

Unit 18 – Christian, Jersey, Macoupin and Montgomery Counties

Thursday, June 12, 2025

Jersey County Office, 201 West Exchange, Jerseyville, IL

Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Connor Ashlock, Mike Cross, Mark Dugger, Anna Fessler, Caiden Freeland, Caleb Grover, Cyndy Howard, Vicki Joiner, Dennis Rahe, Jessica Jaffry (staff), Sara Marten (staff), Lisa Peterson (staff)

Call to Order – Vicki called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

Approval of Minutes – Minutes from March 20, 2025, were presented to the Unit 18 Extension Council Board. With no additions or corrections proposed, a motion was made by Connor Ashlock to approve the March 20, 2025, minutes and seconded by Anna Fessler. Motion passed by consent.

Fiscal Reports – Fiscal reports were presented. The 2024 – 2025 Fiscal Year ends on June 30, 2025. The Trust Financial Report is slightly over budget, but this is no cause for concern. The Revolving Financial Report was also presented to the Unit 18 Extension Council Board. Sales in April and May were profitable for the University of Illinois Extension Unit 18.

Unit Plan of Work – A discussion was facilitated by Jessica Jaffry and Lisa Peterson regarding *local needs assessment* pertinent to Unit 18. Two questions were asked of the Unit 18 Extension Council Board Members:

Question 1. What programs or classes are you most familiar with in Extension?

Question 2. What do you see as the most pressing issues in your community?

Regarding question one, members of the Unit 18 Extension Council Board stated that they are generally more familiar with Nutrition and Wellness, Master Gardeners, and the 4-H Program. Other programs mentioned included Agricultural Literacy and Economic Development. It was stated that Unit 18 lacks in sufficient agricultural programming. Pesticide classes and agronomy classes have not been taught in Unit 18 for quite some time. Anna suggested implementing a farm implement safety course. Mark stated that the Extension is not prioritized as a resource for agricultural programming. Instead, producers of agricultural products are more likely to reach out to agricultural business marketed towards targeted audience. Unit 18 must work to successfully re-establish themselves as a viable resource to agricultural clientele.

Regarding question two, it was stated that becoming a Master Gardener is potentially daunting and may lead some prospective members to turn away. Budgetary compression was also suggested as a pressing issue in not just Unit 18, but in the State of Illinois as a larger whole. While the cost of living has increased, the value of the dollar has inversely decreased. This has left entities, such as Unit 18, in a predicament where donations are becoming more necessary for sustainable programming. The Unit 18 Extension Council concurred on the importance of genuine expressed appreciation, especially from children benefitting from the generous monetary donations and volunteer hours exerted by county fair judges. Another recurring problem throughout Unit 18 is homelessness and gambling addictions. Gambling is not sustainable, especially without sufficient income. To combat the phenomenon of gambling, the Unit 18 Extension could consider establishing a “gambling anonymous” (or comparable) program.

Unit Updates

STAFFING UPDATES – Current 4-H Extension Program Coordinator position is currently open. This position will cover Christian County and Montgomery County. Hoping to have an offer to a candidate in the next week or so.

Summer staff hires for Unit 18 Extension include Ava Pulley, Shea Murray, Kaylee Gerlach, Syndey Poleon, and Grace King.

2025 4-H SHOW SEASON – Jessica reported that Macoupin County wrapped up last week, with one additional show in late June. Montgomery County shows start next week. Jersey County fair takes place in early July and Christian in mid-July. So far, everything has ran smoothly and the unit has combined some of the smaller shows to maximize resources.

OTHER ITEMS – A proposed budget bill in Congress will cut SNAP-Ed program funding. Strategic planning involves requesting up to 50% funding from the University of Illinois campus, as well as reworking programming to fit within new guidelines. Council members are encouraged to contact legislators to support the program and instating funds.

Old Business

COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD – STATUS OF AWARD PRESENATATIONS – Macoupin County Award has been delivered. Christian County, Jersey County, and Montgomery County winners will be officially awarded soon.

New Business

FY26 UNIT BUDGET – The FY26 budget is largely similar to the FY25 budget. Some funding has been shifted to accommodate milage rates for employees traveling between counties for different Extension programs.

PROGRAM ACCESSIBILITY – DIGITAL ACCESSABILITY REQUIREMENTS & PROGRAM ACCOMMODATIONS – While these accommodations are largely being practiced, further attention will be aimed at ensuring compliance of state- and federal-level accommodation policies. This may include major changes on the University of Illinois Extension webpages.

STAFF PROGRAM REPORTS – Lisa and Jessica gave verbal reports on past and upcoming programs. Andrew Holsinger submitted a written report. Sara shared a report for Valerie Belusko.

The next council meeting will take place on Thursday, October 16, 2025. The meeting will be hosted at the Macoupin County Extension Office.

With no further business, a motion was made by Anna Fessler to adjourn the June 12, 2025, meeting and seconded by Connor Ashlock. Motion passed by consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 P.M.

DRAFT