continues to work with the Wisconsin PSC regarding a possible federal BEAD grant. Barry and others are developing a “Broadband 101” toolkit. Different counties are at different points in developing broadband in rural areas; some have not even formed committees yet, while Iowa County has been aggressive.

Barry, Larry Bierke, and Craig Hardy have also been working on a Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant through the federal government. The grant is due May 30 and will be for over \$1 million. The money could be used to purchase property as well as equipment to install and implement charging stations in our area (Hwy 151 from Madison to Dubuque has been identified as a key corridor for developing EV infrastructure).

Barry also discussed several other projects he is working on, including helping the Plymouth UCC church find ways to offer their space to the community, discussions with the Town of Dodgeville regarding implementing a room tax, and conducting a Real Colors session at this month’s Department Head meeting.

Health and Well-Being Institute

Maggie – Maggie first discussed a Community Food Garden that was started in Lancaster. The cost to install it was just under \$1,000, and it was full-funded through various grants and programs. The garden will donate food to the local food pantry and to community members. FoodWise will hold a series of education classes there this season. A community planting day is planned for this Saturday.

Maggie and Kathy participated in a County Community on Transition (CCOT) event at Governor Dodge State Park that included over 50 students with disabilities from Iowa, Grant, and Lafayette Counties. Attendees made a homemade trail mix, tasted fruit water, and discussed healthy whole-grain snacks.

National Resources Institute

Joe – Joe continues to meet with the area Land & Water Conservation offices to review the results of the SWIGG study. They are discussing their next steps as they consider that 1/3 of the wells tested are contaminated. They are discussing different ideas such as educational options, preventing contamination, and addressing contamination once it happens. From funds that were received from ATC lines, there is some money available to Land Conservation to address groundwater issues; could possibly look into decommissioning abandoned wells and cost-sharing lab testing and septic system updates.

Joe and Katie from Land Conservation are going to prioritize sub-watersheds upstream from the Hollandale Wastewater Treatment Plant. Joe connected Katie with a specialist at WDNR, and they will be running a model to identify where conservation efforts are most needed in the watershed. That way, Extension, Land Conservation, and the wastewater treatment plant can work together to identify where conservation training efforts are most needed.

Joe offered an interesting example of how sometimes a problem can lead to an opportunity. They are looking into cost-sharing with individuals for testing of their drinking water, and they were going to use the labs at UW-Stevens Point, as is normally the practice. However, UW-SP was not able to logistically accommodate that number of tests all at once. Instead, Land Conservation is looking to purchase the equipment necessary to test the water for nitrates themselves. This way, people won't have to collect samples and mail them to the lab, they can just come here and get the water tested. This will lead to quicker results, and it will also allow Land Conservation to address any issues more quickly and directly.

Positive Youth Development

Dan – Dan has been working on boosting the Iowa County 4-H program's visibility on several social media outlets. We are posting or sharing an average of three different subjects each day, and the reach into the community has increased by 150% compared to the previous 90 days. We have also added an Instagram account, as many youths prefer that format to Facebook. The engagement of the posts on Facebook, meaning how many people are viewing, commenting on, and/or liking the posts, has increased 358% during that time as well. This is a great way to promote and inform people about the Iowa County 4-H program throughout the community and the state.

Dan applied for (and as we learned, was approved for) a grant to install flower quilt gardens in various locations throughout the county. Basically, it will be like a barn quilt, with numerous colors and patterns, but constructed from flowers in a flower bed. The flower beds will be planted and maintained by county 4-H clubs.

4-H camp is coming up in June. There have been 78 campers signed up to attend camp at Upham Woods in Wisconsin Dells from the three counties (Iowa, Grant, and Lafayette). Plans are progressing and details continue to be hammered out.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 20th at 5:00 pm. Darrell made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Ricky. Motion passed.