

Carroll, Lee & Whiteside Counties

Extension Council

MINUTES

May 19, 2025

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in person and by Zoom.

Attendance:

Gordon Kelm, Karla Belzer, Pam Martinez, Cilvia Rivera, Lupita Serrano, Kathy Book, Kara Schweitzer, Mike Delany, Lee Reese, Emily Zimmerman, Eileen Piper.

Public Comment:

None.

Extension Mission and Vision:

The mission of University of Illinois Extension was reviewed: developing educational programs, extending knowledge, and building partnerships to support people, communities, and their environments. A simplified version was also noted: *"In service to the citizens of Illinois."*

Minutes:

The minutes from the February 10, 2025 meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve was made by Cilvia Rivera and seconded by Pam Martinez. Motion carried unanimously.

Budget Update:

- FY25 will close June 30; FY26 planning is underway.
- No major changes anticipated; unit expects a carryover balance.
- Whiteside County Board toured the Extension office earlier in the day, expressing strong support.
- State budget deficit noted, but no Extension funding impacts expected.
- SNAP-Ed federal funding remains uncertain due to Farm Bill discussions; programming continues as planned.

Programming Updates:

Educators reported highlights across program areas:

- **4-H Youth Development (Kathy Book):** Welcome to the Real World career and budgeting simulations, online photography spin club, CSI club in Morrison, and summer programming at Open Sesame and Elevate. Plans for "Fuel and Fit" wellness program with Westwood, with expansion in Lee and Carroll Counties.
- **Agriculture & Youth (Martha):** Embryology program reached 845 students in 37 classrooms across 13 schools. Summer school and library programs planned. Participation in state-level career readiness and 4-H curriculum projects.

- **Community & Economic Development (Mike Delany):** Poverty simulation in Mt. Carroll served over 40 participants; next scheduled for September 5 in Whiteside County. Strategic planning with Savanna Chamber underway. Entrepreneurship initiatives and statewide Local Government Education Webinar Series continue.
- **Family Life (Kara Schweitzer):** WITS Fitness Brain Health programs remain popular; Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention completed with plans for seated Tai Chi expansion. Upcoming partnerships with senior centers and Hope Cancer Wellness Center.
- **Horticulture (Bruce Black):** Entering busy gardening season; community garden projects planned.

Grants:

- **West Carroll STEAM Hub:** Federal funding still delayed; minimal programming continues in Carroll County schools.
- **CDC Action Grant:** Supports poverty simulations and gardening projects; Extension serves as subcontractor to local health departments.

New Business:

Council approved the FY26 budget agreement, authorizing a \$13,500 transfer from the gift fund to operating expenses. With a 75% anticipated state match, this will generate approximately \$23,500 in program support. The motion to approve the FY26 council agreement was made by Pam Martinez and seconded by Silvia Rivera. Motion carried unanimously.

Extension Funding Advocacy Initiative:

Discussion held on House Bill 4035, which proposes increased state funding for Extension. Illinois currently ranks lowest in per capita Extension funding among neighboring states. No immediate council action required.

Needs Assessment Discussion:

Council members engaged in a needs assessment activity to identify local issues, gaps, and underserved audiences. Key issues raised included: childcare, food insecurity, transportation, healthcare access, technology barriers, immigrant support, rural senior needs, and housing. Underserved audiences identified included teens seeking community beyond school, immigrant families, rural seniors, and residents of smaller towns. Feedback will inform the unit's plan of work, due in fall 2025.

Next Meeting:

September 22, 2025

Adjournment:

The motion to adjourn was made by Pam Martinez and seconded by Lupita Serrano. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.