



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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

Multi-County Council Minutes
November 5, 2025; 11:30 am
@ Bond County Extension Office

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order by Mike Bruns at 11:33 a.m.

Roll Call:

Council members present answering to roll call included: Nick Suess, Kathy Sherman, Mike Bruns, Laura Wesselman, Dennis Perez, Greg Branch, Diane Keortge, Julie Miessner, Jeff Rabenort, Julie Karmeier and Butch Myers. Staff in attendance were Jordee Koehler, Jamie Mahlandt, Chris Lueking, Fawn Terwilliger, Kayla Powers and Rhonda Mueller.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 3, 2025:

A Motion was made by Denny Perez with a second by Greg Branch to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Welcome and Introduction of members and guests:

Kayla Powers was introduced as the new 4-H EPC along with Fawn Terwilliger as the Office Support, both serving the residents of Bond County. Also introduced was Jeff Rabenort as a new Council Member Representative from Washington County.

Jordee then continued on last meeting's presentation on What Illinois Extension is, Why it matters and what each council member's role is in the success of local Extension which encompass -Building Pride; Giving Clarity on what Extension provides to the individual communities and Preparing for What's Next – what the council members' roles are to assist in telling the Extension Story.

Illinois Extension brings University resources into the communities. Connecting the knowledge with the needs that have been identified. Locally we focus on four different state-wide priority issues:

1. Community
2. Agriculture

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University of Illinois* U.S. Department of Agriculture* Local Extension Councils Cooperating
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

3. Youth
4. Health

Some programs that Extension is a large component of even though the Extension name is not listed are:

- Conservation Days in Marion County
- Fruit & Vegetable School which is a Regional Training held in Mt. Vernon
- Certified Livestock Manager Training in the Breese Office
- PSEP Training Partner
- Community Gardens – Clinton, Jefferson, Marion & Washington
- Local Government Education
- Little Free Pantries with Unit Way (2 pantries in each county)
- SSM Food Pantry Partner
- Welcome to the Real World in partnership with KSED

Community

Jamie Mahlandt spoke on how her work affects the Communities by creating strong support to produce resilient youth, families and communities. Financial Education can focus on many items, but with the rise of the cost of food at home she has researched the Cost of Food at Home through the USDA and compiled resources that she makes available which consist of ways to:

- Set Grocery Goals
- Meal Plan
- Grocery Plan
- Track success

Residents are then encouraged to reflect on grocery and meal planning at the end of a four-week time frame to continue to work on building healthy habits.

Jamie has partnered with the SNAP Education Educator to compile Educational Resource Kits through funding that they were able to obtain. The kits contain:

- Grocery Planner
- Recipe cards with EAT MOVE SAVE recipes
- Customizable recipe cards to include costs
- Magnetic shopping list
- Ink pen for completing list and planner
- Food preservation clips
- Reusable water bottle
- Salad container
- Sandwich container
- Reusable grocery tote bag

Jamie has been able to partner with SSM Health Good Samaritan Hospital to make the kits available when clients pick up a food box.

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Agriculture

Chris Lueking spoke on what the Community's need is regarding to maintaining a safe and accessible food, fiber, and biofuel supply.

Residents have the ability to bring samples of plants that they are having issues with to the Extension Office to have sent to the diagnostic plant clinic lab on campus to have it cultured to find out what is going on with the plant. The cost for this service is \$18.00 for a basic sample. Most times it only takes a small section of the plant. Many times Extension can connect the bridge for a client to getting the services that they are needing (i.e. water sampling – hard water pond samples).

Youth

Jordee spoke on 4-H Youth development. Local 4-H staff have been working to adapt and meet young people where they are by working with local schools to provide opportunities in after school settings. This will allow youth who would otherwise not have had access to 4-H Clubs, experiences, hands-on learning opportunities, etc.

This model was test piloted in Clinton County for the past two years with the Robotics Lego Curriculum.

4-H is growing today's youth to be tomorrow's leaders. 4-H is the largest youth organization outside of schools nationwide. Over the last year the unit has engaged just under 6,000 youth in different 4-H experiences. They are learning leadership, building skills and developing competencies for their future.

Some various workshop that are planned are: Quilts of Valor Series, Tractor Supply Company Horticulture Workshop, Little Free Art Gallery Series, Barn Quilts – Project road Show, Chunky Knitted Blankets, Charcuterie Board Workshop, Sourdough Workshop, Ag Business Career Program, Junior Master Gardeners (Marion County), Junior Master Naturalists (Bond County), Embryology, Livestock Skill-a-Thon, Drones with Kaskaskia College Ag Department and Welcome to the Real World Career Exploration with KSED

Jordee shared the different Traditional and Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs in each county. She also shared the Extension by the numbers data for 2024 as the 2025 data is not available at this time.

Financial Update

A majority of expenses for the unit is staffing.

An update on County Board funding for Extension FY27 by county is:

Bond – stay constant

Clinton – stay constant

Jefferson – increase for 4.9%

Marion – stay constant

Washington – stay constant

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The county money is subsidized and last year the rate was 85%. The local funding opens the door to state funding.

Jordee is in the process of creating Ambassador Toolkits for council members to have with them to advocate for Extension within their individual communities. The Extension fingerprint is everywhere even if the Extension name is not in the title.

Staffing Updates:

- SNAP Education – those positions will be phased out February 14, 2026
- Youth Educator – Ashley Hoffman – to begin November 17, 2025 to be housed in the Jefferson County Office
- Bond County 4-H EPC – Kayla Powers began on October 27
- Jefferson County Office Support – interviews have been held – waiting for approval to make an offer – anticipated start date – December 1
- Jefferson County 4-H EPC – interviews will be held on November 12

Once these positions are filled, the Unit will be fully staffed.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:02 pm by a motion from Nick Suess and a second by Laura Wesselman.