

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Thursday, July 20th, 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 Kevin attended the meeting in person. Roger was an excused absence. Lynn, Barry, and Tom were at the meeting. Maggie and Dan attended via Zoom. Kathy did not participate in the meeting but was at the event in Livingston with Maggie. Joe Bonnell was absent but provided a written summary.

A motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Ricky, seconded by Kevin. The motion passed.

Motion to approve minutes of the May 18th, 2023, meeting by Darrell, seconded by Ricky. The motion passed.

Report from Committee Members – Ricky spoke briefly about the farewell retirement celebration that was held for Ruth Schrieffer last week. It was a very nice event, and it was great to see some of the head Extension people from Madison come out for it. It was also fantastic to hear about the Work n Wheels program that Ruth was part of. Ice cream from the event was provided by the Chancellor, leftovers were brought to the meeting for all to enjoy.

Darrell participated in 4-H Ambassador interviews this past Monday. It was great to see such brilliant young talent. One of the youth mentioned that there is no advertising for 4-H. Would it be possible for some county money to be used for one or two billboards advertising 4-H to be put up around the county, especially during specific times, like re-enrollment? Perhaps it could be considered tourism, as it would attract people to the area.

AED Update – Lynn provided an update on the status of filling the staffing vacancies and gave a brief overview of the process that must be followed in order to post a position. Approval was received at both the Extension and County levels to fill both the Human Development & Relationship and the Regional Livestock Educator positions. When final interviews are scheduled for the HDR position, Lynn will be asking for two committee members to participate in the interview process and provide their advice/opinions; for the Livestock Educator position, committee members from all four counties will be invited to participate in the interviews. Applications are redacted so that no names, addresses, or other identifying information is visible; that way, the interview team is only looking at the resume and application information, without knowing who submitted it.

When they met with Iowa County regarding continuing to fund the positions, they asked that our office cut about \$3,000/year from our budget for 5 years (\$15k total). Taking a look at the budget numbers, that should be feasible.

As reported earlier, the Ag Institute is going to begin funding up to \$5,000/Ag Educator to be used for travel purposes. Because of this, as of July 1st, the counties will no longer need to be paying for Ag Educator mileage expenses. There is just over \$1,000 remaining in the Ag Educator mileage account, which will be split between the four counties and given back to them (each will get approximately \$266).

Lynn also pointed out the new format for the Educator Reports. Each educator has about a page to a page-and-a-half, and they can include things such as photos, testimonials, etc. The educators post their updates to the reporting portal, then when it comes time to compile the reports, Tom can pull the information from the portal. The goal is to send the report out to all county board members at least quarterly so they can be kept informed about what Extension is doing in Iowa County.

Highlights from Educator Reports

Health and Well-Being Institute

Maggie – Maggie joined the meeting via Zoom from the Livingston community garden, where she and Kathy were participating in a program with Soul Food. They made fresh salsa and had games and activities for children as well. Maggie gave a quick video tour of the garden, which measures 80'x50'. There is also a sweet corn plot, which is free to access for all community members.

Positive Youth Development

Dan – Some recent 4-H events for Iowa County include 4-H Camp (27 youth, 4 counselors, and 3 adult chaperones from Iowa County went this year), the Ambassador interviews & banquet (held this past Monday), and Cloverbud Day at the Fairgrounds (held this morning, 16 Cloverbud youth attended this Hawaiian-themed event).

He is working on developing a curriculum for 4-H youth that focuses on blossom end rot found in tomatoes. It will incorporate a 3D Lego model of the disease, hands-on activities, and recipes using tomatoes. The goal of this program is to educate youth about the disease...this will be shared with 4-H youth across the state.

Dan is also putting together an Iowa County Safety Day. This is something that surrounding counties have been doing on an annual basis, but it has not been done in Iowa County in a number of years. 5th grade students from all of the schools in Iowa County will be invited to the fairgrounds to learn about rural/farm/agriculture safety topics. Several community partners, including the Health Department, have come on-board and will present topics.

Dan provided a handout with breakdowns of numerous statistics, demographics, and updates regarding 4-H in Iowa County, including enrollment trends for both youth and volunteers. In general, the numbers show that interest in 4-H is slowly on the rise, after a period of slight decline.

Community Development Institute

Barry – Barry, Larry Bierke, and Craig Hardy submitted a Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant through the federal government. The grant is in the amount of \$2.5mil. 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). There has not been any word as of yet on if this will be approved; hopefully they will know by September.

Barry has also been facilitating a series of conversations with people in the Dodgeville community about ways to bring arts and other cultural events to the area. They are looking to form a 501C3 organization that can help to bring more music, plays, etc to the community and to determine what facilities exist in the community to hold such events (such as the new auditorium at the Dodgeville High School).

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 21st at 5:00 pm. Darrell made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Ricky. Motion passed.