



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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

Multi-County Council Minutes
September 3, 2025; 11:30 am
@ Clinton County Extension Office

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order by Mike Bruns at 11:45 a.m.

Roll Call:

Council members present answering to roll call included: Nick Suess, Jullie Wollerman, Kathy Sherman, Mike Bruns, Laura Wesselman, Dennis Perez, Jeff Pingsterhaus, Jamie Storey, John Consolino, Greg Branch, Diane Keortge, Matt Hornbostel and Julie Karmeier. Staff in attendance were Jordee Koehler, Kara Boozer, Jamie Mahlandt, Allison Diekemper Crocker, Kaylen Fuhler, Jennifer Zurliene and Rhonda Mueller.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 16, 2025:

A Motion was made by Matt Hornbostel with a second by Dennis Perez to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Welcome and Introduction of members and guest:

Staff in attendance introduced themselves and explained their job duties and responsibilities.

Jordee presented an overview of what Illinois Extension is and what the purpose (duty) of the multi-county council is. Illinois Extension is based out of the College of ACES at Urbana-Champaign. The state is broken down into three regions consisting of 27 multi-county units. Our unit is in Region 3. Each unit has one County Director. Each region has a director and the director for Region 3 is Doug Harlan.

The purpose of Illinois Extension is to serve the people of the state with research, teach and outreach programs.

Some highlights in history that have paved the way for Extension are:

- July 2, 1862 – Morrill Act signed into law by Abraham Lincoln (founding the Land Grant College System)
- 1885 – USDA joins in with the Land-Grant Schools

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- March 2, 1887 – Hatch Act passed by Congress – which led to the establishment of Extension programs from the Land-Grant Colleges
- 1914 Smith – Lever Act – combined the Extension activities of the Land-Grant Colleges and the USDA efforts

In 2010 – Extension experienced a reorganization where the 102 Illinois Counties were consolidated into the current 27 multi-county units – where units were able to consolidate personnel costs and other expenses as a cost saving measure.

The Purpose of the Extension Council is to be actively involved in the programming and activities of University of Illinois Extension

- Advisory Body
- Ideas of future programs
- Help in marketing programs
- Avenues of possible financial resources
- Recruiting volunteers
- Serve as a liaison between Extension and the public

Operating Procedures of Council:

- Officer positions of Chair, Vice-chair and Secretary
- Follow Parliamentary Procedure
- 5 meetings per year
- Need Quorum of members at meetings
- Notify director or office support if you can't attend a meeting

Jordee then provided council members with the staffing assignments for Unit 23.

The different program areas that the Unit covers are: 4-H/Youth; Horticulture, Financial Education and SNAP-Ed.

4-H is the largest out of school youth organization across the nation. The Unit currently has one youth educator (Kara Boozer) along with looking to hire a second educator. Each county has a 4-H Extension Program Coordinator covering that county.

Agriculture and Natural Resources is another core program for the Unit. Chris Lueking is the Educator for this area and she specializes in Horticulture but is picking up various trainings and specialties that will best serve the 5 county unit.

Financial Education – Jamie Mahlandt is in year 3 and has been working to build her foundation.

Strategic Priorities – How Extension determines where to focus their efforts

Community	Economy
Health	Partnerships
Environment	Technology and Discovery
Food and Agriculture	Workforce Excellence

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Kara Boozer then explained some of the Foundational Programs that the 4-H participates in:

- Partner with the ROE to provide Professional Development opportunities
- Partner with The Maschhoffs
- Present the Welcome to the Real World Simulation

Currently working on developing:

- Teacher Corner
- In-person Programs
 - Focus on Career and College Readiness
 - Welcome to the Real World
 - Local School Programs
 - Large Scale Event – Be Safe
- Schools and Spin Club
 - 4-H
 - Leadership Summit
 - Leader Orientation
 - Skill-a-thon

Areas of interest that were identified by the needs assessment

1. Animal Sciences
2. Environmental Sciences
3. College and Career Readiness
4. Food Systems
5. Healthy Living and Nutrition
6. STEM
7. Creative Arts

Next, Financial Consumer Science Educator, Jamie Mahlandt, discussed her program. She focuses on economy, financial literacy and workforce preparedness.

Some of the things that are being done locally are:

- Mindful Mondays – weekly social media blog
- Finding Financial Balance Blog – done monthly
- In-person program – Welcome to the Real World
- Local School Programs
- High School career days at Kaskaskia College
- Shopping for Snacks Program with Grocery Store Simulation

Statewide Programming efforts:

- HCE – Lessons for Living
- Quarterly Companion – this is mailed all county HCE members

Areas of interest that were identified by the needs assessment

1. Financial Literacy for Youth
2. Saving and Investing
3. Spending Money
4. Protecting Money

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5. Financial Awareness
6. Borrowing Money
7. Earning Money

Jordee then provided information on the Horticulture program which is led by Educator Chris Lueking. Some of the Hort Foundational Programs/Events that she participates in are:

- Continuing to partner with The Maschhoffs, Inc – providing Spanish materials on Gardening in Illinois
- Teacher Professional Development Programs
- Community Gardens
- Back to Basics Series – Seed Saving, Recycling Day, Butter Making, Preserving (many of the homesteading topics)
- Horticulture for Holidays/Cut Flower Series
- Conservation/Earth Days/Library Programs
- Green Thumb Thursday – How to videos on horticulture topics
- In-person programs
- Four Season Webinar Series
- Regional Mt. Vernon Fruit Tree and Vegetable School and Illinois Specialty Growers Conference
- Cover Crop for a Cause – currently planted turnips, carrots and beets – the produce that is harvested will be donated to the area food pantries

Areas of interest that were identified by the needs assessment

1. Home Gardening – Food Production
2. Pollinators Habitat – Environmental
3. Community Gardens – Food Access
4. Invasive Species – Environmental
5. Forestry/Pond Management/Conservation Strategies – Environmental
6. Soil/Weather/Wildlife/Bird Watching – Environmental
7. High Tunnel/Hydroponics/Urban Agriculture/Cover Crops – Food Access

Kara Boozer then spoke on the SNAP-Ed Program. They are currently in the process of sunseting the program due to the elimination of the Federal Grant Funding. Some of the highlights from the SNAP- Ed program are:

- Deer Donation Program – Hunters Feeding Illinois
- Last year they were able to process 20 deer which amounted to 800 lbs. and were able to distribute to 6 food pantries (this provided protein for 1,000 meals). Kara is working to secure partners to maintain this program (currently has funding to process 100 deer). Pantries need to be registered with Feeding Illinois/Feeding America to qualify to participate.
- Community Worker Education – currently still have 2 Community Outreach Workers
 - Adult – (programs provided – Healthy Cents, MyPlate for My Family, East.Move.Save booths)
 - 8 Food Pantries
 - 6 Adult Education Sites

Nick Suess inquired if any thought had been given into covering the Strategic Priorities of Health what was previously been covered by the SNAP-Ed program. A lot of good discussion was held on Mental Health resources that are available through various Extension partners – in and outside the 5 county area.

Extension is funded by a 3-Way Funding Partnership Model

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Federal
FY Oct 1-Sept 30

State
FY July 1 – June 30

Local

We have a tax levy in all five counties. Jordee works with local government through an Extension Board Committee to come to the financial request for the FY in question.

Federal Funds are earmarked for specific programs along with Smith Lever funds. SNAP-Ed funds are also Federal funds.

State Funds – GRF (General Revenue Funds) along with state subsidized funds from the county board tax dollars and other matchable funding.

Local – County Board (secured by the referendum), along with Non-tax based funds from individuals and various organizations (Farm Bureau, Foundations, Gifts and Donations).

Update of FY27 Funding requests:

Bond – Hold constant

Clinton – Budget meeting on September 17

Jefferson – letter sent requesting a 4.9% increase

Marion – Hold constant

Washington – Hold constant

Position Vacancies

Commercial Ag Educator – position has been put on hold due to uncertainty of funding

Jefferson County 4-H Extension Program Coordinator – awaiting approval to post position

Bond County 4-H Extension Program Coordinator – position posted today – open through 9/12/25

Nutrition and Wellness Educator – position has been put on hold

Family Consumer Science Extension Program Coordinator – position has been put on hold

Youth Development Educator #2 – awaiting approval to post

Jefferson County Office Support – awaiting approval to post

New Business – Election of Officers:

A motion was made by Nick Suess with a second by Jeff Pingsterhaus to appoint Mike Bruns as chairman. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Nick Suess with a second by Dennis Perez to appoint Jeff Pingsterhaus as vice-chair. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Jeff Pingsterhaus with a second by Nick Suess to appoint Julie Karmeier as secretary. Motion carried.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:02 pm by a motion from Greg Branch and a second by Jeff Pingsterhaus.

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