

Approved 9/11/2025

University of Illinois Extension Council Minutes

Unit 24 – June 5, 2025 – 6:00pm Saline County Extension Office

Welcome

The Unit 24 Extension Council meeting on June 5, 2025, was called to order by Amanda Courson at 6:09 p.m.

Council Members Present

Norman Hill Jr., Jamie Byrd, Connie Gibbs, Debbie McVey, Mallory Thompson, Amanda Courson, Justin Roberts, and Rachel Lands.

Staff Present

Angie Messmer and Lizz Cooley-Questelle.

Approval of Minutes from March 6, 2025

The minutes from the March 6, 2025, meeting was reviewed by those present prior to this meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Norman Hill Jr. and seconded by Debbie McVey. The motion carried.

FY25 Fiscal Report – 3rd Quarter

The Fiscal Report was provided to those present consisting of the Banking Summary – Q1 2025 and FY25 – March 2025 Reconciliation Summary. The ending balance shown on the report was as of March 25, 2025. The budget for FY26 is due on June 15. A council member asked if losing funding for Gallatin County has had a financial impact. Angie Messmer said that it has not affected anything on the reports yet and that the income and expenses offset each other. There has been a small impact from this but not much. Angie also said that the closure of the Gallatin County Extension Office affected one employee who was offered other positions in the unit but chose not to accept any of those positions. A motion to approve the Fiscal Reports was made by Jamie Byrd and seconded by Justin Roberts. The motion carried.

Updates from County Director

- Angie Messmer said that each council member should have an Annual Report in their folder and extras could be provided for those who wanted to take more than



one. She also said that the folders with the Annual Report will be mailed to those council members who could not attend this meeting.

- Lois Jones, the Office Support Assistant at the Saline County Extension Office, retired on April 30, 2025. Paula Waters was hired as her replacement and began on May 19, 2025. Paula is from Eldorado.
- Kristina Aldrich, a SNAP Community Worker at the Carmi Office, moved to Unit 27. She will be working in Anna in Union County. Faon Crystal of Hardin County was hired as her replacement and began on June 3, 2025. She attended DuPage College.
- Presley Morris and Parker Hosick have been hired as SNAP Summer Extra-Help and began on May 19, 2025. Angie said that they hired high school and college students from all the counties in the Unit (including Gallatin) for Summer Extra-Help positions. Angie said that Extension still works with the residents in Gallatin County, but they cannot do programing there. She also said that they have not had any 4-H'ers move from Gallatin County clubs to other clubs/counties in the Unit yet. A council member asked if Gallatin Schools came to Stewardship Week this year. Angie said they did not, but they did not normally participate in the past, and that there were almost 1000 students in attendance at Stewardship Week this year.
- Samantha Stallings was hired as a Summer Extra-Help worker and will be helping with the White County GIFT Garden. She began on May 19, 2025.

Updates from Educators

- **Bronwyn Aly:** Bronwyn Aly was unable to attend this meeting. There are already cucumbers being harvested in the tunnels at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. There will be produce to purchase this year and some can be brought to the next Extension Council meeting. There was an herb tower added to the blessing box at the Ag Center. Gardening classes have started this summer in Carmi, Hamilton, and Pope Counties. There is an adult gardening class at the Ag Center, but there has not been good attendance. There were 45 people registered for the Twilight Series Workshop at Flock Farms, but only 11 were in attendance. Mallory Thompson said that maybe Extension could do a program like a Lunch and Learn, like at Mt. Carmel and other senior living places. Debbie McVey asked if the Carmi GIFT Garden was still there. It is, but they got a late start because of flooding. Gardening classes started there this week.
- **Lizz Cooley-Questelle:** Lizz provided the council with a report and emailed more fliers/ information about Illinois Junior Chef, Teen Cuisine, and a Walking Guide out to the council members following the meeting. Lizz said that Illinois Junior Chef is

for 8–12-year-olds and Teen Cuisine is for 13–18-year-olds. There are still openings for Teen Cuisine in Carmi, but not in Pope County or Harrisburg. Lizz said that both classes are great and there has been good parent feedback. Teen Cuisine is about a 10-hour class (2 hours each day for 5 days). They tried to do it in 3 days, and it went well but it was a lot for 3 days. Lizz said that SNAP-ED is doing other adult programing as well. They are partnered with PSE (Policy Systems Environmental Change) and will have information in grocery stores, like the recipe of the week at the grocery store in Golconda. They are working with two other stores, one in Carmi and Big Johns in Eldorado. SNAP-ED had a Farm to School project where there was taste testing in the schools. There has been a farmers market push in the Unit. It has been a challenge to get some vendors at the markets because they are often on the same day. Some vendors are also now part of the link to match program with SNAP EBT. There has been a physical activity focus. There is a walking guide on the coalition's web page. SNAP-ED has had workshops for school food service staff, worked with food donation gardens, and with Southern 7 Head Start helping with nutrition strategies. SNAP-ED is also working on a hydroponics project with Bronwyn Aly to get hydroponic towers in some of the Saline County schools and couple it with the Great Garden Detective Curriculum. There will be a lettuce and herb tower and a cherry tomato and small pepper tower. This is with the SNAP-ED and Ag. and Natural Resources team. This program is sponsored by funding.

- **Lindsay Adams:** Lindsay was unable to attend this meeting because she was at the Hamilton County Fair. **Pope and Hardin Counties** participated in International Night at the Hardin Co. Junior High. The Pope County Clover Crew Club hosted their own International Day. Both events were a success. Stewardship Day brought together hundreds of students from our unit and other counties. The Hardin County Robotics Club ended in May 2025. A group of 8th graders expressed that they would like to continue the program at the high school level. The Teen Teachers had a good and active year. Both Hardin and Pope County schools have committed to continuing the Teen Teachers program next year with planning already underway in collaboration with Unit 27. In **White County**, 17 youth are actively participating in the shooting sports club. The new War Horse Swine Show showcased over 180 hogs. A new Welding SPIN Club has launched at the SIC Carmi campus. The White County EPC participated in the local Safety Day and led a session on 'Poison Look-Alikes.' Several White County 4-H'ers attended Legislative Connection at the Illinois State Capitol. **Saline County's** 4-H programming included two days of 'Shop Local' curriculum delivered at Harrisburg Schools. Library programing will begin on June

17. YQCA training was also held in Saline County. The Lads & Lassies Livestock Judging Team competed at the Livestock Judging Contest in DuQuoin and placed 5th overall. **Hamilton County** hosted a YQCA Skillathon. The Mercy Heights outreach concluded on May 13 with the youth making a project to enter in the county fair. The local Farmer's Market launched at the end of May and will continue weekly through the summer. In April, the Hamilton County EPC organized and hosted Safety Day at the fairgrounds. **Across the Unit**, 4-H clubs are collecting donations for the Ronald McDonald House and will deliver them to the Evansville location where youth will tour the facility and visit Countryside Orchard. On March 20, Unit 24 hosted its annual Public Speaking/Presentations contest and several 4-H'ers advanced to the state competition. The annual Unit 24 Excellence Awards was held at the Big Red Barn with 23 youth being recognized for their outstanding achievements. EPC's also helped deliver 100 handmade lap blankets to veterans participating in the Honor Flight.

Civil Rights Discussion

Angie said that Extension will begin conducting the Needs Assessments for our Unit. Questions will be emailed to some people in each county asking about what the counties/communities need. She said that even if Extension does not provide a service or program, they still need to know what it is in case they get extra funds so they can hire more staff to do more programs. She said that they will get together with some of the council members to ask their thoughts as well. Angie also mentioned that there is a lack of participation in Extension programs throughout the Unit. Norman proposed the idea of keeping track of the conflicts pertaining to why people could not attend events. Another member asked about how Extension is advertising their programs. Some programs have specific requirements on how they can be promoted, such as by social media, papers, television, or through business partners. Lizz said that they could perhaps explore having online attendance options for programs that could allow that.

Council Replacements

The terms of some council members expire this year. The council replacements will begin September 1 and are due to the Regional Director by June 15. From White County, Mallory Thompson's term expires on August 30, 2025. She said that she had already given Angie the name of another person to replace her. Richard Nole, from Gallatin County, withdrew his membership from the Council. Angie has reached out to another individual from Gallatin County to see if they would like to take his place on the Council.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next meeting of the Unit 24 Extension Council was discussed. Possible dates include August 6, 7, 13, or 14, 2025. The meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. and members in attendance are allowed to bring guests but need to let Shelia know since this meeting will also be our annual dinner. Angie Messmer asked if there were any ideas for a change of venue or a guest speaker. She also said that there may be a few results in from the Needs Assessment. Council members voiced their ideas about having baked or grilled chicken and/or Pork 'n Genes, having the meeting at The View 111 in Pope County, and possibly having Extension specialists come down to speak at the meeting.

Comments and Discussion

There were no comments or discussion.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn this meeting was made by Rachel Lands and seconded by Justin Roberts. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Minutes taken and submitted by Rachel Lands.