

University of Wisconsin Education, Extension and Agriculture Committee
Thursday, March 17th, 2016
James P. Coughlin Center – Volunteer Room

Members Present: Tom Widener, Tom Snider, and George Scherck.

UW-Extension Staff: Chris Kniep, Mandi Dornfeld, Darrell McCauley, Catherine Neiswender, and Amy Timm.

Others Present: Gerald Correthers via Skype.

Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Tom Widener.

Comments from the Public related to items on the agenda: None.

Approval of Minutes: Scherck moved to approve the 2/18/ 2016 minutes, 2/26/2016 minutes, and 2/29/2016 minutes; seconded by Widener. Motion carried **3-0**.

Regional Director Report: Regional Directors Gerald Correthers joined the committee to provide an up-date on the status of nEXT Generation and respond to questions. The Chancellor, Cathy Sandeen, has taken charge of the reorganization process. The majority of updates and information are coming directly from her office instead of the Dean, Richard Klemme. Correthers reviewed the “Probability of Change” document that was shared at the East-Metro meeting and the correspondence that had been sent from Administration. The steering committee met for the first time on March 4th and will select the planning groups in April. It is undetermined which area the planning groups will focus on first. They are trying to make the reorganization people-centric: to do the best they can for the people involved and allow them to be part of the process. Some definition of the structure could happen in May, but no earlier – the graphic shared in the first draft is no longer being used. County partners will be consulted as Extension goes through these changes. The governance systems within Extension will also be consulted on a monthly to weekly basis. Correthers encouraged the committee to share any concerns or feedback they have.

Program Reports:

Family Living Programs: Dornfeld reviewed the *Real Happy Hour* program. UW-Extension has partnered with Re-Think, and other organizations in the county-wide effort. The group is awaiting a response on the grant she helped write applying for assistance to fund the program. Baseline surveys were conducted at back-to-school fairs last fall to gather information on how often families sit down for a meal together and what factors deter them from doing so. Evidence has shown that having regular meals with family is a preventative factor that reduces substance use and improves family relationships.

Dornfeld reviewed the *WI Bookworms™* program, a partnership between Head Start, WI Public Television and UW-Extension delivered by the HCE organization. The program is offered at 2 Head Start locations in Winnebago County. A wide base of demographics and developmental needs are seen in the children involved in the program. Each child is given 8 books per year. Volunteers read the books, create lessons, and develop take-home crafts for the children to enhance learning. UWEX’s goal is to leverage other organizations with a passion for literacy, such as US Venture and Altrusa, to provide additional funds and volunteers to support the program.

Agriculture: McCauley shared that local waters are very brown right now due to the significant erosion from areas that have been conventionally farmed. Implementing cover crops is a method for reducing runoff that will have quick results in improving water quality. Interseeding corn crops with clover, barley, and other crops that grow beneath the corn canopy helps to secure the soil and reduce runoff. Cover crops also help prevent regrowth, reduce pesticide use, and reduce nitrogen. Changing tillage procedures to implement no-till increases water infiltration. This approach challenges tradition with evidence that no-till practices work. McCauley has partnered with focus groups to help disperse education and evidence to other farmers. Farmers are starting to coordinate with their neighbors to determine the best times for spreading manure to reduce odor complaints. This year’s *Tractor Safety* program was successful. The seven youth who completed the program liked having the class offered on a farm – something new this year.

Committee Chair Report:

nEXT Generation: Widener expressed concern over a “culture of fear,” regarding the reorganization process. People have been afraid to ask questions for fear of repercussions. A proposal was shared for considering a 2-county organization partnering Winnebago and Calumet counties vs. the 4-county structure currently identified. Calumet county has passed a resolution stating they will not be going along with the reorganization. There are questions of what that might look like if they do separate from the state. With all of the uncertainty surrounding the reorganization,

Widener encouraged staff to continue doing the excellent job they already do. Scherck suggested going on record that the committee supports a positive view and for individuals to share their concerns/suggestions openly.

Vacation Policy: Widener presented a "Vacation Days Summary" to the Personnel & Finance Committee. According to the information compiled, Winnebago County is comparable to other counties/municipalities after 10 years of employment but is weaker than other counties/municipalities for new-hires. Widener presented the information for P&F to consider and indicated that the committee would follow up in the future.

UW-Extension – Administration: Kniep shared that budget carryovers have been approved to allow for adding electricity to the new garage at the fairgrounds. Facilities will be doing the work to limit costs.

PA System/Hearing Loop Status: The hearing loop is now connected to the PA System, and both systems are functional. The new system includes 6 handheld microphones. 2 microphones are assigned to Side B, and 4 are assigned to Side A. Lapel microphones are also available. Additional table-top microphone stands have been ordered.

Staff Updates: 15 applications have been received for the open WNEP position. Applications are being reviewed now. Interviews will be conducted in April.

UWEX Updates – Department Activities: Kniep shared that there has been no slow-down in the amount of work the staff is doing at UW-Extension. This is consistent with Winnebago County UW-Extension's commitment to remain positive and move forward during the reorganization process.

Comments by Committee Members: None.

Next Meeting: Next regular committee meeting will be held Thursday, April 21st, 2016 with the current board members.

Adjourned: Scherck moved to adjourn; seconded by Snider. Motion carried **3-0**, 11:14 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Amy Timm