

Agriculture & Extension Committee Minutes
Tuesday, November 23, 2021 1:00pm
Health & Human Services Center & Zoom
303 W. Chapel Street

Dan Nankee called the meeting to order at 1:02PM.

Roll call: Dan, Ricky, and Kevin attended the meeting in person; Kim and Don joined via Zoom. Lynn, Barry, Sarah, Ruth, Joe, 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 September 15, 2021 meeting by Kevin, seconded by Don. A correction was made that Kim was excused from the meeting. The motion passed.

Reports from Committee Members – Ricky shared some information regarding the Board of Visitors Membership, a committee of 17 members that meets every six months or so. This board has developed three aspirational goals for Extension over the next five years: to fully realize the Wisconsin Idea in Extension by leveraging campus resources across multiple disciplinary areas, to diversify funding, and to expand reach to underserved audiences. Through these goals, they will work toward connecting the state to different communities. Also of note – unlike other divisions, the Dean of Extension is able to fundraise. Ricky also introduced a new proposal for Ag positions in the state. The idea is to move positions into a more regional setting with new outreach specialists who specialize in specific areas. He also mentioned the Wisconsin Idea Collaboration Grant as a way that Extension personnel may obtain research and development money.

Kevin gave a brief report on the status of the fair/fairgrounds. Everything was up number-wise this year for the fair, although the overall number of entries was slightly down. Overall, everyone seemed pleased at how things went. Elections were recently held. It has been proposed that a Fair Manager be hired to oversee the day-to-day operations of the fair; a candidate was recently interviewed. It is still in question whether this position is necessary and how it will be paid for.

Dan mentioned the Wisconsin Extension Association (WEXA), which was formed to help support Extension and county Extension committees throughout the state.

Area Update from Lynn – Lynn distributed copies of the 2022 contract for educators. This contract includes a 2% increase from last year's contract. The only major change is that professional development will be paid entirely by the state moving forward, the county will just be paying a flat fee. Ricky suggested that Larry Bierke have a look at the contract before it is signed. It was thought that perhaps Larry just takes care of it altogether, as none of the committee members recall signing the previous contract.

Lynn then gave an update on the Food Wellness/Nutrition position search. There was one potential candidate from the first round of interviews, but she refused the position due to financial concerns. The position has been re-posted and will close on December 3. To streamline the process, the hiring team discussed the possibility of doing one longer interview rather than a series of shorter interviews. They hope to have the position filled by January 1st. Once that position is filled, they will with the new hire on filling Maria's position.

Lynn shared how other Ag Educators in the region have stepped up to assist Iowa County in answering any Agriculture-related questions that come up in Gene's absence. It has yet to be determined as to what will happen with that Ag Educator position. As Ricky alluded to earlier, the thought is to move to a regional educator system as Ag Educator positions open up (retirements, etc). There would be educators who specialize in certain areas and cover a designated region.

Highlights from Agent Reports

Ruth – The Healthy Aging in Rural Towns (HeART) project provides support to older adults and their families/caregivers. It does not duplicate the work that is done by the ADRC, but extends and enhances the work that they do. She is working with Shelly Reukauf from ADRC to offer “Powerful Tools for Caregivers,” a virtual series offering self-care ideas for caregivers. Through the HCE, Ruth offered information to members regarding “managing heirlooms that nobody wants.”

Barry – Updates on the funding status of two ISP proposed broadband grant application/projects: MHTC project, which involved a grant request of \$610,405.00, was not funded, while the LightSpeed (Reedsburg Utility Commission) project, which involved a grant request of \$2,025,000.00, was funded. A new round of PSC funding totaling \$100M through the State of Wisconsin was just announced and that grant round opens on or around December 2, 2021. In addition, President Biden's infrastructure bill that recently passed allocates \$65B to broadband infrastructure. On November 16, Barry was one of fifteen presenters for the Wisconsin Broadband Summit attending by almost 200 participants via Zoom. The survey that was created in September 2020 for accessing broadband in Iowa County has received attention throughout the state and Barry was asked to talk about the survey and the results at the summit. Lastly, the CLA board and committees we were able to create an outline for year 2 of a virtual CLA offering and will continue to develop the curriculum and format. The goal is that our 2022 CLA program will start in March.

Joe – Joe highlighted the WDNR Surface Water Grant application that he worked on with Katie and Landon in the Land Conservation Office and Chris Baxter at UW-Platteville. He also mentioned the farmer survey that was conducted in the Knight Hollow watershed. Joe also identified two (2) goals that are being worked on for our Area 17 region. First, work with watershed groups, farmer-led groups, and individuals to employ land management practices that improve the water quality of Wisconsin's water resources. Second, work with watershed groups, farmer-led groups, and agency partners to have the skills and capacity to influence landowners, land managers, and communities that will ultimately improve the quality of Wisconsin's water resources.

Sarah – Sarah began with two questions that she posed in her report: Which project was the top choice in 2020-21 for Iowa County Youth (Photography), and what percentage of 4-H youth were from the city vs a farm (59% city, 41% farm). Area 4-H youth recorded 25-second messages using a cell phone app that were aired on WGLR during National 4-H Week (October 3rd-9th). To be approved adult leaders, volunteers must attend a 1-hr training, complete an online Mandated Reporter Training session, and have background checks performed every four years. Iowa County Mental Health First Aid committee has begun meeting again. Upcoming: Holiday Science Zoom, camp counselor training, winter educational activities, crunching survey results.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 20th at 5:00pm. We will look to meet more frequently, every two months or so. Ricky made a motion to adjourn at 2:51PM, Kevin seconded, motion passed.