#### University of Illinois

#### Extension

#### Unit #9 – Grundy, Kankakee, & Will Counties Unit Council

#### **Meeting Minutes**

#### June 22, 2022

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Michele Crawford. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

In attendance: Dale Bowman, Isaac Brockman, Willene Buffett, Michele Crawford, Victoria Lundh, Sally Skoff, Jennifer Wick, Kim Yohnka.

#### Additions to the Agenda

None. No agenda.

### Minutes of the March 31, 2022 Meeting

The minutes of the March 31, 2022 meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Victoria Lundh and seconded by Jennifer Wick.

#### **Updates from Willene Buffett**

#### A. Unit 9 Director

As shared earlier, Megan Walsh discontinued her employment as Director of University of Illinois Extension Unit 9. Willene shared that there is urgency in filling this position. The posting will be shared soon. University of Illinois Extension asks for the Council's help in promoting the opening. This is necessary, as Extension has had is having challenges filling all positions within Extension.

## B. Small Farms and Food Systems

Willene shared that Extension has tried twice to fill the Small Farms and Food Systems position, previously held by James Theuri. Extension will post this position and try to fill it again. It was added that a stakeholder of Unit 9 asked about repositioning this position

as one that focuses on commercial agriculture, rather than local food and agriculture/small systems. Willene shared that this idea was shared with University of Illinois Extension at the state level. Dale Bowman shared that James's work is missed. Victoria said that she has reached out to many people about the position. She shared that filling a position related to commercial agriculture and horticulture is challenging because there are not many people in this area that pursue a master's degree.

#### C. Consumer Finance Educator

This multi-unit position has been open and has remained unfilled. This position serves multiple units in northern Illinois.

#### **Introductions**

A. Michele asked for introductions from the total group. Michele is currently a Community Health Educator, serving Cook County. Currently, Michele is also serving as the Interim Director of Unit 9. Willene Buffett has worked in Extension for multiple decades, including twenty years as Director of the Extension Unit in Cook County. Currently, Willene is serving as the Interim Regional Director, overseeing Unit 9 and other Units. The Council members introduced themselves once again.

## **Updates from Michele Crawford**

#### A. Funding

There was one funding update since the last meeting. United Way of Will County approved funds for Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Michele updated Unit 9 financial information for acceptance of these funds. United Way of Will County notified Unit 9 that the partnership funds no longer have to be approved by the board and signed by the Chair and Treasurer of the board. This will make the process simpler.

#### B. Programming

In Will County, Nancy has been working on the Kids in Nature programming. There are community workers and 4-H staff helping with this program. Grundy County just held its Murder Mystery Camp. Additionally, the 4-H side of Extension is busy with fair preparation, organizing things like trophies, ribbons, and judges. There have been weekly planning meetings for the fairs.

#### C. Positions

In the Kankakee County office, there has been a person hired for full-time office support. Olivia will start July 5. There will be training for this position. The Family and Consumer Sciences position application deadline has been extended. There have not been enough qualified applicants. Michele is hoping to conduct interviews in July, as the application window closes tomorrow, July 23. Further, a SNAP Ed position remains open.

#### **Local Program Reports – Educators**

A. Michele did not invite the Educators to this meeting, as the goal was for the new, yet interim leadership to meet the Council, and vice versa.

#### Extra

Michele asked the group to share extra talking points that Council typically covers in its meetings.

- A. Jennifer Wick noted that she will not be returning to Council next year, because of term limits. Michele thanked her for her service and assured her that she will be in contact to retain her partnership as a leader in the community and as an employee with Catholic Charities. There needs to be a replacement for Jennifer. This is the only expiring term this year.
- B. Jennifer Wick brought up the Foundation Reports. Michele had only heard from Will County foundation. This main focus of this foundation has been the food stand. It has needed to be torn down and reconstructed. Due to cost, full replacement of the food stand is challenging. Alternative options, like a food truck or trailer, have risen to the top as replacement options. Victoria Lundh then spoke of the drawdown, which is a partnership between Grundy County Friends and Grundy County Farm Bureau Foundation. The proceeds are split 50/50. That process will happen soon. The drawdown was held in April. It was extremely successful. There were the most gross funds ever for the event, but costs were up, which means it was not the top net funds, but still extremely successful.
- C. Willene asked to know who was on the audit committee. These members will need to be identified.

# **Future Meetings**

The September meeting is planned to take place in-person. Michele will share details as the location, date, and time are established.

## Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Michele Crawford at 7:14 p.m.