Council Members in Attendance: Aaron Carlin (Champaign), Norma Calvert (Clark), Brad Clark (Clay-Fayette), Bill Uphoff (Coles), Rodger Sprague (DeWitt), Paul Ruff (Edgar), Bob Westendorf (Effingham), Bill Pool (Ford-Iroquois), Vivian Hallet (Jasper-Cumberland), Kathy Sancken (Livingston), Mike Bartimus (Macon), Lynn Ash (McLean); Sheila Gruelle (Moultrie-Douglas), Jan Wenke (Piatt), Jim Hampton (Shelby), Becky Robinson (Vermilion), Jack Pfaffmann (Woodford), Brian Basting (State Advisory Council), Karen Hawthorne (State Advisory Council), Kathy Reiser (Associate Regional Director), and Nigel Austin (Interim Regional Director).

Guests in Attendance: Dr. Judee Richardson and Dr. Mike Gray

Karen Hawthorne, State Advisory Council, served as President Pro-Tem. Karen called the meeting to order shortly after 7:00 p.m. President Pro-Tem Hawthorne welcomed all participants and an introduction of county representatives followed. Minutes of the Spring TeleNet Meeting (May 6, 2010) were reviewed and approved.

Administrative Update – Nigel Austin, Interim Regional Director
Nigel expressed his appreciation for the support during the last several months of re-organization, followed by an overview of the re-organization efforts:

- Extension Units in Illinois will be reduced from 76 to 27; a map of the new configuration was provided. In the East-Central Region, the 23 counties have been consolidated into six multi-county units.
- Woodford County will be joining the East-Central Region but Lawrence and Richland Counties will be reassigned to the Southern Region.
- Nigel reviewed the County Directors’ names for each newly formed Unit and announced the new County Directors were assigned effective 11/1/10 and should be working with the Executive Council in each multi-county Unit. There are currently three Units in the State where County Directors have not yet been appointed. These three positions are currently being advertised with an application deadline of 11/15/10.
- Most Educator positions have been filled (with the exception of 24 in the state) and a public announcement of those names was made on the afternoon of 11/11/10. The Educators will begin their new responsibilities effective 7/1/11.
- Under the new organizational structure, Educators will report directly to the County Directors rather than to the Regional Director as was the reporting structure in the past.
- The Effingham Center was closed effective 6/30/10 and the Educators were relocated throughout the region. The Champaign Center will be closing 6/30/11.
- Retirements under the Voluntary Incentive Program were effective August 15, 2010.
- Currently there are five regions throughout the state. It is anticipated this number will be reduced, but a definite timetable is uncertain at this time. The Associate Regional Director position is being eliminated.
- Civil Service staff positions such as Program Coordinators, Secretaries and Community Workers, will be addressed in 2011. It is expected that all reorg-related personnel issues will be finalized by 6/30/11.
• Statewide Program Leaders will be: Dr. Judee Richardson, Family and Consumer Sciences; Dr. Mike Gray, Ag and Natural Resources; Dr. Ryan Hobson, Community & Economic Development (interim); and Dr. Denise Legvold, Youth & 4-H.

The evening’s program was provided by Drs. Gray and Richardson, who addressed the future of their respective program areas.

• Dr. Gray’s presentation, “Increasing Relevance & Impact in the New Century,” included an overview of the challenges Ag and Natural Resources staff have been given to create a 10-year plan for Extension that address fiscal challenges, changing demographics, and new priorities for USDA. It is recognized that additional resources will have to come from outside USDA. Illinois’ Land-Grant University has fewer Extension specialists than any other state. It is expected that expertise and resources will be shared across Unit, Regional and even State boundaries.

• --Dr. Richardson spoke about the importance of aligning Extension programs with priorities of the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute for Food and Agriculture. NIFA focuses on inter-agency partnerships that support research-based projects, while promoting efforts that can be assessed through quantifiable results. Historically, Illinois Extension has relied on small grant opportunities to fund projects; going forward, NIFA will require us to think bigger and identify goals and projects that impact a broad audience. Other states are facing challenges similar to the University of Illinois. States are looking at ways to share faculty specialists and to be creative and collaborative across program areas. It is also critical that we fully evaluate ways to utilize technology that is available to accomplish our goals.

Kathy Reiser told the group that the spring meeting will be a teleconference on Thursday, May 5 starting at 6:30 p.m. The date of the fall meeting will be confirmed at the May meeting.

• Officers for 2011 were elected: President: Jan Wenke (Piatt County); Vice-Chair: Rodger Sprague (DeWitt County); and Secretary: Norma Calvert (Clark County).

• Brian Basting, of the State Advisory Committee reported they will be traveling to Washington, D.C. in the early spring to meet with elected officials. It is expected funding will be flat at the national level.

• Unit Council representatives shared program information. Each provided a written summary of a program in their Unit that had been successful.

--The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. with Nigel Austin thanking all for attending.

Submitted by:
Norma Calvert, Secretary
East Central Region Advisory Council