



Unit 25 Extension Council Meeting
Wednesday, November 3, 2021
Edwards County Extension Office
350 N 7th Street
Albion, IL 62806
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present: Rhiannon Anderson, Justine Basnett, Kelly Biggs, Jim Brewer, Terry Bruce, Paul Bruinsma, Haleigh Buchanan, Kacie Hagg, Tonya Potts, Doug Raber, Don Robbins, Kathy St. Ledger

Members Absent: Sara McGehee, Jan Ridgley

Staff Member Present: Tara Buerster

CALL TO ORDER

Kathy St. Ledger called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Each council member introduced themselves again due to some council members being absent from the first meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the September 29, 2021 meeting were reviewed by the council. Jim Brewer made a motion to accept the minutes as reviewed, Doug Raber seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Tara Buerster presented the financial report to the council explaining funding sources and where funds will be spent. Don Robbins asked how many employees U of I Extension has currently in Unit 25. Tara responded that there are 13 current employees, and 1 new employee who will start November 29, 2021, serving as the SNAP-Education Community Worker for Wayne and Edwards Counties. The search for a Youth Development Educator position for the Unit is currently in progress. Applications have closed at this time and interviews are schedule to be held in November.

Kathy St. Ledger asked if there were any more questions regarding the financial report. There were none.

Jim Brewer made a motion to approve the financial report as reviewed by the council. Motion was seconded by Don Robbins. All were in favor; the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

County Office Spaces - Tara Buerster explained that when she was hired as the County Director for Unit 25, she was tasked with trying to find a new office space for the Edwards County Extension Office. A few ideas were offered at the September 29th Council meeting. She has a good lead on a building on Industrial Drive in Albion. The building will have 3 personal offices, areas for a traveling Educator and clerical staff, 2 restrooms, a potential meeting room, a large outdoor yard area, and more space for parking. Tara explained she is working with Extension Administration and the potential landlord on potentially leasing the property, beginning with the next fiscal year.

Mrs. Buerster expressed concern on the moving process and lack of moving companies in the area. The Council offered some ideas for volunteers including 4-H members, parents, and Farm Bureau Young Leaders.

Tara Buerster also stated she has two other offices in the Unit with some concerns and she is looking for other options in those counties, in the future.

Needs Assessment - Each Unit in Illinois Extension is encouraged to have 2 Educators, one Youth Development Educator, and one other depending on the needs of the community. Unit 25 currently has no educators, due to a resignation and retirement prior to Mrs. Buerster joining the Unit. Unit 25 is in the process of hiring a Youth Development Educator. Applications are closed, and interviews will take place November 22.

Tara Buerster reviewed with the Council a map of Illinois and other Units surrounding Unit 25, looking at what type of Educators surround us. The Council members were presented with a draft needs assessment that will be used to assess the needs of the community, to determine what type of Educator Unit 25 should try to incorporate into what our local Extension offices can offer.

Council members have been asked to review the draft assessment document and have any questions, comments, adjustments, or concerns sent to Tara Buerster via email, no later than December 1, 2021.

Tara also asked the Council's thoughts on the best way to disperse the needs assessment to the community. Thoughts included: online through Qualtrics, or paper copies to surrounding places where community members gather. Council members suggested a drawing for a gift card to incentivize community members to complete the assessment. The Council also suggested the following as potential groups to send the assessment directly to: Senior Centers, 4-H club members and parents, Farm Bureau Boards and Young Leaders, Teachers, Chamber members, School boards, City board members, County Board members, and County Fair Board members. The council discussed that we are needing to be able to disperse the assessment to a diverse group of people to be able to get an unbiased direction on what type of secondary Educator might be best for Unit 25.

Engaging Diverse Audiences - Unit 25 Extension is always looking for ways to reach more diverse audiences with programming. Tara Buerster offered that Unit 25 staff are looking for more under served, at risk audiences to reach out to or provide programming to. The SNAP programs serve low-income and limited-resource audiences. 4-H programs serve many youth-oriented audiences. Some other thoughts from the council included: serving pregnant women at pregnancy centers, serving migrant workers in some counties, places like SWAN, WAVE, and Safe Haven, as well as places such as CDC in Fairfield and Lawrence Crawford Association for Exceptional Citizens for adults with mental and physical disabilities. Mrs. Buerster stated SNAP Community Workers have been offering classes to individuals from the CDC the last few months and hope to continue that partnership.

COUNTY DIRECTOR REPORT

Tara Buerster presented the Unit 25 County Director Report to the Council. A SNAP Education Community Worker has been hired for Wayne and Edwards Counties, Jane Jones. She has a start date of November 29, 2021. The application process for a Youth Educator for Unit 25 closed in October, and interviews will be held for the qualifying applicants on November 22, 2021. The unit completed its In and Out Account Audit in October. Tech Fests were held for Wayne and Edwards counties this year. Tara Buerster stated that she has been approached about offering a Poverty Simulation within Unit 25. The simulations require a minimum of 80 participants and 15 volunteers. Tara is going to complete the training to begin being able to offer these simulations, when available. 4-H programs in all 5 counties are rebounding well from the COVID loss of members, with lots of new interest, and previous members wanting to re-enroll. The Unit will have its Administrative/Fiscal review on Friday, November 5, 2021, by Regional Office Staff. Tara will present the report on the review at the next Council meeting. The Annual Civil Rights review for the Unit is due November 30, 2021. Current COVID rules for staff are to be fully immunized or test weekly. Staff are following protocol. Edwards County 4-H is the recipient of the 2021 Bayer Grow America grant for \$2,500, as submitted by Debbie Fearn. The Annual Extension Conference for all Extension staff is November 16th-17th and all staff will be attending. Finally, Mrs. Buerster shared with the Council that the offices will be closed December 24, 2021-January 3, 2022 for winter break.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathy St. Ledger opened the floor for public comment. There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tara Buerster reminded the Council their next meeting will be January 26th at 5:30 p.m. at the Edwards County Extension Office.

ADJOURN

Kacie Haag made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Rhiannon Anderson seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.