

University of Wisconsin Education, Extension and Agriculture Committee
Thursday, January 21, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Steve Binder, Tom Borchart and Doug Zellmer.

Members Absent: Tom Snider and Karen D. Powers

Extension Winnebago County Staff: Chris Viau, Mandi Dornfeld, Todd Wenzel and Dana Berger.

Others Present: None.

Meeting Called to Order at 9:00 a.m. by Steve Binder.

Approval of Agenda: Zellmer moved to approve the 01/21/2021 agenda; seconded by Borchardt.

Comments from the Public Related to Items on the Agenda: None.

Approval of Minutes: Zelmer moved to approve the 12/17/2020 minutes; seconded by Borchardt.

Safety Share: Borchardt reports Vaccines are starting to be available and he is seeing lots of masks when he goes out in public. Binder was surprised when Mark Harris told them the county has only gotten 900 vaccines so far. Borchardt is also confused about how to get a vaccine - thought it would come through the Health Dept, yet now it seems like it is coming through hospitals. Dornfeld shared that vaccines are currently being routed to the Provea Health community site at the UWGB campus. Those 65 and up from any community can create an online account and make an appointment for the vaccine with Provea Health. Dornfeld will email the link to the committee members (she is not endorsing a vaccine, just sharing info on where those 65&up can get it if they are interested).

Committee Chair Report:

Binder wishes Snider well - hopes he has a speedy recovery and can rejoin us soon.

UW Division of Extension Program or Educator Reports and Updates:

Financial Management (Todd Wenzel): In the financial world, a lot of things are hinging on what happens with COVID and the 2nd Cares Act. Evictions in Winnebago County are 2nd highest despite having a moratorium for 6 months. Winnebago County evictions higher than Outagamie County. 38 evictions already this month, even with CDC moratorium in place. Not good numbers, trying to figure out why our eviction rate is so high - this is the current focus of the Winnebago County Eviction Prevention Task Force that Todd is a part of. Other agencies represented include: United Way, Conflict Resolution Center, Advocap, Forward Service Corporation. On January 20, the Biden administration extended the eviction moratorium till the end of February. Not only residents, but landlords are being hurt by this situation. When the moratorium ends we could see unprecedented eviction rates across the country. Nationwide - 1 in 10 people currently owe back rent, are worried about next month's rent or are in danger of being evicted.

Rent Smart classes offered online statewide. 40 participants completed the course last year, 15 of them from Winnebago County. This month 23 participants enrolled in Rent Smart, 8 of these from Winnebago County. Winnebago County has a higher rate of participants than other counties - we have supportive community partners here that promote the program and refer clients. Rent Smart Train the Trainer held in December: 169 participants from 8 different states coast to coast. This program is a well-known program nationally.

Encouraging Financial Conversations - Wenzel is co-presenting training for front-line staff like case managers. Counties participating: Winnebago, Outagamie, Calumet, Green Lake, Fond du Lac, Washington. 57 people registered. Offering classes twice/week. Goal is to get front-line staff armed with research-based methods for having difficult financial conversations with clients. Financial conversations are about as personal as it gets (similar to discussing physical or mental health) and can be very challenging, uncomfortable conversations. Another goal of this class is to give front-line workers tools to make these conversations positive ones.

Youth Forward WI Savings Account: Long-term savings and investment accounts for new-borns and young children to use towards secondary education. Looking at 2022 to have local programs going. Currently looking for places to get funding for this initiative. Cross-program partnership in Extension.

Money Matters - Co-hort of 11 new home owners from a partnership with Habitat for Humanity (HOH). HOH is really excited about this curriculum and possibilities for helping new home-owners be successful.

Housing Coalition Meetings: Extension was the feature Agency at Fox Cities Coalition a couple months ago to help bring more awareness about our programs. Wenzel has been seeing an uptick in referrals due to this presentation.

Been a busy few months - even though we're not meeting in person, we are busy online. Also finding that they are reaching new audiences by having online classes (families without childcare, shift workers, seniors that have a hard time getting out). Will continue to offer online options moving forward.

Borchardt asked for clarification on moratorium - how are evictions still happening? Wenzel - under the current moratorium tenant has to submit paperwork to the landlord to prevent eviction, it is not automatic. This is part of the education that is currently being delivered to tenants to help them know what they need to do to avoid eviction. Judges have also learned to ask tenants in court for eviction if they've had financial hardship due to COVID, which has been able to stop evictions at this point. By keeping people from being evicted - financial burden then gets passed to landlords who have not been receiving rent. We are still waiting to see how Cares Act aid will get applied to landlords.

Binder shared that from his experience as a landlord community resources are available for renters who are willing to take the time to make phone calls and ask for help (Advocap, Churches, Salvation Army). Win-win for both tenant and landlord, and helps keep tenants caught up so they aren't facing a huge financial burden at the end of moratorium. Wenzel agrees - this is something that is covered in Rent Smart classes. Vast majority of Winnebago County landlords are small - own 3 or 4 properties, are not big rental agencies.

Extension Administration and Department Reports:

Staff/Facility/Department Updates:

Viau directed the committee to the January **2021 Extension Winnebago County Review document** for summaries of educator program updates. Note: December is traditionally a planning month, less programming is delivered during this time...with our move to more virtual options this could change moving forward.

Facility updates: Viau is still working with keeping in touch with other tenants in Coughlin Center. Building is closed to the general public. Still working with clients & guests to provide drop-off services as needed. County staff have regular presence in buildings for "frozen pipe" checks.

UW-Staff is still in status of primary tele-commuting through the end of March. There are times when we will engage in face to face programming when needed and when it fits with current safety precautions.

Viau is working with Support Staff to finish up the 2020 **year-end budget** including budget carryover largely due to grants/income in Dornfeld's school programs which are still in the middle of their budget cycle (we take in money in fall for both fall and spring semesters). We may also have a small carry-over for Community Gardens depending on how far the Highway Department got on projects, we are currently waiting for an update.

HR/Staff update: Grandparents Coordinator Role was converted to a permanent (part-time) role instead of a temporary (part-time) position to bring us into compliance with this position. The most qualified candidate was the person in the temporary role and she will continue in the permanent position.

Borchardt let us know that it appears that people are driving around the gate at the Community Gardens. Binder will follow up with the Parks Department to see if it's their staff or something that needs to be looked into further.

Area/Region/State Updates:

COVID and tele-commuting: UW Workgroups are looking at our best practices moving forward in regards to virtual vs. in-person programming. Some virtual programming really expanded our reach. Moving forward we will be using a blend of what we did well in person before COVID and what has worked to reach new audiences virtually. Another UW workgroup is also looking at what tele-commuting looks like post-COVID. Might have minimal impact on Extension staff as they have always been very mobile and out in the community.

Transition from Wisconsin Associated Extension Committees to Wisconsin Extension Association should become more stable with the start of new year, including invitations to district or regional meetings. No dates or info yet, but these will be sent to Snider as Chair of this committee to disseminate to members for how to participate.

Legislative Session has begun which kicks off the 2021/2022 budget process. This will start with getting the Governor's Budget proposal. Extension can be impacted on both the state and county levels, Chris is anticipating potential cuts to funding at both levels.

Borchardt forwarded an email to Viau in regards to November meeting discussion about the reach of our programs and is curious if Viau has had time to confirm receipt. Viau - especially with going online, it may be possible to create a visual of our reach. The state reporting system is currently being upgraded...there is a potential we will be able to pull this info out of the state system which should be available in early February.

Binder asked if someone can send the committee 4-H Pizza Sale information with a mailing address to send pizza orders and payments to, he would like to support the program and order for this sale. Berger said that she would send the info to the committee.

Comments by Committee Members: Nothing additional. Comments addressed throughout the meeting.

Next Meeting: Next regular committee meeting will be held Thursday, February 18, 2021.

Adjourned: Zellmer moved to adjourn at 9:54 a.m.; seconded by Borchardt.

Respectfully submitted by:
Jody Bezio