Southern Regional Advisory Meeting Minutes, March 18, 2010

Present: Jonathan Voelz, AJMPU; Bryan Marcoot, Bond County; David Wheat, Edwards/Wabash Unit; Charles Nolan, Hamilton/Wayne/White; Scott Martin, Jackson County; Robert Koehn, Jackson County; Sam Hayes, Jefferson County; Anne Nowak, Madison/St. Clair Unit; Harry Braddock, Marion County; Elden Niemeyer, Monroe County; Gaylen Greer, Perry County; Angela Truluck, Randolph County; Richard Maloney, Saline/Gallatin/Pope/Hardin; Mike Chwasczinski, Washington County; Pam Jacobs, Monroe County Extension Director & Interim Associate Regional Director and Dale Law, Southern Regional Director

The group enjoyed a meal together followed by a call to order by Elden Niemeyer, Chairman and the members introduced themselves. The minutes of the September 24, 2009 meeting were reviewed. Elden indicated that Angela Truluck from Randolph County was omitted from the attendance on the minutes. The corrected minutes were approved.

Dale Law reviewed the items in the packet which included: a letter to the Illinois legislators along with the Southern Region highlight report; several recent copies of the Extension in Action newsletter, and a copy of the Southern Region newsletter. In addition, there was a map of the Illinois Extension offices and copy of the power point that Dr. Hoeft used at the public listening sessions. Dale indicated that zero County Board Match funds have been provided to counties at this time. He also indicated that County Directors will be asked to use 65% match rate to develop the FY11 budgets. The proposed State Budget lists County Board Match funds at 10 million versus the 14 million needed for full match rate. The Interim State Extension Director has indicated that U of I Extension must show a cost saving of 7 million dollars.

The Carbondale and Mt. Vernon Extension Centers will close in June and July when the leases are up. Edwardsville Center will close when that lease comes due in the fall of 2011. All Extension Centers across the state will close at end of their leases which will be in 2011. Many of the educators will work out of county office facilities and Dale is working with county Extension directors and educators to work out agreeable office arrangements.

University of Illinois is owed over $700 million from the state. Campus & Region Administrative staff & Extension Educators/Specialists are required to take furlough days as a cost saving method.

Dale explained the timeline for Reorganization:
April 5-9-------------Criteria for multi-county formation will be provided to counties
April- June----------Regional Directors will meet with counties
May-September-----County Extension Directors will meet with local councils, Co. Board members, key leaders and Extension volunteers and other counties to develop the multi-county formation.
March 2011--------All new multi-county formations/partnerships will be complete
July 2011----------The reorganization goes into effect

Questions and comments from council members included:
- Statement that a County Board has expressed with county mergers and sharing a Co. Ext. Director, local funding support will decrease.
- Some county combinations might not work well depending on county demographics.
- Expressed the importance of local presence to assure local funding. Concern that County Boards are watching everything to see where available dollars might be saved.
- The current multi-county units have worked fairly well with a shared Co. Ext. Director.
- Perhaps Extension offices should try to share facility with the local Farm Bureau or other agencies within the county.
- Question regarding community worker positions and tenure.
- Question about what the 4-H program fee is covering and concern about charging this fee with the reorganization situation.
- Everyone must be aware that maintaining public relations throughout the reorganization is critical. County Boards need to be kept informed/involved in order to continue their support.

Dale Law said county Extension directors & Councils are encouraged to discuss lower rent options with facility owners. The message to county boards is that reduction in administrative & facility costs will help with increased educational staff support. Members in current multi-county units described how their units worked which saved money with a shared Co. Ext. director. The Council arrangement does vary from the current multi-county formations. Multi-county units submit one budget but most keep separate records on each county for accountability to the County Boards and Extension Councils.

Dale explained that University of Illinois is offering a Voluntary Separation Incentive package and fifty-two people have applied….this can include both professional as well as support staff.

Elden Niemeyer presented the Extension Partners Report. The Extension Partners web address is www.extensionpartners.org. Extension Partners is a lobbying group for Extension. Elden volunteered to attend a local council meeting to speak about Extension Partners.

Bob Koehn and Elden reported on the State Advisory Council. Federal Smith Lever funds have remained at the same level the past several years which is a decrease in purchasing ability. Bob indicated that Pam Weber Extension Partners Lobbyist is a valuable resource to Extension. The Council questioned Dr. Hoeft about any plans for reorganization prior to the public meetings and he assured them that there were no plans in place.
Keith Krapf is also a member of the State Advisory Council. The next State Advisory Council meeting is in the fall.

Sharing County Reports—Elden informed the group that the unit reports will not be verbally presented, instead everyone should review the reports found in the packet. These reports are also provided to all County Extension Directors to share at Council meetings. Members can contact any county unit or members if they have questions about items in the reports.

Pam Jacobs reported on the 4-H Youth Legislative Connection, held March 9, at the State Capitol. 4-H members across the state did an outstanding job of representing the Illinois 4-H program. Bradley Braddock, 4-H member from Marion County enjoyed a great opportunity to speak to House Speaker Michael Madigan. The Phase II part of the 4-H Youth Legislative Connection is for 4-H members and Extension volunteers to make appointments to visit legislators in their home district offices during the Legislative break (March 29-April 13).

The next meeting is Thursday, September 30, 2010 at 6:30pm.

Meeting adjourned.
Submitted by Scott Martin