

# **MINUTES: University of Illinois Extension Council Meeting – Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Stark Counties Tuesday, February 17, 2026, via Zoom.**

**Council Members Present:** Adrian Blackwell, Maya Boehle, Dave Dyer, Spencer Griffin, Melissa Hajostek, Tara Mayhew, Mary Meaker, Addison Monson, Dianna Saelens, Riggins Shafer

**Illinois Extension Staff Present:** Kristin Bogdonas, Jenny Garner, Russell Medley, Emily Swihart

**Call to Order:** Dianna Saelens called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Spencer Griffin called the roll.

**Public Comments:** Not applicable.

**Previous Minutes:** The minutes of the last meeting on October 21, 2025, were approved with noted changes on a motion by Adrian Blackwell and seconded by Tara Mayhew. Motion carried.

## **Fiscal Report:**

- The Unit 7 Trust and Self-Supporting accounts ending December 31, 2025, were provided for review by Jenny Garner.
- Henry/Stark In-and-Out account has an end balance of \$5,793.13. Mercer In-and-Out account has an end balance of \$1,713.68. Rock Island In-and-Out account has an end balance of \$4,341.39.

## **Council Reports:**

- Adrian Blackwell reported the Rock Island Health Department has been doing outreach at Project Now's homeless shelters, specifically BridgePoint, Christian Care, and downtown Rock Island. Hours were extended in November to offer COVID and flu vaccinations.
- Mike Sigwalt reported the Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry experienced a 26% increase with 500 guests served in October and November with the government shutdown and SNAP benefits. While things have settled down, the pantry is still seeing 450 guests each month, which is much higher than normal.
- Tara Mayhew said the Rock Island County Farm Bureau closed their hunger drive that brought in \$8,400, which is much lower than a historic average of \$20,000 to \$25,000. Proceeds were given to the River Bend Food Bank. A succession planning program will be offered on February 20 at Lavendar Crest. Trivia Night will be on February 28 for purposes of raising funds to purchase a peddle tractor for use at the fair. Rurals for the Road is scheduled for March 4 and covers CDL regulations and guidelines, The Women in Ag Conference is set for March 27.
- Dave Dyer said the City of Galva received a \$29,000 grant to do tree inventory and another \$8,400 to purchase trees. Emily Swihart offered Extension's assistance.
- Melissa Hajostek said the Mercer County Health Department is offering flu and COVID shots but does not have RSV or shingles for the elderly. Food donations have been coming in steadily.

- Mary Meaker indicated the Wyoming Public Library has seen hearty attendance for pre- school time, and winter reading challenge is themed around the Olympics. The Library received \$10,000 from Carnegie Corporation of New York for building improvements.
- Dianne Saelens said Birth to Five is gearing up for Easter egg hunts and will be wrapping up their regional needs assessment update at the end of this week.

#### **Staff Programming Information:**

- Russell Medley indicated a poverty simulation is planned for March 7 at Geneseo School District with 260 teachers expected to participate.
- Emily Swihart reported Horticulture’s largest event, Nursery School, is coming up this weekend with eight separate sessions offered to participants on a variety of subjects. In- housing programming is being offered with the latest plant propagation generating a participant to comment, “This is the best \$15 I have spent.”
- Kristin Bogdonas started the first part of 16 sessions with an 8-week Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention program, which is a big commitment for the participants with a focus on aging and wellness. The program filled up quickly, so a second session is planned for those on the waiting list. A location with mirrors so participants can see what they are doing is being sought. The second eight weeks will bring in a trainer to enhance their skills.
- From the staff handout: Jennifer Peterson has been weighing cattle for the four counties. Rock Island County Teen Federation is doing a cooking workshop on Valentine’s Day and Mercer County is hold a soup cook-off on February 21.
- From the staff handout: Elaine Kaple wrapped up Cooking 101 at Thurgood Marshall Learning Center and a social emotional learning visual arts series at Washington Junior High School, both in Rock Island.
- Announcements: Refer to New Business.

#### **New Business:**

- In-and-Out Account Audit: Jenny Garner reported on the annual internal in-and-out bank account audit, which was reviewed by the audit committee of Tayler Louscher, Mark Montgomery, and Mitchell Walker. For FY25, Henry/Stark In-and-Out account had a cash balance of \$18,155.42. Mercer In-and-Out account had a cash balance of \$8,462.85. Rock Island In-and-Out account has an end balance of \$12,685.48. The audit was approved by the Region 2 Office and accepted with the Extension Business Office.
- Extra Help Positions: Several temporary extra help positions have been created to assist unit staff with the transition due to loss of the SNAP-Ed program. A QC River Connections grant was received from Quad Cities Community Foundation and will retain a community health position for 12 months to replicate the Floreciente GIFT Garden project for the City of Rock Island’s West End project. Another 4-H extra help position
- will support after school programs and 4-H activities through early August 2026, and a second extra help position will support marketing and regional housing efforts through early September 2026. The summer intern program is centrally funded and will support horticulture activities; the applicant must be enrolled in undergraduate studies and have a GPA of 2.5.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the meeting, a motion was made by Tara Mayhew and seconded by Adrian Blackwell that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Spencer Griffin

