

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Thursday, January 18th, 2024 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, Roger, Kevin, and Darrell attended the meeting in person. Lynn, Barry, Dan, Maggie, Jackie, Jordyn, and Tom were at the meeting.

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

The minutes from the previous meeting were amended to show that Roger and Kevin's absences were not recorded as unexcused. A motion to approve the amended minutes of the November 16th, 2023, meeting by Roger, seconded by Kevin. The motion passed.

Report from Committee Members – Ricky mentioned that in listening to information regarding the Farmers Union Lobby Day, there was some mention about county conservation, and wondered what they were talking about. Jackie speculated that it may have been in reference to farmland conservation. At the last meeting, Ricky brought up some conservation efforts in Hollandale that was believed to have been involving Joe Bonnell; with Joe's departure, it was unclear who, if anyone, was continuing these efforts. As of today's meeting, there are no updates on this. Dan shared an article that was in the State Journal regarding Grandview and its approval for the State Register of Historical Places, along with some photos of Ricky and Marilyn. Dan also mentioned some articles in GROW Magazine – Lynn has signed all committee members up to receive the magazine, but most don't seem to be receiving it. Lynn will look into it.

AED Update – Lynn provided an update on the status of filling the staffing vacancies. We are in our third round of interviews in attempting to fill Ruth's position. There have been several promising candidates, but none of them accepted the position when it was offered to them. There will be final interviews for this round next Friday, January 26th, and Lynn would like to have at least one committee member in on the interviews. Both the Livestock and Soils & Crops Educator positions have been offered and accepted. Kim Kester, the new Regional Livestock Educator, is slated to begin on February 20th; we can expect to meet her at the March meeting. Jordyn Sattler, the new Crops & Soils Educator, just started two days ago and is in attendance at this meeting. Jordyn will be working out of Green County, and Jackie will now be housed in Iowa County. Jordyn briefly introduced herself and provided some information regarding her background.

Lynn also mentioned Bill Oemichen, an Extension state specialist in the field of law, who has requested the use of office space in our suite. He lives in New Glarus and had been working out of Madison, but he desires to have a county connection. In exchange for office space, he is willing to be available for consulting work when needed. He will likely begin working out of the Iowa County office sometime in February and should be able to attend the next meeting.

Highlights from Educator Reports

Agriculture

Jackie – Jackie highlighted a couple of programs that she has coming up in February. One is the 2024 CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) Annual Update, which will be held on Tuesday, February 13th in Darlington. The other is a Repro Roadshow program on Monday, February 19th, also in Darlington. It is for dairy producers and focusses on dairy reproduction topics. It is the first time one of these roadshows has been hosted in southwest Wisconsin, and she's hoping for a good turnout. Direct-mail postcards are being sent out to applicable dairy producers in the four-county area.

Darrell had questions regarding one of the items in Jackie's report involving feeding dairy cows a low-fiber diet. Jackie explained that sometimes dairy producers will feed cattle a diet with less forage and more corn, resulting in a diet that is lower in fiber. Too little fiber can result in acidosis, reproduction problems, and more.

Dan mentioned that it seems that we are still losing farms and wondered if there is anything that can be done about it. Jackie referenced the high cost of automation (and the problems with equipment not lasting as long as expected) along with younger people not wanting to put in a 7-day work week that farming requires and agreed that it will be a challenge to keep from losing more farms in the future.

Community Development Institute

Barry – Barry has been involved with developing a strategic plan regarding the Bloomfield Prairie. Brochures are to be sent out and a series of listening sessions will be held toward the end of the month to determine how best to proceed.

Barry has also facilitated conversations with the Dodgeville Chamber of Commerce board of directors to establish a mission and core values, and to identify short-term and long-term strategies for growth and improved community collaboration. He will also be doing the same with the Mineral Point Chamber of Commerce.

He has been working with the Iowa County Health Department on topics such as mental health, transportation needs, healthy aging, and more and ways for them to disperse their information. He's also been working with Victoria Solomon in Grant County on a leadership program for Latino leaders that they'd like to establish in southwestern Wisconsin. In addition, Barry has been exploring entrepreneurial programming, including REV – Rural Entrepreneurship Ventures.

In regard to the grants that were available for EV equipment expansion, it looks like none of the upper tiers of states were awarded any of those grants.

Health and Well-Being Institute

Maggie – In November, Maggie and Kathy held an education series at the Meridian Housing properties in Dodgeville, Ridgeway, and Mineral Point centered around fall comfort foods featuring vegetables, including soup. In December, they held a nutrition education class at Pheasant Run Apartments called "Healthier Holidays" that provided tips on how to make healthier choices during the holiday season, including balanced meals and appropriate portion sizes.

They are working on planning for possible community gardens on-site at Meridian Housing Properties in Dodgeville. There are discussions taking place to determine interest, planning, and finding someone to be the point person on-site to oversee the garden. They will also be applying for grants to get these going (as well as making use of some 4-H Ambassador labor!).

Other projects include working with Upland Hills and Second Harvest on their Hunger Care Wellness Program, which provides wellness boxes, and possibly adding StrongBodies classes at Meridian properties in the spring.

Positive Youth Development

Dan – Iowa County 4-H held its Awards Day this past Sunday, where 4-H'ers were recognized for outstanding record books and achievement in projects throughout the year, and where awards such as the Key Award and scholarships were handed out. Over 70 people were in attendance, which is fantastic considering the cold weather.

Currently, Iowa County 4-H has 498 registered members (youth and volunteers). This includes 77 volunteers, all of whom have completed all the required trainings.

Dan is applying for a grant for 4-H Camp with Portage and Waupaca counties - \$3,000, which would lower the cost of camp for those who attend. Camp will be in late June at Upham Woods. He will also be pushing to encourage Iowa County youth to apply for state and national 4-H trips; currently there are very few youths in our county who are taking advantage of these opportunities. In addition, Dan has begun a monthly mailing to Cloverbud participants, which are youth in grades kindergarten through 2nd, called "Science of the Seasons". Because they are younger and not "full" 4-H members, sometimes the Cloverbuds can be overlooked when it comes to 4-H opportunities; this is a way for them to feel more involved.

Darrell had a question regarding the JUNTOS program mentioned in Dan's report. JUNTOS is Spanish for "Together", and this program is geared mainly toward Hispanic youth. It involves school districts and Extension working together to help students through school and beyond. Dan has had discussions with the Dodgeville School District regarding this, but at this time they are more interested in something that may apply to all foreign language speaking students, not just Hispanics. Discussions are ongoing, but at this time there is no timeline as to when this may move forward.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 21st at a new time of 4:00 pm. Ricky made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Kevin. Motion passed.