

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Thursday, October 17th, 2024 4:00pm
Health & Human Services Center & Zoom
303 W. Chapel Street, Dodgeville, WI 53533

Dan Nankee called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Roll call: Dan, Ricky, Brad, and Kevin attended the meeting in person; Darrell was an excused absence. John Meyers was also in attendance for the meeting, and Bruce Paull and Andrea Larson joined via Zoom. Lynn, Dan, Maggie, Jackie, Bridget, Julia, and Tom were at the meeting. Barry was ill, but joined via Zoom.

A motion to approve the agenda as amended (switching the order of items #7 and #8) was made by Ricky, seconded by Kevin. The motion passed.

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 15th, 2024, meeting was made by Brad, seconded by Kevin. The motion passed.

Report from Committee Members – Dan referenced an article in the Wisconsin Agriculturalist entitled “Ag Faces Mental Health Crisis,” written by Jim Massey. It concerns mental health issues facing Wisconsin Farmers, particularly suicide prevention. From 2004-2018, there were 190 Wisconsin farmers who committed suicide. Jackie mentioned that there was a recent program held in Baldwin addressing this issue.

Ricky gave an update from the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA). A subcommittee of the Extension Counties Committee came up with a document called “Pain Points”, which Ricky will forward to Tom to forward out to the committee and the Extension staff. The document lists several items and concerns that the committee has, including the desire to have a Memorandum of Understanding accompany the county’s Extension contract. One particular concern the committee had was the educator hiring process – specifically how it is decided which programs would run in each county. They feel that the counties should have more of a say in which programs are offered. Ricky also noted that at the WCA conference, there was a workshop for county board members for which the Extension Dean was also in attendance.

Highlights from Educator Reports

Agriculture

Jackie – Jackie spoke about a Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Training & Certification event that Kim is presenting on November 13th in Dodgeville. She also mentioned that they are looking into once again writing articles to be published in the Wisconsin Shopper Magazine, a publication mainly for the Amish population. The magazine comes out weekly – they are looking to possibly contribute articles on a once-per-month basis. The magazine reaches over 2,000 mailboxes throughout the state.

Dan commented on the Badger Dairy Insight webinar entitled, “New Concept in Colostrum Feeding for Dairy Calves.” The webinar encouraged farmers to consider feeding a smaller volume of colostrum to newborn calves. Too much colostrum can negatively affect the health of calves; feeding lower quantities of higher quality colostrum can help their well-being.

Community Development Institute

Barry – Barry gave his highlights via Zoom. He mentioned the Youth Conservation Field Day that was held in September, which saw 125 sixth graders from around the county come for some educational sessions aimed at increasing their appreciation for the environment and nature. He also spoke about his involvement with planning for the City of Mineral Point to join the Wisconsin Rural Entrepreneurial Venture (REV) Program. In general, he’s been looking to work with smaller municipalities to promote their growth and development.

Ricky asked Barry if he helps communities with developing their comprehensive plans (specifically referencing a situation in Hollandale). Barry explained that he can offer resources and steer them in the right direction. Ricky went on to suggest that most counties go for the “home runs” – big companies that come in promising lot of jobs

and money; he thanked Barry for focusing on small businesses and entrepreneurs – a large portion of the Iowa County workforce.

Health and Well-Being Institute

Maggie – Maggie spoke regarding the three garden locations in Iowa County that are wrapping up for the season. They are nearing the end of the fiscal year and have begun planning programming for the upcoming year. Maggie also introduced the new FoodWise Nutrition Educator serving Iowa, Grant, Green, and Lafayette Counties, Julia Harman. Julia told a bit about herself and her background and how excited she is to be working in Extension and with Iowa County.

Positive Youth Development

Dan – Dan discussed the Iowa County Safety Day that was held last month. Over 300 fifth graders from schools throughout Iowa County attended. They had the opportunity to witness a MedFlight helicopter land in the fairgrounds, as well as attend sessions about the K-9 Unit, Health Department, DNR, Kyle Thompson (a farm accident survivor), and more. He is preparing for Trunk-or-Treating at the fairgrounds on October 27th, as well as a mini haunted house.

October marks the start of a new 4-H year, and the enrollment period is now open. There have been many new families signing up already this year.

Families and Finance

Bridget – Bridget, whose position has been selected to be eliminated with the cuts proposed in the county budget, prepared and discussed a document detailing the numerous educational programs that would no longer be offered once her position went away...programs such as StrongBodies, Planning Ahead, Aging Mastery, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, financial coaching, mental health programming, HCE and Work in Wheels. She went on to clarify how the work she does compliments some of the programming that the ADRC does (verses duplicating it), and how with all of the direct service needs being addressed by the ADRC, they really don't have the ability to focus on educational programming at this time. Bridget reiterated how no longer providing these programs would affect a significant portion of the Iowa County population.

AED Update – Lynn began by distributing a list of Tom's duties/responsibilities that he performs for the Extension office; if his position is to be combined with another department as proposed, he will potentially have less time to devote to Extension-related tasks, and many of the items on this list will likely no longer be done.

Lynn then passed out a "2025 Iowa County Extension Department Budget Summary" handout, which detailed the 2025 cost to Iowa County to co-fund Extension, including the full cost of three full-time educators, the three regional Agriculture Educators, and the department assistant. The form also detailed the services that Iowa County is receiving for free by having the Extension Office, such as the FoodWise Nutrition Education Program (Maggie Milcarek and Julia Harman), Law and Government Education (Bill Oemichen), a Nutrient & Pest Management Regional Outreach Specialist (Landon Baumgartner), and her services as Area Extension Director. She also passed around a sheet that specified the state investment into the Iowa County Educator costs; in other words, what the state pays to have the educators in Iowa County, including salary and fringe benefits).

Lynn concluded by challenging the committee to think of alternative ways to generate revenue or to adjust things so that Extension may be spared these types of cuts (both now and in the future). Could something be accomplished by having the board members meet with the dean? Could/should Extension consider charging for programming or services? Is there a possibility of the county trying to pass a referendum in the future? John restated what was stated in the county board meeting: in order to keep something that has been slated to be cut, alternative solutions must be presented.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 19th at 4:00 pm. Ricky made a motion to adjourn, seconded by John. Motion passed.