



**Present:**

**Council Members:** Janice Blanchette, Martha Brown, Sal Garza, Patsy Hirsch, Ruby Lingle, Lee Maki, Brian Mueller, Brittney Muschetto, Kathleen Piatt, Carolina Schottland, Reginald Summerrise, Mark Ward, Tim Wells, Jeff White, Linda White

**Extension Leadership Team:** Dennis Bowman, Harry Clore, Lisa Diaz, Tony Franklin, Ryan Hobson, James Hazzard, Samantha Koon, Jennifer McCaffrey, Shelly Nickols-Richardson, Deborah Seiler, Anne Silvis, Amanda Taylor, Joe Toman, Steve Wald, Beth Welbes

**Absent:**

Brent Schorfheide (ESAC), Julie Ritchey (Leadership Team)

**Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sal Garza at 9:00 a.m. with roll call taken and those present noted above. The October 12, 2020 meeting minutes were reviewed with a motion made by Lee Maki to accept as distributed. Motion was withheld. Patsy Hirsch requested an addition to her comments under open discussion indicating that the first sentence should include **and 24D**. Lee Maki motioned to accept the minutes with said amendment and the end of the sentence to read “direct result of dicamba and 24D.” Martha Brown seconded and the motion was approved.

**Public Comments**

Tony Franklin reported that there were no public comments.

**Directors Update** – Shelly Nickols-Richardson

Shelly thanked the group for serving on ESAC, their input, time, and for joining the Zoom meeting today. She proceeded by sharing the mission of Extension explaining that it is part of the land-grant institution and it is to be sure that scientific findings are taken across the state and translated into information that IL citizens can use to make well informed decisions. She stated that with the pandemic the intent is to continue delivering on the mission by continuing activities, services and programs but that the ways the knowledge has been provided has changed from in-person to meeting virtually via different platforms. She then talked about the Strategic pillars (4 pillars) and the systems approach (5 grand challenge areas) reminding everyone to keep in mind that when changes are made in one area it effects other areas as well.

- Efforts to address rural and metropolitan needs and issues. Shared that ESAC members represent differences across the state on how individuals are performing their practices, i.e., rural farming, sustainability in metropolitan areas, etc. Appreciates the advice to bring perspective from each of their respective areas.
- Traditional strengths – arts and agricultural arts but also want to incentivize innovations to tackle grand challenges in other contemporary areas of life and staying aware of what’s happening in the economies. Added new faculty to develop health and economy. Forced to address the pandemic - Extension was asked to assist in vaccination education.
- Aligning interests to general collaborative outcomes with high impact. When resources are brought around the table, more can be done rather than doing individually. Being more responsive to collaboratives and partnerships and seeking new opportunities to partner with state agencies.
- Has been working on Extension leadership and workforce stability. A cost savings method (Voluntary Separation Incentive Program - VSIP) which includes payout of 20 weeks of employment was rolled out by Campus in early to mid-December and was made available to 134 Extension employees. Approximately 27% of those eligible applied. Has worked with all units who have eligible employees and those units were asked to take a 10% cost savings to account for the program and in doing so the cost for the buy-out would be split. A plan has been submitted to the College, the College agreed, and plan has been submitted to Campus for review. Campus will determine the final outcome. Reaction will be the ability to replace the majority of the positions for those who will retire. Replacement salaries will be lowered to entry level.
  - 20 employees were told they were eligible for the program but then informed they were not due to source of funding. Working with those individuals to offer individual retirement program. Believes 20% will be consistent with the other groups. Has worked with the units and requested 10% cost savings for these positions as well.

There are units not impacted by either VSIP or the 20 noted above and those units will also be asked to look for cost savings measures for 2025-2026.

- Strategic hires have been made.
  - Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) and Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences (CHSAS) educators have been hired. These positions are designed for urban and metropolitan food and agriculture and helping students.
  - Working with Local Foods Small Farms Educator in Unit 22 on the JJK Initiative to have a Local Food Systems/Small Farms Educator in the JJK Foundation Center.
  - Assistant Director Government Affairs has been hired. This position serves as the governmental relations liaison to campus and provides a valuable service to Extension having eyes and ears on government actions both in state and federally.
  - Search is still open for the Assistant Dean/Program Leader Agriculture and Agribusiness.
  - Search continues for Natural Resources, Energy and Environment (NREE) Assistant Dean/Program Leader.
  - Integrated Health Disparities Assistant Dean/Program Leader begins March 1 with a goal and focus to work more closely with immigrant families, the Hispanic population and underserved populations on cultural awareness, and health related access for those underserved groups.
  - New faculty Extension Specialist positions within departments have been hired
    - Assistant Professor in Agricultural and Biological Engineering with leadership in occupational safety and health and assisting leadership in the AgrAbility program
    - Assistant Professor Specialty Crops Entomology with focus on insect/pest control in local food chains.
    - Assistant Professor Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences with expertise in human wildlife interaction, expert in bats.
    - Associate Professor, Food Science and Human Nutrition specializing in food safety in food supply chain in urban areas.
- Programming - We are wanting to be responsive to needs with programming. Both old services/programs will be conducted as well as new and emerging trends. The North Central Region (NCR) consists of 12 states of which Illinois is one. Program Leaders each have their respective program areas and Extension Directors also have a group where information is shared on challenges/opportunities and how to better solve grand challenge areas collectively. Two large topic areas are broadband and health. More work is also being done for mental health for farmers/producers. Vaccination education will be the next project to move forward, including COVID and other vaccines. Heart issues, aging, diabetes, etc. projects will continue. It is important to break down the barriers amongst various populations.
  - With broadband there is hopefully capacity to expand. James Hazzard, Steve Wald and Anne Silvis have been working on broadband opportunities and looking for ways to build capacity across Illinois.
- Extension programs are open to all. A program and plan for 4-H opportunity for all has been developed as part of National 4-H. Lisa has also developed a program specific to IL with a statement and action plan in place. The other program areas are working on statement and action plans as well. The message is to be that we are nondiscriminatory and are addressing the issues, acknowledging institutional elements and are working to change. The race matters webinar series was talked about and Shelly acknowledged those who worked on the series. Webinars are still available for viewing and access. Tony was thanked for working closely with the College on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEIA).
- Extension mission is to bring information, technology, and knowledge to anyone who wants to access it and offer opportunities through evidence-based information.

Brian Mueller asked about how many volunteers at U of I were being sought for the early retirement program. Shelly responded that the University wasn't looking for volunteers, rather criteria had to be met (at least 55 years of age with 7 years as a University employee). Personnel rosters were then reviewed to identify those eligible. Once known, information was sent to those individuals alerting them to eligibility. Those who wished to apply could. Extension Units have been worked with and the first cost savings will be FY 23-24 followed by additional savings in FY 25-26. 36 Extension employees applied with applications being reviewed and all were approved.

A follow-up question was asked as to whether the University set a target as to what they were looking to save in the budget by offering early retirement and if they don't get that number of volunteers will there be forced retirements to meet the budget constraints? Shelly responded that she doesn't know that the University set a target number. The program was presented as implementing a staff voluntary retirement program for a cost savings. There was no guidance on how much would be contributed. The program did not include faculty members rather it was limited to staff (Civil Service & Academic Professionals). Uncertain if there will be another program. Central Campus has not indicated there would be

another program. Extension needs to be prepared and ahead of any additional cost savings and needs to remain cognizant of workforce and operations. Positions will be refilled as feasible 85-90%. A few units decided to do some shifting with personnel. The target date for retirement is no later than June 30. Some have requested extended if approved by Campus.

### **Financial Update** – Harry Clore

- State of Illinois funding sources FY10 versus FY20 were shared. A 5% budget reduction through the Provost office is expected in 21, 22, 23 and a potential of 2.5% cash rescission. Some carry-over funds had to be given to meet the cash rescission. Chart comparisons of FY2010 versus FY2020 were shown. Cook County Initiative (CCI) and Youth Development funds for FY17, 18, 19, 20 have been received.
- Smith Lever funding is up as is SNAP-Ed.
- Local funding was down in 2010. Local matchable is \$13.9mil and declined approx. 20%. There was a large decline in 2012 but has been pretty level since that time.
- Showed comparison of 2010-2014-2020. In 2010 the reorganization took place with many changes being reflected.
  - 77 County Directors to 27
  - 5 Regions to 2
  - 12 Centers to 0
  - Focus was changed from county to multi-county
  - Academic professionals (educators/administrators) reduced from 349 to 237
  - AC Pros – educators, administrators 349 to 237
  - Civil Service 475 to 457
- Extension Program Coordinators (EPC) salaries were increased. In FY20 the turnover rate reduced to 11% thus retaining EPC force who work with volunteers. Community workers had a very high rate of turn-over. Jennifer McCaffrey is looking at ways to retain employees. Extension Specialists within departments now show in payroll with support of 15-17 taken from Extension dollars. Other expenses are down. 2010 was \$67 million, 2014 was \$62.5 million and 2020 was \$54million. These figures are w/o CBM. There is enough carry-over.
- Beth and Program Leaders were thanked for better ways to measure effectiveness. The 2010 outreach numbers were high. Methodologies used to measure contacts were not consistent.
- Funding by source was reviewed reflecting that funding is stable.
- 71.5% of expenses are payroll related. When pay is on local unit funds or GRF funds, benefits are not picked-up by Extension rather the State. The benefit rate for personnel fluctuates but is approximately 45% this year (retirement, health, etc.). Leases are second followed by supplies, travel, ICR, and other. Other costs of 11% include copiers, awards, and 4-H premiums.

Jeff White stated that it seems that with the happenings with the State and Federal funding that local and regional units are more fragile than the University and asked if that is what is happening and is there a plan to work on it? Harry responded indicating that local funding noted since 2012 is very stable. The Extension model is to review each individual unit due to funding nature. 2-3 years ahead are reviewed and units are assisted with support from central funds to be sure that there is at least 6 months of carry-over/operational funds in reserve. Tries to carry-over minimum of two years. Carolina Schottland noted that Federal funds, SNAP and Smith-Lever have increase and inquired if the reach of the department had been limited due to federal funding and if there is any loosening on the types of programs that can be offered. Harry responded that there are more restriction than before. There is some flexibility but not too much.

### **COVID-19 Updates** – Tony Franklin

Tony shared that Extension was well aligned to move to remote work. With travel and field work, employees already take their computers/tablets with them. The focus was on safety of staff and clients in each area. County Directors were granted permission to implement what they felt would work best within their unit. Campus has extra protocols in place that were not available in the field. Wanted to align with Campus but situations were different. Extension met once a week then moved to bi-weekly to be abreast of the happenings across the units. Worked with HR to be sure that those who needed special arrangements due to children at home, ADA needs, etc. were accommodated. Dean Kidwell also had weekly meetings. Testing was required for staff. PPE supplies and information was sent to the units. County Directors and Regional Directors worked together for transition to office. Some offices are hybrid due to social distancing. Flexibility was allowed across the state. Shelly's recommendation was to put together a return to office operations group. Staff had to adjust. Committees included three County Directors and Leadership Team members and they met periodically to be sure they were listening to survey feedback. August 15 was initial date for return to office. Date was set due to students returning to campus. Remote work agreements extended through November as things changed. Within the State the restore IL can be different depending upon location therein. Flexibility and local decision making

was critical. Followed CDC, IL Public Health and Campus guidelines. There were many pieces to coordinate. Throughout the journey, flexibility was a key term. Emotions were at a higher level. ESAC members were encouraged to reach out to their areas of influence thanking staff for the work they've been doing. With technology, youth were able to continue with their competitions. Hoping to have more face-to-face activities throughout the summer. Asking for assistance in monitoring behavior. We will follow the protocol, guidelines, etc. Amanda Taylor shared that a survey from Texas A&M was replicated to get a pulse on where staff are in regards to how the pandemic has effected them. Survey has been sent to get a sense on how as an organization employees can be better served. 150 responses have been received and another reminder will be sent on Wednesday. Results will be shared after the data has been analyzed.

### **Governmental Affairs Update** – Steve Wald

- Shared a visual of the network for Extension related to governmental relations and how the organization communications are shared with legislators and others. It is important to be sure that information flows and those working with elected officials are kept up-to-date. Governmental Affairs generally provides access to legislators and advocate directly by gathering data and other information.
- Shared information on changes of persons in the Senate, House and USDA.
- Reviewed Federal Issues – NIFA funding, Farm Bill, SNAP-Ed and Broadband
  - NIFA - large pools of funding flow through NIFA including Smith-Lever, competitive research funding and other capacity funds received by ACES. A letter is sent to each member of the IL delegation making the annual request for funding. The annual formal requests are made along with travel to DC to discuss the issues.
  - Farm Bill - A result of Extension 3.0 is to try to include technology and Extension in the Farm Bill. Integrating in next generation technology and high end digital applications into the Extension system. \$5million in funding for pilot program. Commercial ag first then all programs within Extension. A 17-page white paper was developed in the fall. Meetings were held with NIFA staff. White paper was well receive. Convening national conference to move the effort forward under the Farm Bill.
  - SNAP-Ed & INEP – Worked with Jennifer McCaffrey
  - Broadband – Participating as part of a national coalition led by Land O'Lakes – American Connection project. Through the coalition participating in direct advocacy with the President Last month a letter was sent to Biden and congressional leadership. Coalition is meeting weekly. Great opportunities on state and national coalition. Continuing to play an active role to support communication related to Broadband.
  - State Issues – IDOA funding, U of I funding, Service
    - IDOA - U of I has been preparing materials for funding of both U of I and Extension. University's overall leadership with role in COVID. Extension mission and presence in every county positioned well to provide information. Extension shows up and advocates for the University in letter writing.
    - Service – Extension programming and problem solving. CED team is working with county on coal-plant closure in talking about and becoming informed and working with local governments on policy changes. Recent meetings with Pritzger's staff.
    - Urban agriculture – interest in Chicago region and Extension is supporting by responding to legislative interest in the area and supporting IDOA in their efforts in supporting urban ag.
- Reviewed the Governmental Affairs calendar sharing important dates and topics.
- Shared various resources available, i.e., one page documents, talking points, IL Connection and the Teconomy report, to support in legislative advocacy on behalf of Extension

### **IT Update** – James Hazzard

- James shared an update on the happenings for IT for 2020. Many challenges and successes due to COVID. Many strategies/tactics will carry forward in 2021.
- Proud of the IT team comprised of 17 individuals.
- COVID 19 Impact – transitioned to work from home on March 13, 2020. IT operations saw an increase in help desk requests. Generally two people on help desk. For first two months, all hands were on board. Large uplift on hardware profile and switched all laptops. 260 plus laptops were distributed to staff, including EFNEP staff.
- 2020 successes –
  - Extension in good place as they are used to doing programming remotely, i.e., schools, homes, libraries, etc.so business continuity continues.
  - Major advance for on-line programming is Moodle which is used for learning management and where all courses will reside. Courses such as master gardener, PSEP, CCA, Newer Share, Livestock management, etc. are being moved. Additional courses will be added. Currently 32 courses with 5,500 students.

- New partnerships, new efforts in the Broadband realm – part of IL connection project, IL DCEO. Added parking lot wi-fi spots. Partnered in a grant that was funded – IL Ready broadband, digital navigator application in. Many opportunities. COVID demonstrated the digital divide.
- 4-H Virtual Fairs –IL put together training and developed all the 4-H virtual fairs and moved them on-line.
- Digital First – Part of Extension 3.0 that Extension needed to be digital first and presenting in a digital manner. On-line attracted many audiences for events and programs.
- 2020 Learning curve - learned that better training was needed. Trouble tickets that came in after moving to remote work showed that more training was needed. Worked to put together trainings to address the issues. Help desk numbers have reduced but still not enough. Needs better hardware and hardware support. Learned that individuals need better equipment, microphones, cameras, ability to do things at home, hotspots, broadband, etc. More wear and tear on laptops. Better warranties, better service from providers. Need keep an eye on supply chain and upstream providers. Supply chain disintegrated in early March.
- As a smaller organization relies on IT team for software managers. Made sure that those security issues, etc. for Zoom were okay and we were not locked out of public access. Close relationship with U of I campus service managers.
- Streamlining the service and applications catalog – need to remove older applications that are no longer supported and move them to off-line

#### POST COVID Strategy

- Improving basic and digital skills – being sure that staff know how to operate a laptop, etc. Being sure that staff are self-sufficient and know how to act as host, moderator, etc.
- Connected to clientele – wants to work with Com Team to build out pieces to be certain that they are connected with their audiences.
- Wants to support agile and mobile workforce. Learned that people work hard, even when at home. Want to provide all the support and tools needed to be successful. Mobile hotspots, equipment, cameras, ability to put together digital assets, post captioning, translational services. To have support needed long-term.
- 2021 priorities
  - Web team (EWM) – new website enhancements, i.e., language translations, package for newsletters and ability for educators to develop to pull content pieces from various areas into content.
  - Customer relations management implementation is an open source built for specific non-profits. Will work with Com/Marketing to get what they need then permissions/presentation for County Directors and Educators
  - 4-H website redesign – will be done – bring in additional pieces, 4-H Foundation, 4-H alumni, donations, etc.
  - IT Team - Mobile workforce support – continue to build.
  - Broadband efforts – digital navigator programming – building out parking lot wi-fi currently 12 hoping to increase to 30-40 by summer. Being sure they are advertised and get onto the maps.
  - Training – continue to build the program and culture around IT training. Stress that to be a modern workforce staff need to dedicate time to IT training.
- 2021 challenges
  - Shifts coming out of COVID-19. Uncertainties of workforce, transition to offices. Have to adjust to rapidly changing on-line education.
  - Systems and applications integration – cannot build from scratch – leaning on third party applications. Need to be able to pull data into data warehouses.
  - Staffing – Had full staff in March. Web app manager took another position in November. Interim web manager. Losing an individual to volunteer separation program. Staffing – in good spot to increase presence in IL education arena. On-line education coordinator position to produce more certificate programs. Reviewing staffing and open positions.

Jeff White asked about internal customers and said that it seems that nation-wide if training is needed in their area, it makes sense to do training in groups rather than individually and stated that it might help to tell local politicians what was done to serve the community but to also tell community that training is available on the local websites of the unit. He has been hearing about the broadband initiative and is interested to know where it is going and how rapidly. James responded that training is considered for the public and that the University also offers. He will work with Samantha to see where they should be placed on-line. As far as Broadband, the digital navigator program is intended to work on broadband equity issues but also adoption and use of assets such as Zoom and going out to the public and training on how to use it and actually bringing people on-line. Additionally, the IL Ready grant was awarded for the East Central region. Initiatives have been going on for awhile, both state and federal. Learned in a meeting two weeks ago that money has

been spent in the program and no progress has been made. IL programs are targeted specifically with digital equity but also infrastructure. IL broadband is for wired/fiber infrastructure as written into the grant. Elon Musk will roll out to lower latitudes soon. Q4 2021 will be in beta for IL. James feels the market will dictate.

### **Communications Report** – Samantha Koon

- Highlighted communication team goals for the upcoming year adding that the team supports events, develops facts sheets, creates video content, etc. Looking at places where extra man power and resources can be provided above and beyond where the field is requesting assistance.
  - Working to update Extension’s collection of websites. 18 months ago Extension’s main website was updated. Training webinar series has been provided on Wednesday mornings and that will continue – best practice guides. Legal obligations, compliance issues.
  - Test and build new ways to communicate with people. Reviewing how people are getting information and where they are seeking information. Will focus on testing new strategies and provide guidance on how employment of information will be done at the unit level.
  - Written plans/strategies. Have been holding conversations on how to approach work in the coming year.
- Digital footprint – main Extension website, unit and centers have their own sites within our sites. Extension Website Manager (EWM) was relaunched in 2019 and have been working to update approx. 40 websites. Will be looking at how to invest in the top websites that receive the most traffic. Google analytics is being used to track how the sites are being used. The next set is state social media. Looking at ways to better measure impact.
- There was high interest for our content during COVID-19. Websites specifically provided information related to COVID thus a spike in the increased visibility on the sites. Question is how to retain folks who visited the first time. FB state account – COVID months increases. Post COVID still performing better in content views. 2020 to 2019 comparison – more than double with impressions. When visiting with peers on campus, Extension rates in the top five campus entities. Social media is in the top three. Visibility to partners on campus has increased.
- Best practice training. Continuing to build out the communications best practice guides. Training every Wednesday morning. Have recently had interest from external folks to participate in trainings as well as some on-campus. Looking to see how to leverage the work to continue to help folks be smarter about the topics and raise the awareness of IL Extension as the go-to for these resource
- Measuring digital footprint – keyhole system will help collectively across all websites which received 13 million visits in 2020. Main extension social media in excess of 200 million impressions. Anticipating 400-500 million.
- Social media strategy – being strategic in using assets most effectively. Evaluating new channels to determine if new social channels fit with our brand, i.e., tick-tock. Asking field staff to let them know what they are interested in using.
- Added three new full-time positions with and hoping to fill in 4-6 months to complete the staffing plan established two years ago. Partnership goals are to help connect content with audiences. Want to help those educators with good content expertise but not naturally familiar with marketing.

Kathleen Piatt said there was lots of energy coming from the CommIT presentations and that it was an active realm in the last year. She congratulated both for responding to it. She asked if we are at a place to be looking at Extension without borders. The response was that the topic surfaced as preparation were being made for the Extension Road Shows. Conversations are currently taking place. There is internal conversation on how best to support effort for ongoing impact. Local programming for local need. Extension programming regardless of where you are in the state.

### **EPECC Update** – Deborah Seiler

- She has been coordinating the center since 2019. 2020 was planned to be the launch year for the new programs and experience. Reported that all the major goals were hit.
- EPECC mission is for Extension to work closer with Campus partnerships. Extension was part of the 2018 Campus Strategic Plan. Extension was given a proposal of \$1.8 million to begin the Extension Public Engagement Connection Center. Mission is for U of I community to connect with Extension for public impact-focused scholarship.
- Public Engagement means a practice (research, teaching, outreach in communities), framework for institutional assessment and recognition/tracking impacts for communities.
- EPECC in 2020 tied to promise in investment for growth grant. 1) Two new hires and one failed search.
- Move made at EPECC was to start a new campus outreach & engagement professionals network connection. This began as a casual coffee meet and evolved into a formal network based around exchanging common knowledge and information. There are 50 members from 25 different units to discuss ideas and exchange information. Will make it easier to find partners across campus.

- Extension collaboration grants – kicked off in 2020. Revival of the ICE grant, cross-campus initiative. Continues to evolve. In 2020 created an opportunity to be more creative with how the grants were rolled-out. 2018 grants were offered internally within the College of ACES. In 2020 a pre-release was made for request for proposals and timeline was extended. Application was moved to on-line. Review committee was 50/50 including others on campus to reflect joint endeavor between Extension and campus. 50 grant apps started. 17 teens were awarded grants and more than 107 collaborators were involved in the grants.
  - Illini Science Policy program started in 2020 – collaboration grants connected Extension to research. This is how Extension is connected with students. Illinois' goal is to have young people reside and stay inside IL as a career destination. Work with partners around the state as a way to build visibility with public partners. Government agencies across the state pay 1/2. Participants work on an Extension project during their time and a host project. The projects dovetail in the priorities of Extension and the public partners.
  - First class of scholars are working with hosts, IL black caucus, Hispanic caucus, host of ag, innovation, and commerce & economic opportunities in broadband. A one-year appointment.
  - Illini Science Policy Program 2021 – all hosts are returning plus Illinois Board of Education.
  - Public Engagement in 2020 – Chancellor's office has dedicated staff for public engagement. Pursuing priority projects. Expecting to see Extension using on-line GivePulse portal for volunteer opportunities. WeCU helps connect students with volunteer opportunities. Currently local but hoping to expand statewide.
  - 2020 & beyond – connecting sustainability, visibility, asset mapping (capture clarity as to who is doing what and coordinating efforts to make clear pathways to engagement), mission integration (engaged scholarship).
- Carolina Schottland as if this is just the C-U campus or if the opportunities are spread to other campuses as well. Deborah responded that within the first year the focus was at C-U due to a matter of capacity and establishing relationships then determining how to move outside. Opportunities are being reviewed to expand the network. Carolina stated that with the grants units need educators to bring research opportunities and without specific educators they cannot participate in programs and public engagement opportunities. She asked if there are any thoughts about bringing in other educators to assist. Deborah responded that opportunities do exist to leverage and that it's a matter of make the right match. She cannot speak to unit capacity. Additional suggestions/comments can be sent directly to Deborah.

#### **4-H Youth Development Update-** Lisa Diaz

- Lisa shared a link to the CloverSeed annual report.
- 4-H Pivoted during COVID. Personal interaction and face-to-face is important with the young people so 4-H had to quickly determine new modes to interact. Alternate adaptations were made to shows, etc., judging on-line, new formats, etc. Thanked the Extension IT and Comm Teams for their work. There were 444 virtual show/competitions with 2200 youth participating in a State Fair virtual experience. 200 new virtual programs were developed across the state.
- Volunteers have been central/backbone of 4-H. Statewide staff committee is working on resources developing café conversations, monthly training topics on issues specific to the times and positive youth development.
  - Local statewide COVID idea challenge – what can be used in my community and be scaled to other communities.
  - Shooting sports moved to a virtual shoot.
  - Growth in virtual SPIN clubs implemented in the last nine months – meeting mental health needs of young people. Your Thoughts Matter curriculum is being used. Positive feedback received.
  - New resources developed – 4-H at home ([go.illinois.edu/AtHome4H](http://go.illinois.edu/AtHome4H)) has had several new video-based challenges. 4-H spark Sheets (80 project areas) curriculum gathered from various sources – these sheets are a better resource to use with new audiences to 4-H. New 4-H Apps to get research based, up-to-date information out to youth in an engaging way, i.e., terrific teachable moments and 4-H cooking projects.
  - Diversity/Equity/Access/Inclusion (DEAI) – the 4-H real talk series was created by STEM specialist Keith Jacobs who worked with other colleagues to talk about experience with race/racism. Interviews in the series were used internally with staff over the summer and into the fall for conversations on where we are and the important work that needs to be done reflecting that 4-H is inclusive for all youth in Illinois. A newly formed DEAI task force will be creative with the first gathering this week with a day-long meeting with group from Chicago. Task force will then develop an action plan to guide the work into the future.
  - Dedicate funding for youth led and staff led projects to advance DEAI goals.
  - Chancellor Jones joined the National 4-H Council Board of Trustees and as part of Black History Month talked about his personal experience with 4-H. The Chancellor co-signed along with the Dean, Tony, and Shelly as co-support on 4-H real-talk series.
  - New resource – teen-led equity dialogue training has been done for 4-H state youth leadership team so it can be shared with others across the state.

- This year Illinois 4-H is honored to have Elizabeth Weidner from Effingham county selected as a recipient of the national youth in action award. Elizabeth is a cancer survivor and has been an inspiring model to others about the change you can make in your own community. Serving in spokesperson role. Has been keynote for a few events. Two were also semi-finalist in STEM and Healthy Living.
- State Level Youth Leadership Team – 20 competed and applied as part of a process to be representatives on the food advocacy group. First thing they wanted to do was spark youth led food advocacy across the state. Nine counties were awarded funding in the first round.
- Health is an upcoming priority for the summer and face-to-face options are being explored. Competitions will be held in the Orr Building.

Mark Ward asked if the February 17 meeting will provide guidance on what units can do. Lisa responded that information will be shared reflecting a layout of data and scenarios to equip the counties to know what to do to adapt locally with all the considerations. She is anticipating that situations won't be the same in every county and information provided on February 17 will need to be used to know the local considerations.

#### ANR – Dennis Bowman

- For more information following the meeting, the Extension website can be visited. View the link to ANR programs and resources that go across programming for ANR.
- A listing of number of ANR Educators by expertise area was shared along with a map reflecting locations of where educators are officed. When COVID surfaced and the state went into lock-down, the goal was to be sure that people knew they still had access to the Educators.
- Field staff share expertise to answer many questions. Over 11,050 questions were answered.
- New campus faculty specialists have been added – Lee Rincker (Animal Science judging and recruitment) and Emily Heaton (lead in regenerative ag initiative).
- There was a shift due to COVID. Programs were adapted into webinars with 28 offered in 2018-2019 and 285 in 2019-2020.
- Training certifications moved to on-line platform – [learn@illinois.edu](mailto:learn@illinois.edu). These certification programs include certified livestock and the pesticide safety education program. Extension provides the training for these programs. Testing was included with the training so that once training was completed the participant could move to the testing portion which is handled by IDOA via a proctoring agency. Some have not had a positive experience. Crop Flix is generally an eight hour event for CEUs. The content for the program was doubled for a lower price.
- Farmdoc created a series on how COVID would effect ag as a whole. There were 14,508 attendees.
- 3600 Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers from across the state donated over 140,000 hours of time which is the equivalent of 78 FTEs.
- Master Gardeners support community gardens across the state. Not all are active due to COVID. 73,000 pounds of produce was grown and donated to pantries and groups.
- ANR a partner with state agencies and organizations and provides education and services
- A success story was shared about a project led by Philip Alberti. The Midwestern hemp data base is a field on hemp production and CBD. Information was organized and Philip collaborated with nearby states to create the database. Information from compiled reports is submitted to USDA and last month USDA released their rules on domestic hemp production. USDA refer to the Midwest hemp database as a source for their information. The program has helped Illinois farmers.
- An impact report example was shared. The plant clinic diagnosed over 2,000 plants
- ANR is a partner in research projects. Andrew Marginot has ongoing research on heavy metal contamination.
- 11 of 17 Extension collaboration grants have an ANR component.
- Various new programs are being developed. The Center for Digital Agriculture/AIFARMS applied for \$20 million grant and was funded. Extension is a partner in the project.
- ANR shifted to on-line delivery. ANR experts work through many different avenues to help Illinois. Volunteer programs are very important to Extension's efforts and mission.
- Facts were shared about ANR: Work on behalf of all Illinois residents, serve in urban and rural areas, provide essential services to commercial agriculture, provide direct education, work well with others.

Carolina Schottland indicated that the Master Gardener opportunity will be offered on-line this year and she is excited. She inquired whether this is just in response to the pandemic or if it will be encouraged with other master programs. Dennis responded that Master Gardeners already had an on-line training program but not all counties offered it. With the pandemic the on-line capability was able to be updated and used. He said that Master Naturalist training did not previously

have on-line training but it is in the process of being created now. Some hybrid opportunities are available now as the more formal product is being worked on. The on-line program will continue.

### **ESAC Business (Old/New)** – Sal Garza

#### **Old Business**

The floor was opened for any discussion as follow-up concern or items from the October 2020 meeting.

- Patsy Hirsch shared information related to the challenge to herbicide drift and a potential opportunity. She has done research and reached out and talked with experts through IDOA, legislators, and other individuals having the same experience. Herbicide drift has gone on for decades and is unresolved. She will send full information to Dennis and Shelly. Learned that lawn applicators are not required to attend the special training that farmers do and they do not have application cut-off periods and can apply throughout the season. Had conversation with state inspector that when he sees the amount of damage done in the neighborhood he could not include it in the report because the person did not file a complaint. In talking with her neighbors, herbicide injury was largely unchecked because they do not recognize the problems. All but one realized there was a problem but did not know how to recognize it. Feels it is causing ecological change. Is requesting that the issue be addressed and that the gap be filled that she saw with regards to public education and knowledge to identify and work through the system. She suggested educating Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists and possibly adding to the training manual as required learning and offering virtual training for those already certified. She would like all to realize there are no laws/regulations/boundaries/limits to buffer an area to keep drifting from going into other areas and feels this is an opportunity for education for the U of I and Extension to provide the citizens. Following Patsy sharing her information Sal felt that there needs to be follow-up and suggested scheduling a virtual meeting for those who want to be involved. Sal with reach out to Patsy this week to identify some potential times to offer Shelly, Tony and others for further discussion and next steps.

#### **New Business**

No new business to be addressed.

#### **Other / Open Discussion**

Herbicide Issue and Educational Opportunity – Patsy Hirsch

- Patsy Hirsch – Shared that she has had an issue with herbicide drift in her yard which is a direct result of dicamba. Feels it is an ecological injustice for families who are trying to do the right thing, home gardening, etc. This is a statewide problem and curious as how to remedy the situation. Looking for stronger ways to educate more people and have a more sustainable environment for families to grow in. She inquired how the University can help with the issue as it is not talked about because it is not recognized.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Tim Wells and seconded by Lee Maki to adjourn the meeting. Sal thanked the group for their time and attention and participation in the meeting. Motion carried and meeting adjourned at 3:18pm

#### **Next Meeting**

October 11, 2021 – Location to be determined

February 21, 2022 – Location to be determined

October 10, 2022 – Location to be determined