

University of Illinois Extension Council Minutes

Unit 24 – March 6, 2025 – 6:00pm – Saline County Extension Office

Welcome: The Unit 24 Extension Council meeting on March 6, 2025, was called to order by Norman Hill at 6:04pm.

Council Members Present: Norman Hill, Joe Zieren, Jamie Byrd, Dean West, Connie Gibbs, Debbie McVey, Mallory Thompson, Audera Willis over phone, and Rachel Lands over Zoom.

Staff Present: Angie Messmer, Lindsay Adams, and Sheila Stamer.

Approval of Minutes from September 18, 2024: The minutes from the September 18, 2024, meeting was reviewed by those present. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Audera Willis and seconded by Mallory Thompson. The motion carried.

Fiscal Reports – Trust Account 1st and 2nd Quarters: The Fiscal Reports were provided to those present. About \$20,000-\$40,000 was cut from the budget because of the discontinuation of the University of Illinois Extension in Gallatin County by the citizens of Gallatin County's vote. Angie Messmer said that this would not hurt the budget too badly and that there would be savings because of this discontinuation. A motion to approve the Fiscal Reports was made by Dean West and seconded by Jamie Byrd. The motion carried.

Updates from County Director:

- Angie Messmer said Sol Systems has agreed to provide funding for some special projects in Saline County, hydroponic garden equipment to put in classrooms, and some equipment for virtual welding and farming.
- Angie said that Extension completed the new strategic plan. The "Grand Challenges" is now different areas and priorities that programs will fall under. There is a revised mission statement as well. The three-year plan of work will be completed in the fall. Nothing has changed, just the process.
- There will be a needs assessment conducted in the next few weeks. This helps with developing the budget and program planning. Focused interviews will be conducted with individuals/groups in the community instead of sending out paper surveys to everyone. The coordinators will also use secondary data, such as the census. Angie said that if any of the members present thought of any individuals or groups to be interviewed, please let her know the name(s). She said there will be a Needs Assessment Team that will conduct the interviews and that they will be done over the phone or face-to-face. The individuals to be interviewed do not have to be the leaders of the organization. Angie said that she would have the results from the assessment in the fall and present them to our council.
- The summer help has been hired. There is one worker in Hamilton County, one in White County, two at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, and Rachel Lands will help throughout all the counties in the Unit where needed.
- There are two staff openings. There is a Community Outreach Worker opening in White County. The application deadline is March 7, 2025, and there have been four applicants so far. There is an Office Associate position opening in Saline County. The application deadline is also March 7, 2025, and

there have been 17 applicants so far. Both positions are full-time. Angie said that after the application deadline passes then they will conduct interviews.

- Angie asked those members present if they still wanted representation from Gallatin County on the Extension Council since the county is still in our unit. Angie said that although Extension is no longer funded in Gallatin County, it is not banned, but Angie does not want to take money from other counties to fund programming there. She said that youth can join other 4-H clubs in other counties, but she did not know how many would transition to different clubs. There were about 30 or more 4-Hers in Gallatin County (but there were many more served than that) and there were good Extension-affiliated programs in the schools. She also said that since some of the organizations are part of a bigger network (like food pantries) Extension is still helping food pantries in Gallatin County on a limited basis. There were residents in Gallatin County that said they want the funding issue back on the ballot in two years. Angie said that Richard Nole was an Extension representative for Gallatin County, but he did not wish to remain on the council. Audera Willis stated that it would not hurt to still have someone from Gallatin County on the Extension Council.

Updates from Educators:

- **Bronwyn Aly:** Bronwyn had prepared a packet for the meeting. This year's Twilight Series will begin on May 19, 2025, and be held at the Flock Farm. Bronwyn is still trying to confirm the other dates and venues. The Twilight Series program has been held for over ten years in the region and happens May-August with one meeting per month. The Sustainable Living Series will begin again soon. Some of the programs will be canning in White County and beekeeping. Bronwyn is working closely with Southeastern Illinois College on programming. The Annie's Project women in agriculture program is going on now at SIC (that was why Bronwyn was absent from this meeting). It is a six-week series and there are two more classes left. There has been about 11 people attending this program and if anyone wants to sit in on the last two, they can call. There will be beginning farmer classes in the fall at SIC, and SNAP is trying to get food education to the college students. The latest edition of the Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Newsletter was also included in the packet. The newsletter was started about 30 years ago, and Bronwyn has been the coeditor for 10 years.

- **Lizz Cooley-Questelle:** Lizz had a report on SNAP-Ed. Her packet included information about Eat. Move. Save. and the Hunters Feeding Illinois program. This was a large program where hunters could donate deer that they did not want to the program. The organizers of the program worked with processors and the program paid for the processing. The meat went to food pantries and education on how to freeze and prepare the deer meat for a meal was provided.

- **Lindsay Adams:** Lindsay provided a handout with county updates and highlights. She worked in Gallatin County in the fall and had a virtual welding program using the virtual welder from SIC. All programming will be moved from Gallatin County to other counties due to the discontinuation of the University of Illinois Extension in Gallatin County. Saline county had their Achievement Night, a float in the Harrisburg Lights Parade in December, and a photography workshop. A couple of 4-Hers from Saline County attended the Junior Leadership Conference. Hannah Wenzel, a 4-Her from Saline County, along with her teammates are the 2024 4-H Hippology Overall National Champions. Lindsay said that they are hoping to have a Welcome to the Real-World program in Saline County in the future and a Ready for Work program in Carrier Mills. The Saline County EPC is doing programming with 1st graders in Harrisburg, Galatia, and Eldorado schools. Hardin County Teen Teachers will have a training at Shawnee Community College where five students will attend. In the fall, Lindsay wants to have a Ready for Work program in Hardin County. In Pope County, there will be a Teen Teacher Training happening tomorrow, March 7, 2025. This training has been in the works for months and the whole class of about 13 students will attend. There will be a scholarship awarded to those individuals to cover the cost. Lindsay also wants to have a Ready for Work program in Pope County. Hamilton County 4-H participated in their Christmas Parade. They also had their Achievement Night and the Haunted Trail in the fall

with about 200 vendors in attendance. There is a Mercy Heights Private School 4-H STEM and cooking club in Hamilton County now. White County had lots of workshops including a gingerbread workshop, floral arranging, cupcake making, and letter writing. The Teen Teacher program is not affiliated with the school in White County, and they lead Cloverbud workshops and meetings. The unit is still working on collecting lap blankets for the Veterans Honor Flight, participating in the Fill-A-Purse Drive, and holding a photography contest. The pictures from the contest will be used to make a 4-H calendar. Lindsay also said that Stewardship Week will be April 23-25 at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. She is also hoping to be awarded a grant from Sol Systems to purchase more virtual welders. Norman Hill asked if retired/aged-out Teen Teachers could become 4-H club leaders and Lindsay replied yes.

Civil Rights Discussion: Angie Messmer asked those members present to be thinking about populations and places that are underserved and need services in our Unit, and ideas for programs that Extension could offer (not taking into account financial or any other types of barriers).

Election for Extension Board Roster and County Governing Board Roster: The duties of the Extension Board include looking over the budget before it is sent to campus. The duties of the County Governing Board include going to County Board meetings when needed. These committees should consist of two men and two women and shows the system of checks and balances within the Extension Council. Audera Willis and Norman Hill both volunteered to be on these committees. Any other member who wishes to be on the Extension Board and/or the County Governing Board are encouraged to let Angie Messmer and Sheila Stamer know.

Next Scheduled Meeting: The next meeting of the Unit 24 Extension Council will be held on May 15, 2025, at 6:00pm at the Saline County Extension Office.

Comments and Discussion: Angie Messmer said that the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center was awarded a Federal Earmark at the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024 to build a new cattle arena, greenhouse, and educational building. The cattle area would give the youth in Pope County a place to show their cattle. The education building would have a classroom, commercial kitchen, and more offices. Angie received a call and signed off on the last approval and the paperwork will be submitted soon. Connie asked about the Blessing Box count and an update on that. The gardening class in Pope County puts fresh fruits and vegetables in the Blessing Box at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center in the summer. Norman Hill asked about how the SNAP fund freeze would affect the SNAP programs with Extension. Angie Messmer stated that the programs with Extension is SNAP Ed, not SNAP Benefits, so Extension is not affected right now.

Adjourn: A motion to adjourn this meeting was made by Debbie McVey and seconded by Norman Hill. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes Taken and Submitted By:

Rachel Lands