

Extension Education Committee Minutes

Date of Meeting: August 10th, 2026

Call to Order: Supervisor Matt Foelker called meeting to order at 0832

Roll Call: Quorum – Supervisor Francine Gies, and Supervisor Matt Foelker was present in person. Supervisor Dwayne Morris and Supervisor Elizabeth Hafften were present online. Supervisor John Kannard was absent.

Jerry Wilcenski, Chrissy Wen, Cadance Hawk, Steven Chmielewski, and Lilianne Bidwell were present in person. Alison Pfau, Julie Hill, and Josh Kamps were not present.

Michael Luckey, Sarana Stolar, and James Kuckkan were present via Teams.

Certification of Compliance with Open Meetings Law: In compliance.

Approval of Agenda: Agenda approved as printed by Foelker, second by Gies

Public Comment: None.

Approval of University Extension Education Committee Minutes from July 13, 2026: Motion by Foelker to approve the minutes as printed. Second by Gies and passed.

Communications: None

Review of 2026 Departmental Budget: Wen stated nothing new with budget and is on track.

Division of Extension update: Wen stated nothing new.

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), and Julie Hill (Horticulture Educator) presented in-person or via Teams, Josh Kamps (Regional Crop Educator).

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

- Planning and partnership development continued for the Rural Entrepreneur Venture (REV) Program in Palmyra. REV is a community-based economic development initiative designed to strengthen entrepreneurship, support small businesses, and identify opportunities for long-term community vitality. Local leaders, business owners, and community stakeholders are working together to assess assets, identify priorities, and develop strategies that support business growth and economic resilience. Locally developed REV Goals include:
 - Support and grow local businesses and entrepreneurs. (Comprehensive webpage in development stages as well)
 - Strengthen downtown vitality and community attractiveness. (Conducting commercial vacancy survey)
 - Build local leadership and partnerships to advance economic development workforce development with Youth Apprenticeship Program (Changes in PEASD staffing with DWD Youth Apprentice program need to be addressed)
- Extension is working with UW–Whitewater, City of Jefferson and Village of Palmyra to explore

launching the RenewTowns program, an initiative that helps rural communities strengthen entrepreneurship, support local businesses, and build long-term economic vitality. Community leaders, entrepreneurs, and residents collaborate to identify local assets, explore opportunities for business growth, and develop strategies that enhance community resilience and economic development. The program increases awareness of available resources, strengthens local partnerships, and supports sustainable community growth throughout the region. The program strengthens community partnerships, supports local entrepreneurs, encourages investment in downtowns and provides a framework to build on for years to come.

- Program planning for Jefferson County Transformative Government Workgroup to discuss development of a program to address the community engagement and awareness strategic priority.
- Additional discussion was conducted with Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission on analyzing economic impact of Public Rail System per member county to follow a request to better understand individual county's ROI of being part of a freight system

Events coming up:

PFAS & Emerging Contaminants: Community Education, Engagement, and Response – August 20

<http://go.wisc.edu/0s7256>

Solar panels and wind turbines are becoming increasingly common in Wisconsin's energy portfolio as low-cost, reliable energy sources. As our state's energy landscape shifts, many communities are facing new challenging conversations and navigating complicated processes, some for the first time.

To help communities navigate these changes with confidence, we invite you to join the [Fall 2026 Renewable Energy Cohort](#).

This virtual series will take place weekly on Thursdays from September 17th to October 8th from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM.

- § September 17: Wisconsin's Energy Landscape & Community Engagement
- § September 24: Community Priorities in Locally Permitted Projects
- § October 1: State Regulatory Process & Joint Development Agreements
- § October 8: Local Government Actions

Alison Pfau, Bilingual Regional Dairy Educator, was not present.

- A Badger Dairy Insight webinar for dairy producers and allied professionals, where participants learned methane emissions mitigation approaches, with attention to their effectiveness, tradeoffs, and relative costs within whole-farm systems.
 - Methane emissions continue to be a hot topic in the dairy industry and particularly in livestock production. The rumen microbial ecosystem is critical for the digestion of feedstuffs including energy sources which are the primary source of methane emissions from dairy cattle. Anaerobic manure storage is also a dominant source of methane emissions. In response to the need to better understand methane emissions, we developed a Badger Dairy Insight webinar focused on research being done on these topics. This program provided information on research from both the dairy cattle and manure created. Producers will have a better understanding of how energy sources and feed additives impact performance, feeding behavior, and methane emissions. They will also have a better understanding of how technological and management strategies can mitigate emissions from manure management systems.
- An information booth at Jefferson County Fair for the general public, where Extension staff provided information and resources about Extension programming.

- A bilingual (English and Spanish) newsletter, Bovi-noticias, for dairy farms, their employees, and industry partners, where research-based information is shared in accessible language to explain the reasons behind key farm management practices and provide practical insights for daily work, to strengthen communication, support the implementation of best practices, and foster a healthy farm culture that ultimately builds an engaged workforce, improves animal herd and well-being, enhances safety, optimizes resource use, and supports farm profitability.
 - The Wisconsin dairy industry continues to face challenges in animal health, productivity, and farm efficiency. While owners and managers often have strong foundational knowledge, frontline employees—responsible for daily animal care, feeding, and parlor work—need information that is both practical and easy to access. Language barriers further limit understanding and adoption of best practices. To address this gap, Dairy and Farm Management Extension Educators collaborated to create Bovi-noticias, a bilingual (English and Spanish) e-newsletter.
- Planning with Extension Dairy and Livestock educators to improve producers' understanding and implementation of daily biosecurity protocols within their herds or flocks. Established daily practices help prepare producers for enhanced biosecurity measures that will be implemented during a foreign animal disease response.
 - Livestock disease reduces U.S. animal productivity by 10–20%, depending on the sector. Routine biosecurity failures lead to hidden losses that often contribute more to productivity losses than obvious outbreaks. When farms don't have strong biosecurity or good planning, outbreaks get bigger and cause more damage. But with good biosecurity and business continuity plans, farms can reduce infections by up to 60% and shorten outbreaks. Experts agree that improving biosecurity is the most cost-effective way to protect livestock and limit economic losses.

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

- Summer Programming focused on youth sparks and expanding skills in food production and animal care with Beulah Homestead
 - *Ongoing*
- Livestock Marketing programming gives youth real world experience in marketing their livestock project to prospective buyers using industry criteria.
 - *Youth involved in livestock projects gain strong technical and animal husbandry skills; however, many lack structured opportunities to develop the marketing, communication, and business skills necessary to succeed in today's evolving agricultural industry. Modern livestock production increasingly requires producers to effectively communicate the value of their animals, genetics, and products to buyers and consumers. Research shows that while 4-H livestock programs build important life skills, communication and marketing-related skills are often less developed without intentional programming.*
- Countywide Cloverbud Programing that highlights the various projects and activities 4-H has to offer
 - *Improved understanding of 4-H, excitement for Cloverbud projects, improved sense of belonging to 4-H*
- Weekly in-school programing at the Palmyra Montessori school that provides and exploration of 4-H and its diverse project areas for new and primarily first generation 4-H youth
 - *Programming completed in: Legos, Food Science, Plants and Soil Sciences, Rabbits, Global Exploration, Archiving and Collections and Gems and Minerals.*
- The Youth Livestock Producers is series of programs and a youth lead committee that aims to build future leaders in fields of genetics, animal science, meat science and veterinary science.
 - *Ongoing*

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

- A photo contest initiative for 4-H members provides an opportunity for youth to participate in the photography project at a countywide level. In the month of July, we had 6 submissions, which is a 600% increase from the previous month. As the initiative gains traction, we hope to see a continued increase in submissions. This initiative also serves to increase social media engagement among families and community members, as votes are tallied based on social media likes, and folks are inclined to interact with photos taken by community youth. This is an ongoing initiative that will occur each month.
- Garnered a significant increase in social media engagement throughout the month of July. Statistics showed that views increased by 365.4% and interactions increased by 446.2%.

Julie Hill, Horticulture Educator, was not present.

- A new partnership with GIFTS Men's Homeless Shelter in Rock County to deliver gardening programming to their guests. The goals of this effort are to learn gardening skills and best practices to improve individual well-being, food productivity for the shelter, and build community.
 - Ongoing
- An information booth at Jefferson County Fair for the general public, where Extension staff provided information and resources about Extension programming.
- An interview for the WCLO listening audience, where listeners learned about horticulture resources and basic vegetable gardening. The goal of this effort was to increase awareness and knowledge about UW-Madison Extension Rock County Horticulture.
- An in-person presentation in collaboration with Jefferson Public Library where participants learned about proper horticulture practices to provide food resources and decrease/eliminate pesticide use to improve habitat availability for hummingbirds as a Wisconsin pollinator.
- A weekly social media outreach campaign for consumer gardeners utilizing Extension Jefferson County Facebook page to help promote local plant health diagnostic services and upcoming programs and improve understanding of how sustainable horticultural practices positively impact landscapes and ecosystems.
- 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.

Josh Kamps, Regional Crops Educator, was not present.

- A study to better understand the correlation between field management practices and corn rootworm pressure by utilizing insect emergence traps and yellow sticky cards to measure adult beetle populations during the soil emergence timing of July and August. Results from this study will help farmers, agronomists, and crop consultants in selecting appropriate management strategies to best control corn rootworm in corn production systems.
 - *The study will generate information on corn rootworm emergence patterns and adult population dynamics in relation to field management practices. Results will support the development of more effective and targeted corn rootworm management strategies, helping farmers, agronomists, and crop consultants select appropriate control measures that improve pest management efficiency, protect yields, and support sustainable corn production systems.*
- An project designed to calibrate the nitrogen application equipment being used for an on-farm research trial. The results of this project provided the necessary information required to adjust the application of nitrogen at 5 different rates across the trial field.
 - *The project provided the information necessary to accurately adjust the application equipment*

and implement the five nitrogen treatment rates as designed. As a result, the on-farm research trial was established with greater confidence in treatment accuracy, improving the reliability of trial data and supporting meaningful evaluation of nitrogen management practices.

- A farm consultation to provide assistance with identifying toxic plants and weed plants within a hay production system. Recommendations were shared to aid in reducing the presence of these undesirable plants which included a fertilization plan, strategic mowing timing suggestions, and the use of targeted herbicides. These management changes will help the farm produce safe forage with higher quality and higher yields for their animals.
 - The producer gained knowledge and practical recommendations for managing toxic plants and weeds within the hay production system. By implementing the recommended fertilization, mowing, and herbicide strategies, the farm is better positioned to produce safer, higher-quality forage, increase hay yields, and improve the long-term productivity and sustainability of the forage system.

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: Would like to keep this on the agenda to ensure it's an ongoing cause.

Next Scheduled Meeting: September 14th & October 12th @ 0830

Adjourn: Motion by Gies to adjourn at 0855. Second by Morris and passed.

Minutes recorded by Lilianne Bidwell, Administrative Specialist