

Unit 27 Council Meeting  
December 15, 2021  
11:00a.m. – 1:00 pm  
In-person and ZOOM meeting

**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order by Phyllis Webb at 11:08 a.m. Phyllis opened the meeting by telling the emotional history of the song “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” and Natalie Dougherty sang the song for the lyrics to be heard and a Merry Christmas given to all in attendance.

Council members present:

Alexander/Pulaski	Johnson	Massac	Union
Derek Eurales Josie Eason	Phyllis Webb Natalie Dougherty Jonathan Voelz	Cheryl Vanderford Megan Henderson	

Staff present: County Director Johnson, Sarita Sawyer, Monica Meyer, Kimberly Rohling, Tami Crest, Erin Garrett, Amy Shuck, Shannon Pulliam, John Shadowens.

Meeting minutes from September 29, 2021, were reviewed. Motion made by Chery Vanderford and seconded by Jonathan Voelz to approve prior minutes. Motion carried.

- Council Business - Campus and Unit holidays were reviewed – Offices will be closed from December 24 to January 5.
- County Extension Director Report  
Plan of Work / New issues or concerns in community – POW is submitted and field of work is focused on Health, Food, Economy and Environment.

COVID-19 effects discussed toward programming; face-to-face presence is going on with some virtual programs continuing. Staff meets each Monday by ZOOM for a weekly briefing.

Budget – balance reviewed with no concerns addressed. County Director Johnson advised that campus has gifted each Unit \$500 for “staff health and wellness”. Unit 27 will use toward a staff retreat/lunch/meeting on December 17.

Vacancies – SNAP-Ed EPC position still vacant, waiting on approval to hire.

New staff – John Shadowens – CED Educator working on HEAT grant in Units 24 and 27.

Civil Rights and efforts to reach underserved audiences – Staff continue to reach underserved audiences and promote programs. Monica Meyer gives a monthly reminder on civil rights efforts and reporting to focus on to stay up to date.

General updates (Facilities, vacancies, and other) – All minor issues; phone/internet issues in Massac office; windows/paint/flooring updates needed in P/A office; electrical outlet issue in Union Co., which is under new ownership; Johnson Co. and Shawnee College offices report no issues.

Audit – fiscal audit was completed in November 2021 with very minor findings reported. All matters were easily resolved.

Unit activities include HEAT project (John Shadowens); Create Bridges, a Walmart grant (Susan Odum); AmeriCorps VISTA with Vienna High School and expanding to Egyptian school in March 2022; MY PI Illinois (SIH grant) begins at Vienna High School in spring, Massac will not participate this year as their new nursing instructor is acclimating to the position.

- Unit Reports
  - ANR Environment and Energy Stewardship – Erin Garrett, Kimberly Rohling

2021 Impacts = 645.5 Master Naturalist volunteer hours valued at \$18,422; 378.5 Master Gardener volunteer hours valued at \$10,802; 1,689 lbs of refuse collected at “Trash Blasts”; 1,715 lbs of invasive species removed; 3,851 autumn olives trees removed from Garden of the Gods; 1,511 trees and 200 pollinator plants planted at Cypress Creek for restoration; 13,016 acorn and pecan seeds collected for IDNR restoration.

Kim has created a monthly book club with 11 volunteers participating.

Cairo Pilot Garden - 681.2 lbs of produce grown and donated with 238 volunteer hours valued at \$6,792. This is a first-year garden with no spring plants. Growing/collections began in June. This garden is set up for drip irrigation and watering next year. 8 different sponsors made this garden possible.

Metropolis Plant a Row, Watch COPE Grow garden – huge thank you to Max Russell! Garden site is changing in 2022 to a more visible location. 352.3 lbs of produce grown and donated with 39 hours of volunteer time valued at \$1,113.

Nature Programming Needs Assessment – In an effort to reengage local communities and include underserved audiences, needs assessment postcards/surveys were sent to 2,431 households, focusing on low-income, African American, and Hispanic households. Press releases were also sent out to increase survey feedback and council members were tasked with helping Extension to distribute surveys.

Master Naturalist advertisement are out for spring training. Currently there are 4 registered and 8 are needed to make the class happen.

o John Shadowens, joining University of Illinois Extension as a visiting community and economic development educator to work on food access in the southernmost 11 counties as part of the snap education HEAT (Health Equity Achieved Together) project. Grant project will focus on advocacy, resource development, ensuring supply chain, increasing food access points and collaboration. Objectives are to established food access points (hopefully a grocery store) in Gallatin County in Cairo. Cairo has not had a grocery store since 2015 and residents must drive 32+ miles to the nearest supermarket. Gallatin Co. residents must drive 16+ miles to a supermarket. The options for both communities will lead them out of state to spend their dollars creating more problems by letting income sources leave their town, county, and state.

John highlighted population loss trends in Cairo and Gallatin Co. over the last century and the correlating food insecurity rates. 16% of Alexander Co. residents are food insecure residents and 70% live under the SNAP threshold. 15.9% of Gallatin Co. residents are food insecure and 65% live under the SNAP threshold. Grant target area is designated by USDA as low income and low food access areas.

John is working with partners to expand food pantry and soup kitchen availability as a short term solution with a long-term goal of bringing sustainable local shopping and access to fresh food for residents to stimulate economic growth and to help maintain population and residency.

Dates and Times of future council meetings

- February 16, 2022 @ Vienna – 11am-1pm
- May 18, 2022 @ Vienna - 11am-1pm

Motion to adjourn made by Jonathon Voelz and seconded by Cheryl Vanderford. No objections, meeting adjourned at 12:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Monica Meyer

Unit 27 - Office Support Associate

For Unit 27 Unit Council secretary, Chris Boyd