

University of Illinois Extension Council Minutes

Unit 24 – February 15, 2024 – 6:00 pm – Saline County
Extension office

Welcome

The Unit 24 Extension Council meeting on February 15, 2024, was called to order at 6:00pm by Vice Chair Norman Hill due to the absence of Chair Stacy Phillips. All present introduced themselves.

Council Members Present

Amanda Courson, Connie Gibbs, Norman Hill, Debbie McVey, Justin Roberts, Mallory Thompson, Dean West, Jennifer Willis, and Rachel Lands over Zoom.

Staff Members Present

Angie Messmer, Sheila Stamer, Lizz Cooley-Questelle, and Lindsay Adams.

Approval of minutes from October 27, 2023

The minutes from the October 27, 2023, meeting was reviewed by those present. A motion to approve the minutes as read was made by Mallory Thompson and seconded by Justin Roberts. The motion carried.

Fiscal Reports – Trust 2nd Quarter for FY24

The Fiscal Report was provided to those present consisting of the Banking Summary – Q4 2023 and FY24 – December 2023 Reconciliation Summary. Sheila Stamer stated that our numbers look really good and made note that the end of the FY24 – December 2023 Reconciliation Summary is where we are right now but there are still a few outstanding charges. A motion to approve the Fiscal Report was made by Amanda Courson and seconded by Connie Gibbs. The motion carried.

Updates from the County Director

- Angie Messmer thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
- The Pope-Hardin 4-H Extension Program Coordinator position is being readvertised. The position has been vacant for a few months. There will be 3 interviews conducted



on February 16, 2024. Angie and Lindsay Adams will be interviewing applicants in the afternoon for the 4-H Extension Program Coordinator.

- The Dixon Springs Agricultural Center has advertised for a 60% Housekeeper position. The housekeeping position had previously been an extra help position. There will be an interview conducted on February 16, 2024 by Angie Messmer and Sheila Stamer
- There is a new Gallatin County Extension Office opening on March 1st. This has been in progress for a while. Gallatin County used to have an Extension Office but due to COVID-19, campus made it close, and the staff began to work from home.
- Angie Messmer felt that it was time to inform the council that there is a member of the Gallatin County Board, Warren Rollman, that is set on getting rid of Extension and 4-H in Gallatin County and is petitioning to do so. The money that funds the Extension comes from a tax levy in the community. Those tax levy funds are then state matched. There is discussion of only allocating Extension \$1 or cutting it completely from Gallatin County, but it is illegal for the county to not pay the tax levy. One of the concerns of Gallatin County not allocating those funds is how Gallatin County Extension and 4-H will be funded because Angie said that she will not take money away from other counties to fund Gallatin. Angie said that she will be attending the County Board Meeting. He believes that Extension is ineffective and is taking money away from the citizens and not using it. He is spreading misinformation, twisted facts, and half-truths. She says that she is not concerned with his treatment towards her, but she is very concerned about the effects he is having on the Extension staff, the kids, and the community. He has made everything that the Extension staff has done seem insignificant. There are about 500 4-H'ers in Unit 24 and about 35 of which are in Gallatin County. People in Gallatin County support 4-H. Angie is trying to approach the situation in a nonconfrontational way and has asked him to sit down with her to discuss his grievances and look at the budget, but he refuses. Some of the Extension Council members present suggested having a public meeting in Gallatin County and have all the Extension related things set up, see how the community responds, and invite some specific local churches that can attest to Extension's help with food insecurity to attend as well. Another suggestion was to hold a community meeting. Angie said that she has not been to the White County or Hamilton County Board Meetings yet but will attend them both soon. One positive that has come from all of this is that some of Extension's partners are going out of their way to say thank you.

Updates from Educators

- Bronwyn Aly: The Sustainable Living Series is beginning again. It will touch on a different topic at every meeting. The first meeting in the series on February 20, 2024 will discuss fruit trees and be held at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. Registration for the event is open. The meetings will move from county to county. On April 2, 2024, there will be a meeting in Carmi on the topic of backyard chickens. The annual Twilight Series will start again this summer. FFA Section 25 Horticulture Judging Contest will be on March 12, 2024 at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. The unit-wide Stewardship Week will be April 17-19, 2024 at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. Schools from all counties in Unit 24 will attend.
- Lizz Cooley-Questelle: Food on the Move in partnership with the Tri-State Food Bank is in New Haven on every 3rd Wednesday. That community is a food desert and they are overjoyed to have this food access where there was none before. There is a website where people can put in their zip code and find the available food sources in their area – Find Food Illinois at <https://extension.illinois.edu/food/findfood-illinois>. They are currently conducting a guest survey about customer service, location, and etc. They have met with Hardin and Pulaski Counties as well. They are looking to possibly have a stop in the Rosiclare area at the end of March. Lizz attended the National SNAP-Ed Administrator Conference in Washington D.C. SNAP-Ed Community Outreach Workers also met earlier this week at East Side School in Harrisburg to discuss increasing fruits and vegetables for meals. SNAP-Ed is starting to plan the Illinois Junior Chef program for the summer. The Healthy Lifestyles Action Team, an action team of the Southeastern Illinois Community Health Coalition, is hosting a Nourish Your Neighbor healthy food drive in Saline and Gallatin counties. There will also be a walking challenge and walking guide with walkability audits online as an updating document that can be digitally downloaded. SNAP-Ed is for low-income individuals, but they also have some events open to the whole community. They have direct education for youth, adults, seniors, and the whole family. The majority of their direct education is within elementary schools. They also work with the Golden Circle in Ridgway. There are currently 2 Community Outreach Workers serving all 6 counties in Unit 24. There has been a Create Better Health program going on in Hamilton and White Counties. SNAP-Ed has also helped to coordinate donations of ground venison to local pantries. There will also be a School Wellness Policy Workshop March 5, 2024 at John A Logan College. New cooking methods have also been implemented in Gallatin County while teaching the Create Better Health program that has opened new possibilities for cooking.

- John Shadowens: John's report discussed the mobile food pantry, the Illinois Grocery Initiative program, and the R3 grant. The R3 grant money is from the tax on marijuana sales and goes towards helping with positive youth development. The grant had to be applied for and was received with Harrisburg being the focus area of these funds because it is an area where the schools and the community need to be brought closer together
- Lindsay Adams: The big event coming up is the total solar eclipse. She is reaching out to the schools in Unit 24. All high school science students in Gallatin County can be part of a program and they will get custom made eclipse glasses. There will also be an eclipse program at the Harrisburg Public Library open to non-4-H'ers. Pope County is not on the participation list due to the lack of having an EPC, but they recently had a fossil hunt, 4-H'ers walked in the homecoming parade, and there was a maple syrup event and pancake breakfast. A lot of the events open to 4-H'ers are unit-wide. Extension/4-H is also going into the schools and beginning a program called Drones in Ag that the physics and computer science students in Gallatin County will get to participate in. Some other upcoming events/activities is the unit-wide 4-H Public Speaking Contest on March 21, 2024 at the White County Extension Office, Horse Bowl and Hippology Contest, YQCA Training (for the quality care of animals and all 4-H'ers must complete it to show livestock at the fair), an Electrical Workshop sponsored by Carmi Lumber Company is coming up and those 4-H'ers who participate can exhibit that project in the fair, and making lap blankets for the participants in the Veteran's Honor Flight in May 2024. There is a new Cloverbud club in White County for kids ages 5-7. On February 16, 2024 there will be an Eclipse program in Hardin County where the Teen Teachers will receive instruction and then teach the younger students. Hardin County schools also expressed that they wanted a school wide program of Welcome to the Real World to enable their students to talk with real people in the community and see if they could make it in the real world. There is also a new STEM club in Gallatin County that is drawing st

Civil Rights Discussion

Extension had its annual Civil Rights Review at the end of December. This review consists of collecting demographic data from every program and sending that data to the University to ensure that there is no discrimination. The data from Unit 24's programs was reviewed, and all goals were met.

Council Replacements

The following council members will need to be replaced beginning September 1, 2024, Stacy Phillips from White County, Jennifer Willis from Hamilton County, and Alex Watkins

from Saline County. Amy McCarty suggested that Joe Zieran replace Stacy Phillips. Angie Messmer said that the council members could think of other possible replacements and send the names to her and Sheila.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next meeting of the Unit 24 Extension Council will be on May 16, 2024, at the Saline County Extension Office. Angie Messmer said that she would figure out some type of food for those attending to have.

Comments and Discussion

Angie Messmer said (in response to a council member's question) that she has tried to give presentations at Gallatin County Board Meetings, but they do not run their meetings in a professional manner. She said that she always has information to present at County Board Meetings and other counties typically allow her to speak for 5-15 minutes. A council member asked if it would be possible for children in 4-H to attend Gallatin's County Board Meetings and Angie said that she would not want to bring children into those meetings because of how those meetings are.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn this meeting was made by Dean West and seconded by Debbie McVey. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 7:15pm.

Minutes taken and submitted by Rachel Lands.

Approved – 5/16/2024