Opening: Monica called the State Master Gardener Advisory Committee to order at 10:00 am on May 18, 2010.


On Telenet: Mary Jo Novak, Rhonda Ferree, Rachelle Hollinshead

Minutes: The minutes were amended and approved.

Introductions: Lindsey Snell has just begun her duties as Monica’s office assistant.

REPORTS

MG Conference: Registration at about 150. Monica would like to do county blitz to remind people. Monica will email County directors.

Hawthorn Suites gave great room rate of $70/night which includes breakfast. The tours will leave from there. Lunch will be under a tent on campus with a tour of campus during lunch.

Search for Excellence: 3 search for excellence winners from Illinois. Winners will receive award at international conference in VA.

1st place Boone Co for EAB and Ash Tree Inventory

2nd place Macon Co for rain barrel

2nd place Champaign Co for juvenile detention center garden

Organic Gardening: Rich Tobias just finished Master Degree at U of I. Focus of organic gardening for home owners. Has agreed to make facts sheets for MG’s to answer questions. He will do Elluminate sessions for MGs for CEU’s later this summer or fall.

Thinking Green: A committee has been working on this project for over a year. They have come up with a curriculum package which includes 3 areas of focus- Worm, Butterfly, and Insect track. There are ready to teach lessons under each category. 15 or 20 counties have offered to pilot. Any MG or 4H group that agrees to pilot will receive the curriculums. Schools who participate will receive magnifying glasses, a Fandex flip filed guide for bugs, the book One Small Square: My Backyard by Donald Silver and other resources. Others interested contact Monica or Lisa Diaz. More information will be coming to the counties later this summer.
Counties on board are:
Macon
Sangamon
Will
Fulton/Mason/Tazewell
Sangamon
Henry Stark
Rock Island
LaSalle
McDonough
DuPage
Kane
Peoria
Montgomery
Perry

2012 Conference: Monica has been hesitant to commit to a site due to budget. According to rotation we should be NE. Both Will and McHenry counties are willing to host and are investigating conference venues.

2013 Conference: Conference will be southern Indiana and will be a combined Indiana-Illinois conference. Discussion on possibility of partnering with Missouri or Wisconsin.

Advisory Committee Policies: The current bi-laws state that members will be selected from each of the 5 regions. Extension will soon go down to 3 regions. Board is currently missing Southern and NE staff person. This committee will need to re-do these issues. A possibility discussed was changing to 3 MG and 3 staff from each region. Discussion on lack of representation of southern Illinois. Discussion on leaving our current regions for this committee. All agreed that MG Advisory Board should worry about geographic representation rather than following new Extension regional boundaries. After much discussion it was tabled.

Silent Auction: Gift account will be opened after the silent auction in July. Counties can submit for mini-grants to the state office. Due to the changes in U of I procurement policies- it has become hard to reimburse volunteers. Receipts will need to be turned in to the county before funds can be released from the state office. It would be a funds transfer to County. Typically each the silent auction raises about $3500 to $4000. These are the funds which would be available for the mini-grants.

The committee needs to decide the process for counties to apply for funds and how the committee would choose which counties will be chosen. Discussion on how to set dollar limits and what information is needed to apply. Impact and follow up reports may be needed. Counties could ask for a set amount but may only receive partial funding. Monica will compile a proposed application and will send out for our feedback. We are looking to have application form together by fall for following year planning.
**Advanced Training:**

Our current policy stipulates that advanced training requires 24 hours of instructional contact in one horticulture related topic area. We have done advanced training in Tree ID and diseases. Advanced training is different than the annual 10 CEUs that are required. Many questions about awarding advanced training for Master Composter or Master Naturalist. The current training for the MN program is a minimum of 40 hours and up to 60/70. Master Composter usually is less than 24 hours of training.

Discussion on several aspects of changing current policy: Some feel that some MG’s leave the program when they complete the MN training. What about volunteers double dipping hours? Discussion on getting CEU from other places. Should that count as advanced training? Possibly stringing courses together and recognizing those who have completed. Why 24 hours? Some states count any training above regular time as advanced training. Discussion on advanced training vs. CEU’s and what’s the difference. Needs to be known who has completed advanced training so info can be utilized. Suggestion of reduction on hour requirement. Needs to be one TOPIC.

The committee finally decided to offer 4 areas of advanced training:
1. **Master Naturalist**: grandfather in those who have completed the training in the last 2 years. Minimum of 40 hours of training required.
2. **Sustainable Landscaping**: minimum of 20 hours of training. Could include Master Composter (the folks who have already taken this course could grandfather their hours in); rain barrel or rain garden classes, other sustainable classes thru Extension.
3. **Advanced IPM**: minimum 20 hours of training. Could include PSEP training, DDDI training, NCIPM module on Diagnostics; IPM modules to be released from state office; invasive classes; conference workshops on invasives, weeds, bugs, diseases.
4. **Advanced Local Foods**: minimum 20 hours of training. Could include local foods trainings, local foods or specialty crops conference sessions, GAP training, organics sessions such as the one to be offered later this summer.

Those who have completed MN or Master Composter could be grandfathered in. Monica will provide certificates and pins. The committee will need to redo the policy.

**MG Volunteer Reporting:**

Some counties are still not using data base. 35 are using. Another meeting place training session is scheduled for September 7.

One problem staff is having is with entering activities for multiple counties. Chris Tidrick has told us that MG needs to switch counties when they report in. Discussion on that MG’s won’t be able to remember which county they need to go to. Committee prefers to have staff be able to enter activities in multiple counties rather than having volunteers switch counties when they enter their time.
Approval time is a hassle for some staff. Travel time not acceptable for CEU’s but yes for volunteer time.

Discussion on categories in the system and how they are important for impact reporting. Reporting demographics is a feature which has not been used much by the staff or volunteers. Staff can enter or designated MG to enter that info but demographics are important.

Suggested improvements include MGs being able to delete mistakes and add the option for MGs to suggest volunteer activities to their coordinators. Monica will bring these ideas to Jane Scherer and will also ask that a link to the system be placed on the MG website.

Rhonda FAQ created for MG’s- Monica will distribute these.

2012 Trainings

Hort team met to see what they can teach and where sessions should be taught. Elluminate was used in 2011 for session in McLean, Jefferson and Coles Counties. McLean did the annuals and perennials via Elluminate and used veteran MGs to answer questions after the taped sessions, so there was live interaction. This was well received by trainees. For 2012 we will have the option of running the live sessions. We may need to use the live sessions to cover subject matter such as soils or insects- where few educators have the expertise to teach those classes.

Tapped Elluminate sessions will be used in 2012 for online trainees, makeups, or for big weather issues.

Examining Future MG trainings After July 1, Monica will talk with County Directors and educators on the best locations to host 2012 trainings and who will be available to train at those locations. It may be left up to the new units to decide which location within the unit is best for training. However- we cannot train in all 27 new units each year –so locations will also have to be considered regionally.

Discussion on the possibility of having people outside Extension doing MG trainings. MN uses field professionals (Jr. College instructors or IDNR). They would need to use MG manual and our curriculum to instruct. Credentials would need to be checked.

Discussion about offering online training more than once a year. It takes Monica about 15 hours a week when the training is going to keep up with grading assignments and answering questions.

HOW TO GET HORT QUESTIONS ASKED:

Hort team is working on a list for being able to answer questions. They will have step by step instructions of how to deal with client Hort questions. One important aspect is having MG’s in unit deal with them first. These instructions will deal with

Monica gave out a handout on how other states handle questions by having a regional question center. This may be good for southern Illinois where there are not a lot of MG’s. Typically little counties have had secretaries call the MG on duty. Cook County has more than enough volunteers and would be able to pick up some questions. They have an electronic plant clinic.
**Purchasing Supplies for MG projects:**

Monica has had numerous directors’ call with questions about how to get supplies paid for MG projects. How should volunteers get reimbursed for supplies? McLean sets up committee chairs as vendors in Banner and set up standing orders with some vendors. Most have staff members go to purchase with p card. Other suggestions: have staff call vendor with P-card or have staff do 1 major buying trip.

Bus trips should have an Extension staff member on the trip if bus is purchased by Extension.

Discussion on if it’s necessary to add rider insurance for bus trips. MG’s are covered by Extension insurance.

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

7/6/11 12-4 Plant Science Lab on campus

9/14/11 10-3 Champaign

11/16/11 10-3 telnet (probably)

2/8/12 10-12 telnet

5/16/12 10-3 Champaign