

University of Illinois Extension Council Meeting Minutes

Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Stark Counties

Tuesday, April 16, 2024, via Zoom.

Council Members Present: Katelyn Attig, Catherine Bass, Barb Chiles, Dave Dyer, Logan Goerks, Emily Herricks, Janet Hill, Tara Mayhew, Jill Milroy, Bob Mueller, Dianna Saelens

Illinois Extension Staff Present: Jenny Garner, Tayler Louscher, Russell Medley, Emily Swihart

Call to Order:

Public Comments: Not applicable.

Previous Minutes: The minutes of the last meeting on February 20, 2024, were approved as read on a motion by Dianna Saelens and seconded by Janet Hill. Motion carried.

Fiscal Report:

- Financial data has not changed since previous meeting.

Council Reports:

Staff Programming Information:

- Tayler Louscher reported on a collaborative project with Kristin Bogdonas on a tray waste study with Rock Island School District at Rock Island Center for Math and Science (~440 students). The first tray waste took place in December and the second followed on April 16. The project team created a Food Waste Detectives video that the school showed the students leading up to the second study in hopes of reducing food waste in the cafeteria. The video highlighted the amount of waste from the initial study and various things the students could do during mealtime to keep food out of the trash. Food waste collected on April 16 will be measured and the class with the biggest savings will receive a special incentive.
- Emily Swihart reported Spring Series kicked off on April 8 with 45 participants. Hosted by Master Gardeners, it is a three-night, six session educational program



and opportunity for the community to hear from speakers on a variety of horticulture topics. Planning and planting of community gardens is underway along with a media tour about the cicada bloom.

- Russell Medley updated the Council on the housing study for Henry, Mercer, and Stark counties. The survey was mailed to nearly 8,000 households in the three counties in mid-March with a submittal deadline of April 15. About a 10 percent return rate is expected. Staff are processing the returned surveys, and an online version of the survey is also available and has been distributed widely.

Announcements:

The graduate students from the Department of Regional and Urban Planning are finishing their work on the housing study in mid-May. The unit is hiring a local college student as extra help to work with Russell Medley to continue work on the housing study this summer.

Review of Community Needs Assessment:

Discussion was held about food access.

- Logan Goerks and Bob Mueller reported on locating a grocery store to Stark County project that they have been working toward. FFA recently met with the Lieutenant Governor during Ag Legislative Day in Springfield on a \$100,000 to \$150,000 grant with the county matching that amount at around \$50,000. Bob Mueller acknowledged that these high school students have been successful in moving the project forward.
- Our SNAP-Ed Team learned from the River Bend Food Bank about a rising hunger issue with over 20,000 people food insecure in our service region along with a 35% increase in food assistance coupled with a 29% decline in food donations. In response, unit 4-H clubs participated in a community-wide food drive, collecting 3,000 pounds of food given to area food pantries. The unit SNAP-Ed team worked with local agencies to create a series of produce pop-ups that distributed 1,900 pounds of donated, locally grown produce. Master Gardener volunteers cared for 5 active food donation gardens that provided 2,800 pounds of produce to local food pantries. Overall, 7,700 pounds of produce was donated in 2023.
- Dave Dyer explained that the City of Galva is considered a food desert despite having a full-service grocery store, Dollar General, and Casey's locations. The reason for this is because stores where food can be purchased have to be within walking distance from households. The Illinois Housing Development Authority uses qualifying information to determine eligibility of senior and/or affordable housing.

Outgoing Council Members: Jenny Garner thanked Dave Dyer, Logan Goerks, Ingrid Hays, Emily Herricks, Haley McDonald, Jill Milroy, and Bob Mueller for their service.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the meeting, a motion was made by Jill Milroy and seconded by Tara Mayhew that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Milroy