MINUTES OF THE MEETING

The Saline County Extension Board met on Wednesday March 29, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. Present were Michelle Renner, Sandy Krivohlavek, Deb Steuk, Austin Nicholson, Aaron Niederklein, Theresa Vernon (Ag Society Representative) and Phil Hardenburger (County Commissioner Representative). Staff present were Nathan Mueller, Maddie Werner, Melanie Kunc, Becky Vales, Anita Stougard and Tara Dunker.

The meeting was not initially called to order as a quorum was not present. It was decided to proceed with staff reports.

Program area reports:

Food and Nutrition - Tara Dunker gave a Food and Nutrition presentation by way of a Trivia game with food questions. She is based out of Beatrice with a seven-county accountability region. She has a partnership with the Crete Intermediate after school program, which is third through fifth graders. This promotes keeping all kids active. She is an active member of the Crete Welcoming committee and has connections with Doane University and Crete School Administrators. Tara has worked with FCs students to get their serve safe certification so they may work in food service. She works with State wide grant funded programs to allow food access in communities by writing grants for food and nutrition. She works with Jason Tuller for local grocery store start-ups to provide fresh fruits and vegetables and allows them to get additional funding.

Water and Integrated Cropping Systems – Nathan Mueller presented a Nebraska map representing his accountability region of Saline Jefferson and Gage counties and the other counties he has fielded calls and done visits in 2022. He has had 95 requests for information and site visits so far this year. This number is increasing a little more each year. A new Agronomist has been hired for Lancaster, Cass and Otoe counties. Mueller is currently serving as the interim director of Nebraska Extension Weather Ready Farms Program, interim Water and Integrated Cropping Systems (WICS) educator for Johnson-Pawnee-Nemaha-Richardson counties and covering required private pesticide application training and chemigation training for Lancaster-Cass-Otoe WICS accountability region. As a result, Mueller proctored 3 local chemigations training for 27 chemigators in partnership with the Lower Big Blue, Nemaha, and Lower Platte South NRDs. Mueller cotaught 18 private pesticide applicator trainings in 12 counties. Mueller partnered with the Lower Big Blue NRD to co-teach two Phase II Nitrogen Management trainings. Mueller helped deliver several statewide programs including the UNL Soil School in Lincoln, and 3 programs in Beatrice: UNL Crop Production Clinic, Ag Lease Workshop, and Nebraska On-Farm Research Meeting. As a result of winter programming January through March, Mueller reached over 1,600 clientele.

Early Childhood – Ingrid Lindal was not present but provided a written report on the CHIME program. It states the CHIME Program provides education and guidance on how to incorporate mindfulness and reflective practice into the daily routine. Ingrid is currently teaching CHIME in Spanish to 18 Spanish-speaking families in Crete. This is possible in part through a grant given to Dr. Holly Hatton-Bowers who is an extension specialist with our early childhood team. This grant provided Ingrid the opportunity to teach the class without cost and provide materials to the parents. Public Health Solutions in Crete has been a great partner and allowed her to provide the class in their facility and provide childcare for the families.

Youth Diversion and Clover Kids – Anita Stougard has been back doing the Clover Kids afterschool program since February after a lengthy illness. She is teaching 45 kids in 5 schools. She is working with one youth in Diversion and they should be finished in the next 30 days. Anita has been working with the County Attorney to streamline the program for the last year. The referrals are now going through the attorney’s office first and this has been working very well. Since July 22, 2022 through the present there have been 6 youth through the program.

4-H Youth Development – Maddie Werner has been working in the office since February 3, 2023. She is from Syracuse and graduated from UNL. She interned in the Otoe County Extension office. She has started the embryology program in Crete with 160 third graders. This is her first time teaching it so she is learning as she goes. She will finish in Crete in about a week and then will move on to Wilber, Dorchester and St. James in Crete. Maddie is working on summer programs and may be doing something with barn quilts. She has been working with Becky Vales on County Fair preparations and most of the judges have been hired. She has been doing professional training in person and via Zoom, learning and on-boarding. Becky is working on the fair book, working on Ads. Recognition and recruitment night in March went very well, with 7 new families coming and then enrolling in 4-H. Becky noted the Lottery pig selection will be this coming Sunday. There is a new breeder this year providing 46 pigs. This number has remained steady in the past few years. She is working with Ingrid, through a Norris Round-up grant, to create a new Kid Zone in the South end of the Ag Hall during the county fair. Hoping to promote Ag literacy, have crafts available, Q & A with live animals and many other ideas. They have received donations for supplies. Nebraska Game and Parks has talked about bringing their trailer as well.

Other reports – Ingrid and Kay Kotas attended the NACEB meeting yesterday. They will give us an update at the next meeting. Nicole Stoner has been in the office frequently. She is working on the Master Gardener program and will be in the Saline County Extension office one day a month throughout the summer.

4-H Council – Sandy Krivohlavek stated they have decided on the scholarship winners. They had seven applicants and they all received something. The council is working on revising some by-laws, regarding money earned in 4-H.

Ag Society – Theresa Vernon reported all contracts are signed and done for the 2023 County fair. The city gave them the Sertoma building which needs a new roof, but will continue to be used for storage for the food stand and other things if possible. It has been proposed to take out the soccer and ball fields, leaving more space for campers. They talked about the need for new rest rooms. The inside of Ag Hall building has been painted.

County Commissioners – Phil Hardenburger talked about the UNL President’s Advisory Committee. President Ted Carter spoke on the main issue of Chancellor Ronnie Green’s resignation. A 23- person search committee was formed and will take applications until April 3, 2023, that will go to Regents. Ted Carter will do the hiring and appoint a new Chancellor. Ted Carter talked about the budget and they want a 3% increase and they will likely get 2%. The Senators also spoke on insights as to what is going on. The county has formed a Health Insurance committee to look at self-funding health insurance going forward. It would likely be better insurance than what they have now. They are looking into the process. The commissions will meet with a contractor this week to look at the old jail. They are running out of office space. They could use ARPA funds to fund the remodel of the space into offices. Extension still has some stuff stored there that would need to be removed. A spot was found to store the 4-wheeler at that location.

At 6:10 p.m. Austin Nicholson, V.P., called the meeting to order.

Melanie Kunc read the budget report, but no action was taken since we were lacking a quorum.

Nathan talked a little about the summer internship. According to the University the internship has heavy programming responsibilities. Ingrid and Maddie have changed the job description so it has more of a part-time 4-H focus. Could it be under the 4-H Extension intern budget? The position needs to be advertised publicly requesting a high school or college student. We discussed payment options as the money is already in the budget and we would not need a new vote to determine how they would be paid. Nathan collected bids to paint the office, but it will have to wait until a full meeting to determine where funds will come from. The Facilities committee consisting of Austin, Kellen, and Dan Johnson will meet to discuss the painting. Phil stated that it is the county’s building and possibly could be painted half one year and half the next with monies left in the budget.

Nathan will look at dates the financial committee can meet in May to discuss the 2023-2024 budget. That committee is Nathan, Kellen, Sandy and Deb.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Steuk, Secretary