Minutes

Attendance: Tanesha Pittman, Cook; Ed Schuckert, McHenry; Pam Garland, Lake; Dave Klussendorf, Kane; Alex Panozzo, Kankakee; Wayne Mundsinger, Kendall; Doug Tweeten, Will; Pat Kosmach, DuPage; and Extension staff members James Oliver, Ellen Phillips, and Cathie Condon.

Absent: None

Introductions

Review/approval of minutes from previous meeting: It was moved (Klussendorf) and seconded (Schuckert) to accept the minutes of October 2, 2009, as presented.

Programming spotlight

Ellen Phillips—Extension Center Educator, Crops Systems
Dr. James Oliver introduced Ellen Phillips who talked about topics in which she and her colleagues have been involved as they relate to agriculture, the environment, and other similar subject matter. Phillips distributed folders containing materials and an outline of teaching programs, research initiatives, and information resources such as newsletters, websites, and publications. She touched upon emerging technologies, ag/hort events, research, youth programs, the expanding organic food production sector, manure, and equine and small animal management.

Phillips has participated in several grants, one of them being Living on the Land. This SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) program teaches new, small-acreage owners good stewardship practices. It was piloted in Kankakee County and will be next offered in Kendall County in August. It is a 10-14 week course. An Illinois Department of Agriculture grant is currently in the works to fund the development of the Illinois Organic Association.

Phillips also contributes to research of insects and pesticides and is part of a group that is looking for farmers to volunteer the use of an acre of farmland to provide information on sulphur’s effect on corn crops. She edits a newsletter, “Extension Ag Update,” and is the author of several publications on soil testing, equine issues, curriculum, and assorted websites. Additionally, she regularly speaks to and delivers training to garden clubs and teaches Master Gardener classes.

Old Business: None

Sharing
See attached.
**State Advisory Council Report**—Tanesha Pittman

It was concluded that Cook County would remain as a one-unit office in the reorganized Extension. The plan is ongoing to work out various issues.

The Council visited Washington DC recently. There are federal dollars awarded to Extension to build relationships through use of volunteers. April 26-29 is a conference that will include a visit to Capitol Hill and the White House. There will be ten delegates from Illinois, and Tanesha will be presenting a breakout session at the conference—*Practice and Communication*—about having talking points in place and being consistent in delivering our message.

**New Business**

Contracts and insurance requirements for meeting space rental were discussed. For an event last year in McHenry County, it took months to have an agreement approved and signed for an event using a facility at no charge. The verbiage was simple, yet university’s legal counsel only reluctantly signed with the caveat that they would not do so in the future. Dr. Oliver will bring up the issue with the university.

**Administrative Update**

**Reorganization**—Dr. Oliver

The Director of Extension has asked that County Directors work with their councils on reorganizing and making recommendations. Unit offices are to be comprised of three to five counties with the exception of Cook County. Cook will not join with another county. Directors should have several options worked out in case their first choice is not accepted. Combining offices means a decrease in the number of directors needed. However, there are quite a few County Director positions vacant, and we anticipate creating some educator positions as well. Additionally, the university created the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) to minimize layoffs because the current number of county directors will be reduced from 70+ to 30 or so. Decisions on which VSIP applications are accepted will not be known until June. By July we will know what the county office configurations will look like, and the plan will be implemented next year.

Center offices will be closed, and those staff members will be placed into counties. Counties will receive additional funds to support these positions and the new unit configurations will see all of them having at least one educator.

University hasn’t received any payments, and Illinois is in a tough position. There will be no county board match this year. The controller cannot release money that isn’t there.

Discussion followed regarding the financial aspect of merging counties. County boards expect reports on how funds are spend in their county.

It was suggested that a regional person be employed to deal with fundraising and handle the intricacies of networking and relationship building. Volunteers also need to be taken into consideration so that we don’t lose good people. Dr. Oliver welcomes additional thoughts and suggestions, and he’ll take them to campus. Email him your comments [jdoliver@illinois.edu].
Questions from the press can be directed to Gary Beaumont on campus [beaumont@illinois.edu or 217-333-9440].

**Civil Service Update**
Nothing scheduled at this time for office support staff or paraprofessional staff in the way of professional development.

**Staff Training**
Grant writing workshops will finish in May.

It was moved (Kosmach) and seconded (Mundsinger) to adjourn the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be Friday, October 1, 2010, at the Countryside Center in Countryside.