



**McLean County Extension Board Meeting
McLean County Government Center
August 1, 2022 at 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes**

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by Mike Sommer at 3:00 p.m.

Public Comments

- No public comment requests were made.
- Public comment rules were discussed.
 - Metsker noted that the rules were not discussed or voted on by the board.
 - Lewis-Sibley responded that the Extension Law (Section 7 b) states that the Extension Director should establish additional policies and procedures needed for the effective functioning of the county Extension board. This information was sent to the Assistant County Administrator before the meeting.

Introductions

- Introductions were made:
 - McLean County Board Representatives Thompson, Metsker, and Soeldner were present. County staff Taylor, Dreyer, and Grant were present.
 - Extension Council Representatives Meiner, Sommer, and Schumacher were present. Extension staff Lewis-Sibley, Halihan, Estes, and McCoy were present.

Review/Approve Meeting Minutes

- Meiner motioned to approve the April 27, 2022 meeting minutes as they were submitted. Schumacher seconded. All in favor. Minutes approved.

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

- The levy request of \$300,000 was submitted to the board for consideration on April 5, 2022.
- Lewis-Sibley requested to give an update and answer questions previously asked of the board in the April meeting:
 - Due to a personal health crisis, Lewis-Sibley was unable to attend the last meeting. She has been updated by staff and read over the minutes.
 - The purpose of the County Extension Board, according to Extension Law, is solely fiduciary. The County Extension Board is to review the annual budget and determine the necessary funds needed to provide educational programming for adults and youth in the community.
 - A brief history of levy amounts was discussed:
 - During Lewis-Sibley’s tenure at Extension, the levy stayed between \$503,370 - \$538,000 for eight years.
 - At the May 2019 County Extension Board meeting, a discussion began about the carryover held in the Livingston, McLean, and Woodford County unit. Harry Clore, the Associate Director of the Extension Business Office, required that units keep an 18-month carryover. This carryover amount was a point of contention with the County Board members. Although they believed it was excessive, Extension relies on those carryover funds in times of need. When the state didn’t have a budget, these funds were what kept Extension afloat. During this May 2019 meeting, the levy was reduced to \$375,000 and was told that this would be for one year only.
 - Extension understands the concern of carryover, which is why the levy request has remained at \$300,000.
 - As of June 30, 2022, the unit funds are at \$2,702,540.53, of which \$1,254,521.07 are solely McLean County’s funds. The full 18-month carryover would be \$2.8 million for the three-county unit.

McLean County Board Representatives	
<i>Catherine Metsker</i>	P
<i>Jim Soeldner</i>	P
<i>Gerald Thompson</i>	P
Extension Council Representatives	
<i>Pam Meiner</i>	P
<i>Mike Sommer</i>	P
<i>Julie Schumacher</i>	P
McLean County Administrative Staff	
<i>Cathy Dreyer</i>	P
<i>Tony Grant</i>	P
<i>Cassy Taylor</i>	P
McLean County Extension Staff	
<i>Bobbie Lewis-Sibley</i>	P
<i>Sara Halihan</i>	P
<i>Erin Estes</i>	P
<i>Janice McCoy</i>	P



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- Like most businesses lately, there has been a worker shortage. Extension has been understaffed and unable to utilize the carryover amount as had initially been planned. Once the full staff is in place, those carryover funds will decrease.
- Programming is starting to bounce back after a two-year pandemic. With the upcoming McLean County 4-H Show, Lewis-Sibley reported that project numbers are up and compare to pre-COVID numbers.
- Thompson asked about the previous weekend's fair setup and who helped with that. Lewis-Sibley responded that staff and volunteers completed the setup the previous Saturday.
- Thompson discussed volunteer dismissals. McCoy responded that there had only been a total of three volunteer disengagements in the 11 years Lewis-Sibley has worked with Extension. Some volunteers have left the program on their own.
- Thompson asked how many Extension Council Meetings were held last year. Lewis-Sibley shared that 3-4 meetings were held and stated that the meeting dates, agendas, and minutes can all be found on the Extension website. When Thompson asked why Lewis-Sibley did not know an exact number of meetings held, she stated again 3-4, but if he wanted to know exactly she could get him that number. Lewis-Sibley asked if he could recall how many meetings he had last year and he gave an approximate number of 68.
- A discussion started about the reach Extension has on the community:
 - McLean 4-H – 883 youth
 - Master Gardener volunteers – 125
 - Master Naturalist volunteers – 67, with new volunteer training starting soon.
 - An explanation about secondary reach was given. An example was given that the Nutrition and Wellness Educator may reach 60 plus adults in their Certified Food Protection Managers training, but when Unit 5 food service staff take that class, the reach goes beyond to all Unit 5 students. Through that class, there is a significant reduction in foodborne illness, etc. from improper handling.
- Soeldner asked about 4-H Alumni and the McLean Foundation. Lewis-Sibley responded:
 - The foundation is a private 501c3 organization and is a separate entity. The 8-member board consists of Extension community supporters and volunteers.
 - There is currently no active alumni group associated with 4-H in McLean County.
- Soeldner asked about the gains and losses McLean Extension had since FY17.
 - 2022 – gain of \$710,000
 - 2021 – loss of \$174,000
 - 2020 – gain of \$961,000
 - 2019 – loss of \$367,000
 - 2018 – gain of \$822,000
- Meiner discussed her background and connection to Extension. With the recent pandemic, many lives were changed. Extension provided programming to both children and adults, keeping them active and engaged. She learned how valuable Extension was and was thankful Extension was able to provide these programs during such a time.
- Metsker doesn't disagree that having a fund balance is important, but \$2.7 million is too much. County Board members have asked for Extension to spend down these funds over several years. She noted that Extension has plenty of money and will not support a \$300,000 request. At most, she believes an 8-12 month carryover should be the maximum amount, making sure that salaries and contracts are provided for.
 - McCoy responded that part of the increase of funds this year is that the County Board Matching payments from the state came in during this fiscal year. The state is now caught up to FY22 payments. In previous years, they have lagged behind. It may be seen as a surplus, but some of that money is backpay that didn't show up in prior fiscal years.
- McCoy pointed out that if a lower levy amount was decided upon, additional county match dollars would also be lost for program support for the community. The average county match is 60%.



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- Sommer talked about a large number of staff openings over the past few years, due to the worker shortages. Those salaries have not had to be paid, which ends up being extra funds unused. As Extension can hire and pay those salaries, the funds would not be building up.
 - Lewis-Sibley notes that there was just under 30 staff currently, with two vacant positions.
 - All staff salaries and new positions are approved by the university.
- Thompson discussed the decline in Ag Literacy in McLean County. Lewis-Sibley stated that the McLean County Farm Bureau has been in charge of that program since 2013. Lewis-Sibley talked briefly about the Ag in the Classroom funding not being enough to sustain the program, so it was handed over to the McLean County Farm Bureau.
- Schumacher asked that if the board members were not looking to approve the \$300,000 in levy amount, what the funds would be used for instead?
 - Metsker responded that they are not asking to cut funding. They are asking Extension to spend down their carryover. She notes that the money is available and that Extension is choosing not to spend it and hold onto the reserve. She is not saying that programming is not good, but that the money needs to be spent down, and then there can be a discussion about a less reduced levy amount.
 - Soeldner stated that even with the reduced funding amount from \$300,000 to \$30,000, and spending continues as in previous years, the surplus amount will decrease but still be over \$2 million. This should not impact programming.
 - Metsker reiterated that this fund cut should not impact programming unless the staff decides to cut programming.
 - Soeldner noted that these funds should be discussed yearly and adjusted accordingly.
- Soeldner motioned to approve the levy request of \$30,000 (10% of the previous levy). Metsker seconded the motion.
 - Discussion:
 - Thompson agreed that he could not ask taxpayers to fund Extension with so much in carryover. He has heard from concerned volunteers about the direction of programming and asking leaders to step aside. He noted that a successful company starts with leadership.
 - McCoy interjected, stating that she has spoken with some disgruntled people who have reached out to campus staff. Campus staff has offered remediation, giving them at least three chances, but those people have declined or not responded to the offers.
 - In the years Lewis-Sibley has been with Extension, only three volunteers have been disengaged. She is afraid the board members are only listening to one side of the story, which can be problematic.
 - She posed the question that if there was a significant issue, why board members haven't reached out to Lewis-Sibley directly?
 - Thomson stated he had a conversation with Lewis-Sibley last year. Lewis-Sibley shared it was because she called him and it was about Commercial Agriculture.
 - Metsker discussed a 4-H Club Leader who had problems getting grants, stating that the leadership wouldn't sign a grant and that this had happened to more than one club.
 - Lewis-Sibley noted that she had never declined a grant and neither has the 4-H Educator.
 - Metsker wanted to reiterate that this fund decrease should not be a reason to stop having programming, and it is not that the board members don't support 4-H or Unity. This is directly in response to the \$2.7 million in reserve.
 - Thompson stated that Cooperative Extension was not like this 20 years ago. People need to stop fighting and get to the real issues.
 - In response to the proposed \$30,000 levy request, all voted in favor. The \$30,000 levy request will be brought to the full county board for approval.



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Adjourn

- Thompson motioned to adjourn. Soeldner seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Erin Estes, recorder

DRAFT