

Unit 27 Council Meeting
February 25, 2021
11:00a.m. – 1:00 pm
ZOOM meeting

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Phyllis Webb at 11:10 a.m. Phyllis opened the meeting by discussing a book she recently read; CASTE: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson. This month is black history month and the book she selected was a difficult read that reminds us of how people were treated in the past. She noted that people tend to fail to see what is around them and this book reminds of us a past not to be repeated or forgotten. Council members and staff present introduced themselves via ZOOM meeting and gave a brief introduction of their service to the Unit.

Council members present:

Alexander/Pulaski	Johnson	Massac	Union
Derek Eurales Josie Eason	Phyllis Webb Natalie Dougherty Zach Garrett Jonathan Voelz	Cheryl Vanderford Megan Henderson	Greg George Chris Boyd

Staff present: County Director Johnson, Sarita Sawyer, Lindsey Sadler, Monica Reid, Patsy Bishop, Tami Crest, Brenda Hileman, Erin Garrett, Kristi Stout, Angela Ralls, Shannon Pulliam, Kimberly Rohling, Toni Kay Wright.

Meeting minutes from December 17, 2020 were reviewed. Motion made by Zach Garrett and seconded by Cheryl Vanderford to approve prior minutes. Motion carried.

○ **Council Business**

- Replacement of Unit council members – Rhonda Dillow and Pastor Kent Hollis will be stepping away from their Council member appointment and will need to be replaced. County Director Johnson asked for recommendations for replacements. This matter was tabled to be discussed at the next meeting.

- County Director Johnson reminded everyone of the need to complete the Illinois Open Meetings Act training and to provide a certificate of completion for University records.

○ **County Director Report**

- Plan of Work / New issues or concerns in community – County Director Johnson did a brief overview of the Unit’s POW and advised council members that this Plan is fluid, evolving and constantly changing. County Director Johnson further invited Council members to reach out with any ideas or suggestions on the needs, wants or expectation that Extension needs to consider.

- Return to office – COVID procedures- March 1st will be an attempt to return to offices, with some employees requesting hybrid schedules. Johnson County and Pulaski/Alexander County offices will be open to public; Massac County and Union County offices will be staffed but closed during March as those counties are still in the warning level for COVID cases. Natalie Dougherty inquired as to the meeting sizes allowed; for March they will be 10 or less. County Director Johnson is hopeful that this will be increase to 20-25 or less in April. During the COVID closures staff have been meeting via ZOOM each Monday morning for a staff briefing and will continue to follow this procedure upon reopening.

- Budget - Updated account balances were provided and discussed with no worries or concerns offered. The Governor has included Extension in his FY22 budget in all five line items that encompass state funding for our programs. Campus has offered an early buyout/retirement plan and some staff throughout the state have accepted this package; no staff locally have indicated a plan to retire. The local FY22 budget is being planned. Extension business office has migrated to a new finance system and the preparation and planning are evolving. As part of the finance discussions, County Director Johnson indicated a want and need to create a Foundation Board to help and oversee fundraising for Unit 27. This matter will be discussed again at a later date.

- Civil Rights and efforts to reach underserved audiences – Staff continue to reach out to underserved audiences and to promote programs. Multiple food distribution events have been completed and hundreds of people have received boxes of food in underserved, SNAP eligible, communities. More distributions efforts will continue, and Unit 27 staff will continue working with area partners to identify and reach areas and populations in need.

- General updates (Facilities, vacancies and other) – Unit 27 in advertising for a SNAP-Ed Educator. This position has been extended for two weeks to allow for a larger pool of applicants to respond. Susan Odum, Extension Community & Economic Development, is working with local retail and tourism groups to promote Southern Illinois assets as part of the Connect Bridges project. More information and promotion of this project will be shared in the future. County Director Johnson has completed his appointment as chair of the fiscal/business committee; he will continue for one more year as an ex-officio member. MyPI Illinois disaster preparedness programs with local schools is on-hold due to pandemic procedures. County Director Johnson continues to work with One Shawnee, a non-profit seeking to revitalize the Ohio River and Shawnee National Forest regions of Southernmost Illinois and advised that community assessments and focus groups are collecting information.

- **Unit Reports**

- 4-H Youth Development staff – Kristi Stout, Vickie Taylor, Dena Wood
Recent activities have focused on community service activities. 4-H staff has worked with members and their families to provide pumpkin decorating for Thanksgiving, Veteran’s Day thank you cards, Christmas cards and Valentine’s Day cards and care packages delivered to local nursing and care homes for residents. 4-H staff have been working with Erin Garrett and Kim Rohling to develop nature kits that are being sent home as an education project activity for

families. As part of the Health Rocks grant, 4-H staff will be working with Shawnee/Wolf Lake school to provide hands on programming showing youth the dangers of driving, drugs, alcohol and distractions.

- ANR Environment and Energy Stewardship - Erin Garrett, Kimberly Rohling Master Naturalist and Master Gardener programming are focusing on engagement of volunteers and providing opportunities for volunteerism. Kim Rohling helped organize a Trash Blast event, but it was cancelled due to weather conditions. Kim has also created a book club that is meeting via ZOOM and is having success in participation. Master Gardener training is underway with a hybrid approach using online teaching and hands-on, at home project learning. ANR staff continues to work with SNAP on planning and preparing for the donation gardens to be planted and utilized in the Unit. Georgia George, local Master Gardener, has tendered the subject of wanting to create a disabled garden in Vienna by working with Arrowleaf to include their disabled population. This project is in the idea phase, but hopes are high for success.

- SNAP/INEP– Lindsey Sadler, Patsy Bishop, Sarita Sawyer, Tiffney Stewart, Shannon Pulliam –

- Toni Kay Wright reported that while virtual programming has been a struggle it has found hidden benefits that are being utilized. Toni Kay co-facilitates the Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network which includes the lower 16 counties of Southern Illinois, consisting of 95 food pantries. She has been working with local food pantries and 10 local pantries were awarded grant funding via Blue Cross Blue Shield to increase their cold storage at the pantries. 34 of the 95 applicants were awarded funds and she is helping to search and capture more funding. USDA and local Unions are working together with Senator Fowler’s office to continue assistance to underserve populations with food needs by creating a “Together We Can”, a month-long canned food drive. Their goal is 50,000 cans of soup in 30 days. Pulaski/Alexander Counties are being included with a project with IL Public Health Institute called Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities. Pulaski/Alexander Counties were recognized as high need communities due to food insecurity and high COVID rates. Unit 27 is focusing on work with food pantries to develop policies to get out more food, cold storage and obtaining more food. Work will also include increased social networking, technology, education, reaching seniors and ways to increase healthy activities.

- Lindsey Sadler highlighted work at the Metropolis and Cairo gardens that benefit local food pantries. These gardens are funded by SNAP-Ed and Growing Together Illinois Allocation grant to help develop and sustain food gift gardens. Ag Natural resources staff, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists and 4-H will all help collaborate on these gardens. Metropolis received \$1,955 and the garden is named Plant a Row, Watch COPE Grow and harvested produce will go to COPE food pantry. Cairo will also have a community garden called The Pilot Garden. This garden is being developed in collaboration with the Southern 7 Health Department in Cairo at their building location. This garden has received \$3,970 and produce harvested will go to Daystar Community Program which has a food pantry and soup kitchen. This garden will also include a sensory garden which is resulting from \$350 from the Autism Society. This portion of the garden will be named separately after a youth with autism from the community and will focus on sensory processing, not food growth. Bishop Derek Eurales asked what types

of food will be grown in Cairo. Staff is basing this on the needs of the food pantry and plan for carrots, beets, radishes, okra, lettuce, spinach and beans. Herbs will also be planted and sent home with recipe suggestions on how to use them. Lindsey and Erin reminded everyone that volunteer help is always welcomed and needed. Pastor Eurales advised he will donate water hoses for use in watering the garden. Josie Eason wanted to know the hours of the garden volunteer opportunities. Hours will depend on work performed. If harvesting is included it must be done during business hours, 8-4:30, M-F, as the grant requirements include weighing and record keeping of all harvested produce.

- Sarita Sawyer outlined her work with Cairo and Meridian elementary schools with the OrganWise Guys curriculum. Sarita showed the dolls for OWG and acknowledged they are in three different nationalities, black, white and Hispanic. She showed the 10 different removable organs in the dolls and discussed how she teaches the kids how the dolls may look different on the outside everything on the inside is the same. Sarita has also been doing Healthy Cents with adults at the Pulaski County Housing Authority and Arrowleaf by virtual programming. Sarita is appreciative of the new virtual education and learning she has obtained during the pandemic. Bishop Eurales expressed his thanks and appreciation for the dolls and their education tools being presented to youth.

- Tiffney Stewart was unable to attend the meeting but Sarita conveyed reporting for her. Tiffney has also been doing virtual programming with Arrowleaf at three locations; Legacy House in Karnak, Heritage House and the Garden Apartments in Vienna. During the pandemic Arrowleaf has been purchasing the supplies for the virtual lessons and is providing hands on assistance to the participants to receive virtual education. Tiffney is doing OWG activities with local schools also; 3 classrooms at Maple Grove, 1 at Vienna and 1 at Buncombe and 1 in Cypress.

- Patsy Bishop expressed how their program delivery is at the hands of their partners and for those entities that don't have the technology available the programming just can't be done at this time. Patsy discussed how interesting it has been trying to reach virtually versus in person and how program delivery has been an evolving process. Patsy's biggest school has three classes per grade, and she was able to provide virtual programming by recording her program and giving the recording to her teachers to be used and presented at their convenience, not a scheduled live program.

- Shannon Pulliam just started with Extension on September 21, 2020 as a Community Worker. Shannon previously worked for Extension providing a traveling Food Power program on loan from Missouri Extension that gave students a literal walk thru of the body and its organs. When Food Power ended Shannon went to work at Goreville School. This job is important to Shannon as she has three children, the youngest with extreme food allergies and sensory issues. Shannon's work has been focusing on training for technology and the variety of lessons and programs that Extension offers and delivers. Shannon is contacting local schools to schedule programming when the opportunity becomes available. Shannon offered a collaborative video of programs and activities SNAP community workers have developed and delivered during virtual programming.

- As a Unit, SNAP is providing Healthy Cents lessons to head start families in all the

counties. SNAP staff are producing a quarterly report for head start programs consisting of text messaging programs, healthy recipes, cooking with children resource information and a monthly calendar with activities to do with their family.

- Other information –

All Unit 27 Extension activities can be found at <https://extension.illinois.edu/ajmpu/events>.

Cheryl Vanderford, following up on Phyllis' opening comments, shared that her mother-in-law graduated from Hampton University in 1932 and in 1936 the University of Kentucky reached out to her in need of an Extension employee, a Home Demonstration Agent, and was the first black female hired in that position in Kentucky and worked in Fulton and Hickman Counties.

Bishop Derek Eurales announced that in Anna, IL, Jim Townsend from the Lincoln Home in Springfield will have the Illinois Freedom Project exhibited at the Anna Arts Center February 23 to March 13 and will highlight inspiring stories from the past to inform and empower people and will show 12 panels telling the story of the struggles for freedom. This project is sponsored by the National Park Service, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Looking for Lincoln. Bishop Eurales will provide the printed information he has with the Mounds office to be shared with others.

Sarita Sawyer will be presenting a program in Anna on March 14 about the history of secret codes and quilts during the time of the Underground Railroad.

Extension Administration recently held a virtual roadshow and County Director Johnson thanked all that attended the ZOOM meeting and participated in the meeting.

- Dates and Times of future council meetings
April 29, 2021 @ Vienna – 11am-1pm – Planning to be in person and via ZOOM

Motion to adjourn made by Derek Eurales and seconded by Natalie Dougherty. No objections, meeting adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Monica Reid

Unit 27 - Office Support Associate

For Unit 27 Unit Council secretary, Chris Boyd