

Carroll, Lee & Whiteside Counties

Extension Council

2/12/2024

MINUTES

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Gordon Kelm. Council members engaged in group introductions.

Attendance: Marcia Zell, Deeann Kramer, Lee Reese, Elieen Piper, Karen Stenzel, Cilvia Rivera, Gordon Kelm, Daniel Swihart, Karla Belzer, Bruce Black, Kara Schweitzer, Martha Ebbesmeyer, Danielle Gapinski, Mike Delany

Public Comment: None.

Meeting minutes: Minutes from previous meetings in November 2023 were not available. Minutes will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting.

Extension mission and vision: Review of Extension mission and vision statements. Both statements are undergoing a process of revision in strategic planning.

Special Guest: Megan Diss presented a comprehensive update on the current activities of the commercial ag team. She began by introducing herself and outlining the ongoing work in the field. Megan highlighted her role, focusing particularly on programming for the western region. This includes upcoming initiatives such as a drone program slated for late 2024, which will cover licensing and the practical use of drones in agriculture. Additionally, she mentioned a Climate Mitigation Workshop scheduled for late summer, specifically in August.

Another significant effort mentioned was the series of farm strolls planned, offering tours of farms in various counties. The goal here is to observe effective practices and tap into niche markets. Megan emphasized the importance of collaboration, noting that if there are specific community needs, Karla should be informed so she can coordinate with Megan to address those needs effectively.

During the discussion, several questions arose. One was about the restoration of a past research station. Another query touched on Extension's involvement in carbon credits and sequestration activities. Megan mentioned ongoing research within the regenerative agriculture program on campus, which includes her own upcoming research at Monmouth. This interdisciplinary approach underscores the team's commitment to addressing diverse agricultural challenges comprehensively.

Reports:

Financial Report: Karla Belzer provided the financial report sharing that county budgets have been approved with a slight decrease in Lee County.

Family Life Report: Kara Schweitzer mentioned that there's been a growing interest in brain health lately. She also noted that there's upcoming CDSMP training and that they're currently developing a tip sheet specifically for activity directors. This sheet aims to help keep rural aging individuals engaged and active.

Horticulture Report: Bruce Black reported that the Ready Set Grow event is scheduled for March 23rd, featuring a half-day session with a keynote speaker and breakout sessions. It will take place at Loveland in Dixon. The agricultural program is progressing positively, with ongoing classes and notable progress in the greenhouse. The classes have been running for a month now. Photos of the greenhouse learning lab were shared, highlighting various hydroponic setups. Technical expertise is being utilized to manage and coordinate activities within the greenhouse effectively.

4-H Report: Martha Ebbesmeyer highlighted the ongoing activities of the Career Spin Club, which is currently meeting virtually. They're also planning a career-focused road trip as a pathway event. In Lee and Whiteside, preparations are underway to kick off an embryology program across 25 classrooms involving 450 students. Teachers are actively participating in continuing education to enhance their skills. The program not only develops scientific skills but also teaches life skills such as teamwork, respecting differences, sharing, and concern for others. Additionally, there's a high-level science project with numerous variables in progress. At Milledgeville Chadwick School, a high school-level food challenge is set to begin at the end of February, with hopes of taking a team to the state-level competition.

Danielle Gapinski discussed various initiatives related to mindfulness and social-emotional learning programs. These include "Mindful Me" and "Mindful Mechanics," targeting students from kindergarten to 2nd grade and teenagers, respectively, with a total outreach of 393 students. Additionally, she mentioned the "Teen Turf" program in Amboy and Sauk as part of the community education efforts, along with "The Vibe" program in Sterling. The "Get Up and Dance" curricula have been completed in Sterling and are ongoing.

There's also a virtual graphic design club for youth statewide, which saw rapid registration filling up within two weeks. Due to demand, 20 more spots were added, catering to ages 8-18. The club covers basic graphic design using Canva, as well as topics like color theory, typography, and more.

Looking ahead, there are plans for a "Forensic Frenzy" CSI camp in collaboration with ISP partners during Sauk's summer college for kids' session. These diverse programs reflect a comprehensive approach to education and engagement across different age groups and interests.

Community and Economic Development Report: Mike Delany discussed the Hometown Leaders program in Lee County, which is aimed at connecting high school youth with county government and leaders. This program, successfully piloted last year in Boone County with an excellent response, is now being made available in Lee County for 2024. Additionally, there's a poverty simulation scheduled in Rock Falls on Friday.

Mike also mentioned an ACTion grant involving Ogle, Whiteside, Lee, and Carroll counties, where they've partnered with other agencies. Moreover, there have been LGE webinars focused on marketing rural tourism, with recent work done in Savanna. These initiatives highlight efforts to engage youth, address community needs, and promote rural areas effectively.

New Business:

Office hours update: Karla Belzer shared with the council that the office will be altering open hours to better serve the public. Office hours will be:

- Monday – by appointment only
- Tuesday-Thursday – 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Friday – 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

This change is being made to better serve the public. The office will still be open and staff will be working in the office on Mondays, there just will not be an office support staff available.

FCS Update: Karla Belzer provided a handout to the council regarding the FCS team’s statewide impact.

Discussion on community needs and efforts to target underserved audiences: Council members engaged in discussion on local food pantries and how they can become involved with the SNAP-Ed program. Members specifically noted that the Tampico food pantry should be a partner. Conversation regarding challenges around food pantry service and how Extension could help address ongoing needs.

Other Business:

ESAC: Mark Ward gave a report on the recent Extension Statewide Advisory Council meeting including sharing information about campus tours.

Remaining 2024 Meeting Dates: Remaining council meeting dates for 2024 were reviewed: Monday 4/15, Monday 9/16, and Monday 12/2.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:27 p.m. made by Silvia Rivera, seconded by Karen Stenzel. No further discussion. Motion carried.