

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by Creswell at 4:30 p.m.

Introductions

- Introductions were made:
 - McLean County Board Representatives Thompson, Metsker, and Soeldner were present. County staff Dreyer and Rodriguez were present.
 - Extension Council Representatives Creswell, Schumacher, and Sommer were present. Extension staff Clore, Lewis-Sibley, Halihan, and Estes were present.

Review/Approve Meeting Minutes

- Soeldner motioned to approve the March 16, 2021 minutes as presented, Sommer seconded; all approved, motion carried.

Follow Up Information

- Lewis-Sibley shared her screen with a PowerPoint presentation, with the information requested from the March meeting.
 - Leases – cost per square foot for Unity and the McLean offices
 - Staff costs – Historically, this unit has allocated levy money to go directly to staff salaries because it’s a more stable funding source. When the levy money is used for staff salaries, the state picks up the benefit-cost.
 - State matching funds – FY16-FY20 amounts received
 - Two years, \$0 was received. Two years, only a portion of the funds were received. In FY20, a large bulk payment was received, covering some of the past deficits.
 - Lewis-Sibley shared that she had a phone call with Senator Barickman and the state matching funds conversation was discussed. He will be looking into this further.
 - Carryover – 60% of the unit carryover money is designated to McLean, which is \$890,884.80.
 - Return on Investment
 - Extension’s request for \$425,000 is 0.004% of the McLean County Board budget.
 - The 2019 population in the county was 171,517. In 2019-2020, Extension served 49,278 residents of this county, which is 29% of the population.

McLean County Board Representatives	
<i>Catherine Metsker</i>	P
<i>Jim Soeldner</i>	P
<i>Gerald Thompson</i>	P
Extension Council Representatives	
<i>Tom Creswell</i>	P
<i>Julie Schumacher</i>	P
<i>Mike Sommer</i>	P
McLean County Administrative Staff	
<i>Cathy Dreyer</i>	P
<i>Camille Rodrigues</i>	P
McLean County Extension Staff	
<i>Bobbie Lewis-Sibley</i>	P
<i>Sara Halihan</i>	P
<i>Erin Estes</i>	P
<i>Harry Clore</i>	P

Discussion

- Soeldner requested to look at the carryover information slide again, asking for an explanation of the 65% State Matching Funds. Lewis-Sibley explained that the state pays \$0.65 per \$1.00.
- Metsker asked why our unit has carryover, and not spending the money allocated for each year. Halihan discussed the use of the budget as a planning tool for Extension.
- Lewis-Sibley noted that with any business/organization, most of their income goes to staff salaries. During COVID, there was a hiring freeze, so when staff left, the positions were not filled. Some of the carryover money accumulated due to this.
 - Now that COVID numbers have gone down and staff is in the offices, the hiring freezes have been lifted.
 - Positions are posted for new positions:
 - Two federally funded (not in this budget) – SNAP-Ed
 - Two additional Program Coordinators – Consumer Economics and Marketing
- Sommer asked about the amount the voters approved that Extension could receive up to. Lewis-Sibley noted that Extension can receive up to \$0.05 for the levy but has not received more than \$0.02 since she has been working in this unit. Dryer had been asked to look up the EAV numbers, but those had not been received for this coming year.

Sommer summarized by noting that this year's request is within the same range, well below the amount the voters approved for Extension to receive.

- Thompson asked about the cost of renovations not being included in the building leases. Lewis-Sibley explained that no renovations have been done at the McLean Office and the Unity upgrades were done in 2018 and 2019. Some of the cost was covered by the owner, some to meet code requirements. Much of the Unity renovation cost was covered by funds raised including donations from the Bridgestone Foundation and State Farm Foundation.

Vote to approve McLean County Extension Levy Amount

- A motion was made by Thompson to discuss the \$425,000 levy request amount. Sommer seconded the motion.
 - Discussion:
 - Soeldner was not comfortable with the \$425,000 request, based on the carryover.
 - Creswell mentioned that with the differences in fiscal years and the projected carryover amount, he can see why questions about this amount are being discussed.
 - Lewis-Sibley explained that the carryover amount was reduced during the current fiscal year, compared to what the unit had in the past with less than 18 months of carryover.
 - On the presentation slide about carryover, the amount of carryover shown of \$1.4 million is assuming that the state match money is received in full. If that money does not come through, it will significantly reduce the carryover for the unit.
 - Senator Barickman will be looking into why Extension (state-wide) has not received the full state match money.
 - Clore talked about how Extension state-wide is short \$20-23 million since 2017. Although Extension has received partial payments since 2018, the full amounts have not been received. A special allocation is being sought from the state for these funds. Metsker asked at what point Extension writes off the state match money. Clore responded that we never do because those funds are still owed from the state.
 - Legislators like Senator Chapin Rose and Senator Jason Barickman want to see results in paying back the funds to Extension. With legislators like this fighting for Extension funds, that's when we see results of payment.
 - A new director at the Department of Agriculture Jerry Costello has been appointed and positive changes are hopeful.
 - Creswell contrasted Extension's fluctuating budget and funding sources with the McLean County Board's more stable budget. He believes having the carryover helps Extension to be able to have security with that fluctuating funding.
 - Metsker noted that with over \$1 million in salaries and rent per year, adding additional salaries may need to be reconsidered. Are more staff being added due to program growth?
 - Metsker will not support the \$425,000 levy request. She says that it is too much to ask from taxpayers and is contradictory to the economy. Most businesses are not finding additional funding for salaries. Instead, they are decreasing office space square footage. A comparison of State Farm funding and staffing was made. She suggests that \$275,000 is a more fitting number she would agree to for the levy amount. Spending down the carryover should be a priority.
 - Sommer responded that the current carryover is not 18 months' worth. With respect to the comments about the voters/taxpayers, they voted for Extension to receive double of what Extension is asking for in this levy request. Nearly 30% of residents took part in Extension programming.
 - In response to growth, Lewis-Sibley talked about the call with Senator Barickman and other entities on the call. One of those people on the call was a vice president at State Farm. He discussed their tremendous growth this year, the fact that they have not suspended raises and moving a lot of their workforce to remote. To compare State Farm to Extension, they are a for-profit organization, while Extension is not.

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April 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes 4:30 p.m.
via Zoom**

- In March this board discussed remote work and reducing office space. Lewis-Sibley is working to do that. This is not something that can be done overnight. The reason we are considering this is to free up funds because of our tremendous growth. While other businesses are slowing down, we are doing quite the opposite. We have more calls for financial help, and how to grow and preserve their own food. We were there to help!
- Thompson noted that with respect to the \$0.02, he found that irrelevant. Board members are tasked with being responsible with funds, and being good stewards of the taxpayer money. He is still concerned with the carryover amount and suggests that Extension continue to lower that amount. There is no need to cut programming, and plenty of money is available to continue to operate.
- Schumacher noted that if all Extension offices are holding 18 months carryover, it's smart to follow suit. If the state money is unknown, the units are doing what they're being told.
 - If positions are needed, Bobbie would know best. She supports Bobbie and the staff in creating those positions to provide more for our communities.
 - The 29% of the community impacted is just a portion of the impact Extension has. If one person in the family calls Extension for a question, the possibility is that the whole family could benefit from that answer given.
 - Schumacher is in support of the \$425,000 levy request.
- Creswell agrees with Thompson's comment about not spending the full levy maximum. The real measure to be considered is the return on investment, and how the community is impacted. The level of carryover is based on the stability of the projections, but there is a risk that funding will not come through. This is the philosophy of why the carryover is needed in Extension.
- Estes asked the County Board members why they continuously push to lower Extension's funding, even when the results show that this is a growing program.
 - Thompson responded that it in his opinion, they look at it from a different perspective. For a carryover amount to be that large, additional funding seems unnecessary when other businesses are struggling to make ends meet.
- Lewis-Sibley asked the board what they are allowed for carryover. Rodriguez responded that they can hold 15%, which is about three months. Lewis-Sibley asked about funding, where the board's funding is a more stable income than Extension. The carryover Extension has is not all from this levy amount.
 - Halihan noted that this unit has been a good steward of the money, making cuts to enable us to have the safety net of the carryover. There will become a point where it won't be that way. Lewis-Sibley noted that the carryover is reducing every year.
 - Metzker asked if there was a spending problem. If you only have so much coming in, and you're spending more every year then you have a spending problem, not an income problem. Carryover needs to be reduced, but that doesn't mean you need to add more people.
 - Lewis-Sibley responded that more people are being added due to the increases in programming. Salary increases have reduced the carryover recently as well.
- Soeldner noted the shortage of \$75,000 last year, so they need to make up that \$75,000. Lewis-Sibley noted that the \$425,000 request included the \$375,000 plus additional funds to make up for the difference in that underpayment.
- Clore asked if he could discuss the funding model since the carryover seems to be the focus. There's a mistaken understanding of what that carryover model entails.
 - In 2016 there was no budget, with \$10 million we were not going to get. This is the same year congress was trying to cut the Farm Bill, getting rid of our SNAP funding. Extension had to be very creative with funding.
 - In FY18-20 the state infused almost \$1 million into Livingston, McLean, and Woodford counties. This helped to increase that carryover amount. Federal funds were used to support the local units. Bobbie managed those funds very meticulously.

- University funding is fickle. Funds can be taken back by the university. Part of the reason for the 18-month carryover request is that the university can't take that money back. State and university funding can be taken back, but by holding it at the unit level, the money is safe.
- A request for a rollcall vote on the \$425,000 levy request.
 - Thompson – no
 - Metsker – no
 - Soeldner – no
 - Sommer – yes
 - Schumacher – yes
 - Creswell – yes
 - Motion did not pass.
- Sommer talked about the \$275,000 mentioned by Metzker earlier, and the \$75,000 that was shorted by the board last year. He proposed a \$350,000 levy request be discussed. A motion was made by Thompson to propose the \$350,000 levy request. Schumacher seconded.
 - Rollcall vote was completed:
 - Thompson – yes
 - Metsker – yes
 - Sommer – yes
 - Soeldner – yes
 - Schumacher – yes
 - Creswell – yes
 - Motion passed.
- Lewis-Sibley will submit the email to Rodrigues for the \$350,000 levy request, to be presented to the full county board.

Adjourn

- Thompson motioned to adjourn. Soeldner seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Erin Estes, recorder