

Extension Education Committee Minutes

Date of Meeting: May 8, 2023

Call to Order: Vice Chair Foelker called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Roll Call: Committee members present in person: Matt Foelker, Dan Herbst and Dwayne Morris. Mary Roberts attended virtually.

Ben Wehmeier (County Administrator), Alison Pfau, Jerry Wilcenski, Lisa Krolow, Christine Wen (Area Director) and Kim Buchholz were present in-person.

Steve Chmielewski, Julie Hill, Heidi Johnson (Ag Institute Director), Allen Sweeney (Rock County Supervisor), and Katelyn Broedlow were present via Zoom.

Certification of Compliance with Open Meetings Law: In compliance.

Public Comment: None

Approval of Agenda: Approved with rearrangement of Monthly Reports going after Communications and then coming back to the 2023 Departmental Budget and going down the agenda.

Approval of University Extension Education Committee Minutes from April 10, 2023: Motion by Herbst, seconded by Morris, to approve the minutes as printed. Motion passed.

Communications: None

Discussion of Monthly Educator Reports:

Committee members received the Extension April 2023 written report in their agenda packets.

Steve Chmielewski, Community Development Educator, provided an oral report to the committee.

- Assisting the City of Fort Atkinson in planning for the Local Government Academy to increase civic participation in local government. There are five sessions set for late summer. It will be announced today.
- In discussions with City of Watertown regarding the Local Government Academy program.

(John Kannard joined the meeting at 8:42 a.m. Katelyn Broedlow left the meeting at 8:45 a.m.)

- Continuing to work with the Town of Koshkonong on Park Planning based on concern identified by their attorney.
- In discussion with the City of Jefferson Chamber of Commerce regarding the update of their Strategic Plan. They have a new director and it has been some time since it was updated.

Lisa Krolow, FoodWise Coordinator, provided an oral report for the committee.

- FoodWise is still in the hiring process for the 2 educator positions.
- Farmer markets are starting up in May. Will be focusing on the farmers markets, especially in Watertown, to work with them to offer food dollars to their participants.
- Continuing to work with Watertown Family Connections in partnership with their monthly play groups where we coordinate a healthy snack.
- Lisa will be attending the Fort Atkinson community event on Saturday.

Alison Pfau, Regional Dairy Educator, provided an oral report for the committee.

- Her dairy educational videos are all recorded and are in the editing stage. Hoping to be able to release them soon.
- She has joined the Dairy Vulnerable Workers Group and is working on program development with the group.

- She is working on sending a TMR nutrition survey to producers this month. This will gather information that has been requested on robotics and its effects on nutrition. Results will be shared at year end after all data is collected.
- Alison is currently recruiting farms to participate in the Alternative Forages research project (cover crops) to understand why producers are using them and what is the nutritional value of these crops. So far she has 7 farms in three counties interested.
- She is working with the grazing crops program to develop different articles and field days to be held this summer.
- Alison continues her work with the Climate Program in writing articles on feed additives and production of methane.
 - In June, Alison will be attending an animal nutrition course for professional development.

Jerry Wilcenski, 4-H educator, provided an oral report for the committee.

- Saturday, May 13 the Dairy Project will be hosting a Dairy Farm Tour to look at the variety of dairy operations in the County.
- Upcoming events include the Livestock Project Learning Day on May 21 and Dairy Project Learning Day on June 10 and 11.
- There is 1 Jefferson County 4-H Club that will be transitioning to a SPIN club this fall.
- 4-H held a Lamb cake back-off that was popular. Members were encouraged to check out the 4-H Facebook page for pictures.
- Jerry reported that for next year, 2023-24, there will be a focus on foods and arts within the programming of 4-H.
- Jerry is leading the horse judging group within the Horse and Pony Project. They meet monthly and will have a competition during Fair.

Julie Hill, Horticulture Educator, provided an oral report for the committee.

- Julie is answering many horticulture questions on random topics.
- Included in the packet are brochures on upcoming horticulture programming in the next couple of months. All educational opportunities are free but must pre-register.
- She will be presenting at The Gathering Place in Milton later this month.

Review of 2023 Department Budget: A copy of the to date 2023 budget was emailed to committee members in the agenda packet. Copies were also available at the meeting. Wen stated that everything is on track.

Discussion on the 2024 Educator Contract and the Regional Crops Educator Position:

Wen opened the conversation with a brief overview of the position and asked questions from the committee. Kannard asked, "Are we serving the public? Kannard has spoken with quite a few producers. They are saying that the producer-led groups are working. Foelker stated that the producer utilizes the information for their crops that is provided by the consultant from which their seed is purchased. Kannard stated that the 80-acre farm is non-existent. A general Ag Educator would be sufficient.

Heidi Johnson, Extension Ag Institute Director, stated that Extension has 30 years' worth of budget data on agriculture. The Institute is able to support 55 educators throughout the State where there are 72 counties. There has been a struggle to maintain staffing. The regional positions were developed to respond to the needs of the producers. Farms are using consultants. Educators need to be specialists. Extension connects the research to the consultants.

Wehmeier asked how do you respond to the needs of the County? How does it work in the model? Johnson explained that the Regional Crops Educator was working on the cropping system which there were similar needs identified across the counties that she was working in. Wehmeier stated that there is a perception that

needs are not being met within the County. If there are needs identified, how does that work into the educator's plan of work?

Roberts asked Johnson if the trend of agriculture was going back to the family farm or larger farms. Johnson explained that the day of the family farm as we know it is no longer. The larger farms are still family farms. The markets will continue to push the size of farms. Johnson explained that with 55 educators statewide, it is not possible for Extension to reach every farm. There is a huge push environmentally which will provide benefit to all farms. Wen referred individuals to the ag portal.

Wehmeier referred to the County's Strategic Plan and how those are implemented in the Plan of Work for the educators? Johnson explained that the key issues that farmers are facing throughout the area are identified. The County can provide input and the educator can work that into their plan of work. The gathering of information is done in a variety of ways: informal as well as formal.

Morris stated that the committee does not have a metric that tells us if we are meeting the agricultural needs. We need a metric. He referred to the link that Edgar had provided at the last meeting. He was able to review that information and found it very beneficial. He said there needs to be a metric such as geographical line, crop, size of system etc. that can be of assistance to the committee.

Johnson said that the Economic Report for which Edgar has referred to is done by Extension from the Ag census that is done every five years. An educator will do evaluation; the previous Regional Crops Educator did not get to that phase of programming because she left the position.

A question was asked as to what the committee needed to do today. Wehmeier explained that the committee needs to authorize the position and it's posting. Kannard stated that the position is relevant in today's agriculture world.

Johnson stated that the need drives educational programming not the topics of phone calls coming into the office. Further discussion on how everything is connected, and it the land needs to be stewarded all together.

Wen stated that the details of an educator's plan of work can be shared with the committee to provide more transparency. Kannard asked Mr. Sweeney of Rock County if he had any comments. He stated that Extension's connectivity to the regional position provides unbiased advice, and that Extension has to be adaptable to the needs.

The budget impact of the position is around \$15,000. Morris stated that when reports are provided by other committees there are greater details and metrics. That is what the supervisors are looking for across the board then with the committees that we sit on.

Johnson explained that Extension is a network. There is a lot going on behind the scenes and it is hard to tell Extension's story.

Morris recommended that the committee move forward with the Regional Crops position due to the minimal budget impact. Roberts agreed; this position is our feet on the ground in the area. Foelker stated that his experience now is much better than when he previously served on the committee; communication is better.

The consensus of the committee was to move forward with the position.

A few more comments were made regarding the need for compensation for the position to be competitive, so we are not a revolving door.

Next Scheduled Meetings: June 12, July 10, August 14 and September 11, 2023

Adjourn – Motion by Herbst, seconded by Morris, to adjourn meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Minutes recorded by Kim Buchholz, Administrative Specialist