

Extension Education Committee Minutes

Date of Meeting: April 13, 2026

Call to Order: John Kannard called the meeting to order at 8:32am.

Roll Call: Committee members present in person: John Kannard, Matt Foelker, and Dwayne Morris. Present via Teams: Elizabeth Hafften. Absent: Dan Herbst.

Steve Chmielewski, Alison Pfau, Jerry Wilcenski, Julie Hill, Sarana Stolar, Chrissy Wen, Lilianne Bidwell, and Cadance Hawk were present in person.

Michael Luckey, James from Watertown Daily Union, and Josh Kamps were present via Teams.

Certification of Compliance with Open Meetings Law: In compliance.

Approval of Agenda: Agenda approved as printed.

Public Comment: None.

Approval of University Extension Education Committee Minutes from March 09, 2026: Motion by Morris to approve the minutes as printed. Seconded by Foelker and passed.

Communications: None

Review of 2026 Departmental Budget: Wen stated we are on track for this year.

Update on Support Position and introduction of Lilianne Bidwell: Lilianne was present and introduced by Wen.

Discussion of Monthly Educator Reports: Steve Chmielewski (Community Educator), Alison Pfau (Bilingual Regional Dairy Educator), Jerry Wilcenski (4-H Program Educator), Cadance Hawk (4-H Associate Educator) Julie Hill (Horticulture Educator), Josh Kamps (Regional Crop Educator)

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

- Facilitated 3 of 5 strategic planning sessions in our process with Jefferson Area Food Pantry.
- Completed and presented the findings of our study to better understand the economic impact of the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad system with communities and businesses. Results will help communicate value of the Rail Transit Commissions work and help inform opportunities for improvement with the system.
- Conducted 3 small business development workshops with 5 participants. Topics included: Planning to start up a business, marketing, financing and accounting.
- Announced 5/7 Southeastern Wisconsin Housing Summit invite for Housing advocates, policymakers/local government officials, developers, urban planners, real estate agents, non-profit leaders, community members, financial institutions, school districts, and businesses. Planning

sessions are being conducted in collaboration with SEWRPC, WHEDA, and M7. The goal is to provide data to support community-level housing conversations, practical strategies for communities to address NIMBYism, and raise awareness of best practices and current initiatives in SE and beyond. These goals are hoped to support an increase for all income levels throughout Southeastern Wisconsin. We reached out to Watertown community to present their innovative approach to new housing.

- Palmyra REV team building goals and strategies from community economic data. This is a community-led process where local leadership team discovers gaps and support needed to strengthen their entrepreneur ecosystem.
- Beginning to finalize county community needs assessment in collaboration with community leaders, businesses and organizations in Jefferson County. The goal is to engage new participation to learn about trends, challenges and goals to develop new programming, raise awareness of local and statewide resources, and increase relational capital.

Alison Pfau, Bilingual Regional Dairy Educator, provided an oral report based on the written report provided to the committee.

- A statewide program promoting humane dairy cow-handling practices for dairy cow handlers where the participants will learn to be aware of their own beliefs about working with cows, which affect how they interact with them. They will also learn how to form or maintain good habits, which will make the cows easier to handle and their job smoother.
- A statewide survey for dairy producers, where participants shared detailed records on inputs, management practices, and expenses associated with raising replacement heifers to generate updated benchmarks and highlight cost-saving opportunities, to support more informed decision-making and improve the economic sustainability of dairy operations.
- Developing the Bilingual Forward Farm Safety Toolbox. This hands-on resource is designed to support practical, effective safety training on dairy farms. This pilot event will be on April 14th and 15th at the Research Station in Arlington WI.
- Creation of interactive and educational hands-on models for training. Dairy farmers and their employees and adult learners benefit significantly from tactile, hands-on practice. The creation of these models would be an invaluable addition to my regional teaching programs and will help to keep animal health and welfare.

Jerry Wilcenski 4-H Program Educator, provided an oral report based on the written report provided to the committee.

- Bake-Off is a series of challenges that allow youth to expand baking skills and master a wide range of baked goods. Programming takes place at the Club level from December to July.
- Carcass Education: Youth learn about how animals are transformed into consumer meat products. Youth learn about yields, grades, margin factors for producers as well as how quality effects price and consumer demand.
- Food4ward Chocolate- From bean to bar youth learn about the production of cacao and the science behind how it becomes chocolate.

- Youth Livestock Marketing- A series of events that break down into four main categories: Youth care of animals, Meat Science and Carcass Quality, Genetics Marketing and Public Speaking
- Countywide Cloverbud Programming that highlights the various projects and activities 4-H has to offer.
- Palmyra In School Club- Every Friday, series goes through all of the project areas of 4-H from rabbits to Legos.
- Jefferson County 4-H kids had a great weekend at the State Meats Judging Contest at UW Madison. The Senior team of Keilah, Olivia, Gracelynn and Cheyenne finished in fourth place. The Junior team of Emmett, Fynnley, Nathan, Elliot and Gracie finished in fifth place. Nathan was Second in Evaluation and 4 Over- All. Keilah was 2 in Reasons. Olivia was 2 in Evaluation and 9 Over- All.

Cadance Hawk 4-H Associate Educator, provided an oral report based on the written report provided to the committee.

- Learning the organizational structure, culture, and logistics of 4-H programming in order to construct a foundation for future work and more effective outreach.
- Website updates to increase information accuracy, navigability, and presentation. The goal of this initiative is to increase accessibility to accurate program information for club members, volunteers, interested parties, and the community. Embedded within this is a subgoal to increase program participation and expand program reach.
- Expansion of social media presence to Instagram. The goal of this initiative is to expand awareness of Jefferson County 4-H programming and to connect with youth on the platforms they engage with on a regular basis. An additional goal is to connect with volunteers of varying age groups, following an expressed gap in connection with volunteer audiences.
- Development of Experiential Learning and Youth-Adult Partnership training modules for 4-H volunteers. These modules fill an expressed gap in volunteer training topics and provide an opportunity for interactive engagement with materials, which enhances information retention. The goal of these trainings is to uplift both volunteers and youth through education that serves as a foundational basis for 4-H principles and operations.

Julie Hill, Horticulture Educator, provided an oral report based on the written report provided to the committee.

- A yearlong activity/service for residents of Jefferson County to provide research based answers to their horticulture questions. The goal of this effort is to educate individuals of Jefferson County so they can implement best practices in their landscapes that will positively affect the environment and their communities.
- Started a Social Media campaign, "This Week in the Garden: Your Questions Answered" where I share gardening questions that came in, links to resources, and other timely tips. Weekly posts will continue throughout the growing season. On Facebook: Jefferson County UW Extension: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Dsm1jqCNH/>

- Participate in the Horticulture Environmental Stewardship workgroup where we created new website articles and .pdf handouts for in-person programs about Finding the Right Certified Arborist and Hiring a Lawn Care Service. Available on the Extension Horticulture website: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/>. Handouts will be shared at local programs.

Coming up:

April 24, 10 a.m., at Lake Mills Club 55, presenting Beyond Birdfeeders: How to be a bird-friendly gardener all year long.

Josh Kamps, Regional Crops Educator, provided an oral report based on the written report provided to the committee.

- A study to better understand the nutrient availability of mint biomass. Results from this study will help farmers in the area better utilize mint biomass as a crop fertilizer increasing profitability and reducing the risk of nutrient loss from agricultural crop fields.
- Planning for educational programming, relationship building, and needs assessment of farms and agribusinesses in collaboration with County-Led Ag Business Councils. The goal is to continue working on expanding the scope and influence of Extension work with new audiences while evaluating the topics covered related to the current needs of clientele.
- Planning and preparation for an educational workshop for grain farmers, dairy farmers, and crop and nutrition consultants in collaboration with the agriculture industry. The goal of the program is to provide research-based information to assist with decision-making that balances crop production goals with feed nutrition goals which reduces confusion between farm advisors and improves farm profitability.
- Material development and program planning for the 2026 Foundational Crop Scout Training being designed for entry level crop scouts. The goal of the training program is to teach the basic skills necessary for successful monitoring of field crops in Wisconsin with an emphasis on crop stand development, nutrient availability, and pest presence.
- An educational meeting for farmers, agronomists, and conservation professionals where on-farm nitrogen rate trial results, irrigation water nitrogen content, and soil sampling and nutrient management topics were discussed to inform field crop nutrient application rates that maximize crop production profitability and reduce the risk of nutrient loss from agricultural fields.

Coming up:

April 9th, Badger Crop Connect

2nd and 4th Thursday of each month

April-October (12:30pm - 1:30pm)

April 10th, Spring Field Day at the Rock County Farm

Janesville, WI (10:00am - 12:30pm)

May 19th, Foundational Crop Scout Training

Janesville, WI (10:00am - 2:30pm)

The full reports are included in the meeting packet distributed prior to this meeting and are also available on Jefferson County's website at www.jeffersoncountywi.gov.

Possible Items of Discussion/Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings: UW Ext – high level update from Chrissy Wen

Next Scheduled Meeting: May 11th, and June 8th

Adjourn: Motion by Foelker to adjourn at 9:17 a.m. Seconded by Morris and passed.

Minutes recorded by Lilianne Bidwell, Administrative Specialist