



**McLean County Extension Board Meeting**  
**McLean Extension Office**  
**April 27, 2022 at 3:00 p.m.**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order by Mike Sommer at 3:01 p.m.

**Introductions**

- Introductions were made:
  - McLean County Board Representatives Thompson, Metsker, and Soeldner were present. County staff Dreyer was present as well as First Assistant State’s Attorney Spanos.
  - Extension Council Representatives Sommer, Schroeder, and Schumacher were present. Extension staff Clore, Cole, Halihan, Estes and McCoy were present.

Sommer called for an amendment to be made to the agenda, due to three speakers requesting public comment at the McLean County Extension Board Meeting.

- Metsker noted that the public comment rules were never approved by the Extension County Board as a whole and she would not be voting for the amendment to allow for public comment. The public comment rules wording was discussed.
  - Estes noted that the public comment rules were in place for Extension Council and that the wording of the rules was based on the County Board’s own public comment request requirements.
- Schumacher motioned to amend the agenda. Schroeder seconded the motion. Three members agreed, and three members opposed. No public comment addition was made to the agenda. The speakers were dismissed.

**Review/Approve Meeting Minutes**

- Soeldner motioned to approve the April 19, 2021 minutes as presented, and Schumacher seconded.
  - Metsker asked for a discussion of the minutes. It was noted that there was too much detail listed in the minutes. Schroeder replied that he appreciated the detail since he was new to the board and a new council member. He felt it was appropriate information that allowed him to feel up-to-date on the topics at hand.
  - Four members were in favor of approving the minutes, and two opposed. Minutes were approved as submitted.

**Review of FY24 (CB tax year 2023) Levy Request for Extension**

- The following documents were provided to all members and staff in attendance (also sent by email):
  - FY23 Budget
  - FY19, FY20, FY21, FY22 Income/Expense Reports by County
  - FY21, FY22 (YTD July ‘21 – February ’22) Operating Ledger and Ag Cost Share Operating Ledger
- Questions regarding the fiscal documents:
  - In Gifts/Donations (303499) there is a negative number on the Budget Plan. Halihan noted that due to the estimated SNAP Lease amount needing to be updated (in a locked field), the amount was offset by a negative amount in the non-matchable revenue line item.
  - Discussion about donations to Extension vs. donations to the McLean County Extension Service Foundation. The foundation is a separate entity with its governing board that makes decisions about its funds.
  - The state match amount is an estimated budget item, which is 68% of the state match dollars.
    - Due to the lean state-county board match over the past several years, the allocation for these funds varies. Payments for state county board matches are caught up through FY21.

<b>McLean County Board Representatives</b>	
<i>Catherine Metsker</i>	P
<i>Jim Soeldner</i>	P
<i>Gerald Thompson</i>	P
<b>Extension Council Representatives</b>	
<i>Mike Sommer</i>	P
<i>Julie Schumacher</i>	P
<i>Rich Schroeder</i>	P
<b>McLean County Administrative Staff</b>	
<i>Cathy Dreyer</i>	P
<b>McLean County Extension Staff</b>	
<i>Bobbie Lewis-Sibley</i>	A
<i>Sara Halihan</i>	P
<i>Erin Estes</i>	P
<i>Harry Clore</i>	P
<i>Amanda Cole</i>	P
<i>Janice McCoy</i>	P



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- During the years when the funding was lacking, Smith-Lever funds were used to supplement expenses.
- If cash reserves were not utilized for Extension budgeting, there would have been several years where funding would have been very problematic. This is why the benchmark for reserves is 12-18 months.
  - All-Academic Staff has Notice of Rights in their contracts. This means that if funding was cut, Extension would still need to pay Academic Staff salaries for one year.
  - Lease agreements would still need to be paid (3-5 years).
  - It is mandated by the Federal Government that 4-H Programming is provided, funding or not.
  - In 2016-2017 when there was no state budget, 82% of funds were not being allocated to the unit.
- Thompson was concerned that the County Board was not made aware of Extension hiring or lease agreements before changes in Extension's budget plan.
- Metsker noted that she has not received one positive comment from constituents about programming and was concerned about the 4-H decline over time. Thompson stated that in a discussion with Mike Swartz from the McLean Farm Bureau, the programming for commercial agriculture has declined significantly.
  - Clore noted that yes, state-wide commercial agriculture programming needs review, but it is not a specific county problem. The model is different for Extension than it was previously for all program areas.
- County Board members addressed a concern of long-term volunteers being asked to leave Extension. This discussion topic is confidential and details could not be discussed.
- McCoy responded to the County Board's concerns:
  - This unit (including McLean) has some of the most innovative programs in the state.
  - COVID numbers have caused some areas to decrease across Illinois.
  - McLean has a robust community 4-H club engagement.
  - The County Board's feedback is appreciated. Extension works with a large number of volunteers, and they do have to abide by Extension policies. There are processes to dismiss volunteers if it comes to that.
  - Youth have become extremely involved in their communities and extracurricular activities. They are busy and 4-H has been seeking alternative ways to communicate and reach out to youth. This is not an isolated problem.
  - McLean County 4-H Member numbers:
    - 2064 members – 731 attending clubs and 1033 attending programming (unduplicated numbers)
    - 49 active clubs (including community, SPIN, and Cloverbud clubs)
      - Clubs have remained steady – some have dissolved and some are new
  - The 4-H program serves youth, evaluating the needs of the youth and their interests. This fluctuates over time and programs evolve.
- Other Programmatic Concerns raised by County Board Members:
  - 4-H Program fee questions arose. What kind of fees are charged to 4-H members?
    - McCoy discussed the 4-H fees were \$20 per youth, but that Livingston, McLean, and Woodford County waived the fees for the 2021-2022 4-H year.
    - Project manual distribution procedures state-wide have changed over the past year. There is no longer a warehouse to distribute the project manuals to counties. Previously, these were ordered by the county and this unit provided them free of charge to members.
      - With the change in distribution, project manuals are now requested in 4-H Online from national 4-H and shipped directly to households. Each manual can range from \$5-\$12.
    - Fee waivers are available and can be requested by all programs.



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- There is no fee to enter the 4-H Show. There are separate Jr. Fair entries that youth can enter, but they are not associated with 4-H.
- Metsker asked about a \$300 LEGO kit that was needed to participate in the 4-H Show. There was concern that there were other sets that were more affordable or could be substituted.
  - Schroeder discussed the robotics club at First Presbyterian and the amount of equipment 4-H has provided for their travel and competition needs.
- Livestock program concerns, including fundraising, and the decline in representation.
  - Cole was able to address some of these concerns:
    - Large animal entries have declined participation rates state-wide.
    - Many livestock groups have their fundraising opportunities to raise funds for livestock participation. These fundraising groups are not tied to Extension or 4-H. Due to a change in the IRS 501c3 regulations, Extension/4-H is no longer able to participate in auctions or raffles.
  - The 4-H Clover can not be used without written approval to use the logo, which is federally protected. If the logo was used in fundraising efforts, then the funds would have to be considered 4-H funds and could not be utilized the same way as the private fundraising group does.
- Volunteer Dismissal concerns, where volunteers are being given negative feedback and encouraged to leave. McCoy responded to these concerns with the following information:
  - Due to the confidential nature of volunteer information, details could not be discussed.
  - As with any organization, there is a screening process that is conducted before approving the volunteer. It is a rigorous process:
    - This included an application, national background check, sex offender check, references, and interviews.
    - The screening process is the same for all volunteers in Extension. As a youth-serving organization, these checks are critical for the safety of our members.
  - All Extension volunteers are required to sign a code of conduct. Failure to abide by this code can lead to consequences.
- Foundation concerns over the purchase of the Unity Community Center building and the operation of the McLean County Extension Service Foundation.
  - Clore responded that the foundation was a separate entity and that they leverage their funding as their board sees fit.
  - As far as Extension funding is concerned, the foundation's purchase of the building reduced the rent by \$2,000 per month.
  - Cole discussed the Unity after-school program and how important "dosage" is when youth participation is involved. The more involvement in programming, the more the youth can build relationships with the leaders and learn about the program. Another program where dosage plays a large role is SNAP-Ed programming.
- Concern about reaching rural communities.
  - 4-H Educator Katie Buckley talked to the board about how the educators are willing to go where they are let in. During COVID, many schools and organizations were not letting outside organizations come in to teach programming. Many virtual programs were done.
    - Outside of COVID, with 4-H alone, Katie is doing programs in Heyworth, Hudson, LeRoy, and others.
    - 134 classrooms participated in Chick It Out programming, hatching eggs.
      - Several homeschools also participated this year!
    - Extension Co-ops with Ag in the Classroom on several county program needs.
- Additional Unity Community Center Concerns.



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- Metsker requested the capacity that Unity has for youth programming. Estes noted that capacity was based on adults per student ratios for determining program participation.
- With \$3,000 rent per month, it was suggested that to be more cost-effective Unity could expand the services provided to all of McLean County.
- One year ago, the surplus/carryover amount was a large topic of conversation and the board had asked Extension to spend down that carryover.
  - Clore discussed state matching dollars, next year's budget, obligations to academic staff contracts, Department of Agriculture money, and the need for carryover for Extension to survive during a state budget crisis.
    - Academic Notice of Rights was explained in more detail.
- Metsker requested that no levy request be voted on and that another meeting be held to follow up on questions posed and to vote on the levy request at that time.
  - Requested information:
    - Cost per individual served by Extension in McLean County
    - Funding source breakdown
    - Bylaws for the McLean County Extension Board
  - At the next meeting, an agenda item should be added to vote on rules for public comment.
  - Budget presentations to the County Board take place in September. Budgets are due to the University for Extension by June/July.
  - Plans to set up a date/time for the next meeting will be communicated by email between Lewis-Sibley and Dreyer. A request to have the next meeting at the McLean County Government Center was made.

**Adjourn**

- Metsker motioned to adjourn. Schumacher seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Erin Estes, recorder