

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Thursday, May 20, 2021 3:00pm
Health & Human Services Center & Zoom
303 W. Chapel Street

Dan Nankee called the meeting to order at 3:05PM.

Roll call, Dan, Ricky, and Kevin were at the meeting, Larry, Don, and Kim joined via zoom. Paul, Barry, Sarah, Donna, Gene, Ruth, and Tom were at the meeting.

Motion to approve the agenda by Ricky, seconded by Kevin, motion passed.

Motion to approve the minutes of the February 26 meeting by Kevin, seconded by Ricky, motion passed.

Tom was introduced as the new Division of Extension Department Assistant.

Reports from Committee Members – Dan shared some recent articles during the Agent Reports.

Area Update from Paul – Paul’s position has been posted in order to find a replacement, the posting closes on May 25th. A screening committee is being formed to conduct interviews. Paul held committee meetings with all four counties this month. Paul also made some remarks reflecting on the past 26 years.

Agent Reports –

Donna – FoodWise has been offering monthly food prep sessions virtually on the third Wednesday of each month, beginning in March. Fact sheets continue to be placed in pantry boxes/bags. StrongBodies has been offered virtually with sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays (FoodWise staff offering nutrition sessions). New 16-session/8-week course will begin Tuesday, June 22. Sessions will be offered virtually or in-person at park shelters in Dodgeville and Barneveld.

Sarah – 50 people signed up for the first pilot electricity project...which was to try to get a paperclip out of a water bottle without tipping it over. Attendees were to use wire, a nail, etc to make an electromagnet. We are one of two counties in the state to be trying out this project. All youth who have animals that stay overnight at the fair are required to go through YQCA training. Attendees learn of co-products and by-products of animals. 4-H clubs are now allowed to meet, adhering to COVID-19 protocols; allowed numbers will dramatically increase in June. Community service project – 4-H members can create plant mats out of plastic bags for members of the homeless community. Ambassador’s challenge – there will be a club project coming up soon.

Barry – Update on broadband...survey was completed in late 2020. He has been developing partnerships with local ISP’s. Grants have been made available; 50-100MB minimum required for the grants (which would result in better service levels). The ultimate goal is 1GB up and 1GB down. There will hopefully be major advancements in the next 3-5 years. A 4-part series on renewable energy was recently completed. Iowa County CLEAN group is doing a solar buy – incentives to have owners implement solar.

CLA Program – having the 10th conversation on Wednesday. They have averaged 19-25 participants per session, which has met every other week.

Ruth – Aging Mastery program – 10-part series. There are three elective sessions (must be an Aging Mastery graduate in order to attend). There have been 30 people registered, the third session is this Wednesday. Protective Factors Framework – offered as Professional Development for Head Start staff (staff can earn 2 hours PD per session) with the goal of reducing child abuse and neglect across the state. Encouraging Financial Conversations – created curriculum to help social workers/ADRC staff to talk to people about spending money. Wise WI spring series – there have been a remarkable interest in Zoom programs. She is hoping to do an in-person book read this fall involving dementia. Shelley Reukauf in ADRC is planning a virtual program, “Powerful Tools for Caregivers”, in September or October.

Joe – Joe was not able to attend the meeting, but Paul informed the committee that Joe has been working on a Clean Sweep grant for 2022.

Gene – Gene reported that he has been doing more farm calls recently, and he now has permission to do outdoor field days and pasture walks. There have been five meetings this month regarding conservation ranching. He was approached by the Audubon Society and Fish & Wildlife, people willing to pay a 30%-40% premium for bird-friendly beef, protecting bird habitats. There are several research/demonstration projects in progress, including forage research in Lancaster, Marshfield, and River Falls that is based in Arizona. Farmers have been planting corn in 60-inch rows instead of 30-inch rows and planting cover crops between the rows. This has been little to no reduction in yield production, and they get the benefit of additional crops later in the season. Grad students from UW are coming out to research pollinator populations and learning how they can improve crop production.

Next meeting will be on the third Thursday of August at 3:00pm (August 19).

Kim made a motion to adjourn at 4:29, Ricky seconded, motion passed.