

University of Illinois Extension
DeWitt-Macon-Piatt County Extension Council Agenda
May 8, 2023
6:30 pm
Zoom Meeting

6:33 pm - Call to Order – Jamie Boas

Members Present: Brooks Brown, Kathi Drozs, Jerry Edwards, Merry Lanker, Megan Murphy, Tayisha Nelson, Mike Randall

Staff Present: Ben Steele, Doug Gucker, Sarah Vogel, Caitlin Mellendorf, Jamie Boas,

There were no guests. There were no public comments.

Approval of February 2023 meeting minutes is postponed until September due to lack of quorum

Extension Updates- Jamie Boas

Position Openings:

- Julia Duncan resigned; Stephanie Hale took over as ANR EPC- effective 4/11
- Macon County 4-H EPC- closed 4/26- interviews are next week
- Two community worker positions- closed 4/8- two will start 5/15
- Family and Consumer Science EPC- hired Tammy Buse, former SNAP-Ed community worker
- DeWitt & Piatt 4-H Youth Development educator position- closed without hiring; will look at opening it in fall
- Louise Hyneman (SNAP-Ed educator) resigned; position is open now; will close 5/24

Educator updates are on found on the written reports.

Doug Gucker presented about “Soil in the news” regarding the dust storms that resulted in tragedy and how less tillage is better for soil health and structure.

Financial Update – Jamie Boas

- FY23 Financial Report- February
- FY24 Budget Overview

Old Business- none presented

New Business

- Each educator talked about their key informant interviews

Ben- His grant challenge area is Thriving Youth. He is focusing on creating opportunities for Decatur Public School afterschool programs. He’s found traction with field excursions and connecting those to real world careers and multi-day activities. The main issues he heard about were peer pressure, drugs and violence. Programs need to have cultural relevance. Post-covid there

is a need for mental health. Youth were forced to be alone and now are choosing that but that's not healthy.

Sarah- She completed 11 interviews. She acknowledged that we are one organization and we cannot address all of the issues she heard about. Needs- not everything can be fixed by hort, but gardening is important and what hort does is important. It's needed for mental health. Partners were very helpful and wanting to share with her. Barriers- visibility and awareness of Extension but also the need for green spaces and natural spaces; transportation is a barrier so partnering for programs at Decatur Public Library makes sense to help with that. In Clinton, transportation is also an issue but so is letting people know about our programs. Agencies are also affected by staffing issues. She is working on developing municipal tree trainings. The DPL social worker shared the lack of "lived experiences" can negatively impact relationships between volunteers and underserved populations. She is exploring training to talk about it to wash away misconceptions.

Caitlin- She focused on Food Safety. She provides training and certification needed for restaurant staff, daycares, amongst others. She offers it at a lower cost than most places but it's available in the community so people don't have to travel. The health department is grateful for these trainings and they do not have the capacity to do them. They are wanting to focus more on home consumer food safety including food temperatures and handwashing. Her second area of focus is Chronic Disease Prevention and Management, focusing on heart disease and diabetes. She interviewed child care providers and dietitians. Hospitals have resources for people. Kirby in Monticello has dietitians doing programs in the garden. Child care workers say general health is a bigger issue- just getting kids to doctor and dental appointments. Everyone agreed that it's hard to change attitudes. One council member suggested community health fairs as a way to bring together organizations and families. Another council member suggested the resource fairs for Decatur Public Schools that happen during parent/teacher conferences.

Doug- He focuses on production agriculture, natural resource and local foods. He noted the need for unbiased research and farmers worry about profitability. However they won't attend a face to face meeting on that topic as no one wants to admit they have issues. He also said water quality, nutrient issues and transporting local foods are all issues. For urban ag, low income audiences have limited access to local produce. There are no farmers markets that take SNAP benefits in our three county unit for example. For natural resources, there is a lack of knowledge by the public of the problems. We need better education, pool resources and cross publicize. Ag Create a business in Monticello that creates videos was mentioned. Megan Murphy brought up a professor at Western IL University who does food hub feasibility studies.

Merry Lanker brought up that there is an issue with balloon releases in memory of loved ones. The balloons are really harmful to animals so she suggested a memorial garden where everyone can bring something like a painted rock, tulips, bulbs, etc, instead of releasing balloons. She educates her students on this. Perhaps NREE has something for education.

Next Extension Council Meeting:

Monday, September 18, 2023 with dinner at 5 p.m. and the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Adjourned 7:32 pm

Submitted by Jamie Boas, Extension County Director