



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**University of Illinois Extension
Bond, Clinton, Jefferson, Marion, and Washington Counties
Unit 23**

Multi-County Council Minutes
April 1, 2026; 11:30 am
@ Jefferson County Extension Office

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order by Jordee Koehler at 11:35 a.m. in the absence of a chair.

Roll Call:

Council members present answering to roll call included: Greg Branch, Courtney Kabat, Butch Myers, Denny Perez, Jeff Rabenort, Julie Karmeier, Marcus Holland, Matt Hornbostel, Diane Keortge and Julie Miessner. Staff in attendance were Jordee Koehler, Jamie Mahlandt, Chris Lueking, Ashley Hoffman, Teresa Dascotte, Kristen Buttrum and Rhonda Mueller.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 5, 2025:

A Motion was made by Denny Perez with a second by Jeff Rabenort to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Welcome and Introduction of members and guests:

Marcus Holland from Centralia (Marion County) and Courtney Kabat from Mt. Vernon (Jefferson County) were introduced and welcomed as new Council Members. New staff introduced to the group were Ashley Hoffman, Youth Educator located in the Jefferson County Office, Kristen Buttrum, new Jefferson County 4-H Extension Program Coordinator and Teresa Dascotte, new Jefferson County Office Support Assistant for Jefferson County.

Extension Updates

County Director Updates

Jordee announced that the unit is currently fully staffed.

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Educator Updates

Christina Lueking – Ag and Natural Resources Educator has been busy with various Training and Testing Sessions along with many workshops. She recently conducted a Pasture Management Workshop which included a presentation from Travis Meteer, Beef Specialist from the Orr Center. Chris has also been working with the Clinton County Farm Bureau Manager, Brad Conant to offer Soil Testing at a reduced rate for the Farm Bureau Members. The program was developed to give homeowners an interpretation of their soil results along with a train the trainer power point which offered kits comprised of soil probes (which can be checked out from the Clinton County Office) and soil collection bags.

In Jefferson County Chris is working with the Summer Food Program in Mt. Vernon to prepare 3000 seed packets, an info sheet, the Gardening in a Glove Activity along with QR codes for the Hort How To Videos which are available on YouTube.

Chris has also conducted two sessions (Jefferson and Clinton) on Pond Management which included a presentation by Ben Lubinski, Rivers and Stream Biologist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Between the two classes there were 59 participants along with the offices receiving several additional calls on this topic.

Recently Chris completed and became certified from SIU-C passing the Unmanned Aircraft General test along with the FAA107 Drones Pilot's test. Some of the highlights that she learned about were the flight maps, weather patterns and no fly zones. She also went to the Princeton, KY and studied Spray Pattern Flight Simulations to assist farmers with testing and adjusting nozzles.

Ashley Hoffman – 4-H Youth Educator – has a new strong team, they just completed a 12 week training series to make sure everyone is on the same page moving forward due to so many new staff members. They are presenting many new workshops – Sewing, Sourdough, Aerospace, STEM, Weather, Mother's Day, Floral Design, etc. 4-H will also be offering cooking schools this summer in all 5 counties. Lego and Robotics clubs in Washington and Clinton counties have also been very popular.

Ashley and Kara will be offering professional development opportunities for teachers and educators through the two ROE Districts (13 and 3) that our Unit falls in to provide professional development on various topics (socio/emotional learning, in-school learning, after school learning, train the trainer, STEM Kits (i.e. Monarch on the Move), etc.

4-H is also working on the Show of Champs (Year 5) which is a Unit Wide show opportunity. This year the competitions will be held in Jefferson County. This show is for all class winners or inspire winners in each county. Kara will be taking lead on the Livestock Show and Ashley will be lead on the General Projects.

Marion County will have Conservation Days at the end of April along with a Summer Pop-up with Cedarhurst.

Something new that Ashley is working on is E-Sports. This is an opportunity to draw in kids that are trying to find their niche who are not involved in any other extra-curricular activities to become engaged and reach more kids.

Jamie Mahlandt with FCS – April is known as the Financial Capability or Financial Literacy Month. This is a month where financial education is really put to the forefront. The Unit will be partnering with Kaskaskia

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Special Education District on April 20 to present an 8th grade simulation of Welcome to the Real World. This year there are 61 students registered so far. Each student comes with their own Individualized Education Plan. This is a great opportunity to serve an underserved audience.

Jamie and Chris are collaborating on presenting a program for the HCE's on "Gardening on a Budget". They have put together a webpage form where you can customize what your garden will look like and what kind of supplies you need to purchase to achieve your goal. This tool is available on the unit website under the Finances section.

This summer Jamie will be partnering with Ashley on a program "Shopping for Snacks" where the kids create their own recipe and are given the opportunity to go shopping for the ingredients and then actually create the snack.

Additional Director Updates

Recently Dr. Matthew Vann visited the unit to get acquainted with staff and learn what great things are being done in Unit 23. At the end of May the Leadership Group will be back down for a few hours visiting the Clinton County Office and the unit will be presenting a program on Pond Management to them.

Jordee then passed out the Impact Report from 2025. She is always looking for gaps or other ways that Extension can be of assistance.

New Business

Markus inquired how the Community Gardens are doing – Chris indicated that some planting has already been done, but they are in great shape. He indicated that Food Insecurity is a big item for Centralia.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:25 pm by a motion from Butch Myers and a second by Marcus Holland.