

## Minutes – CEC Meeting @ Cotton Town Hall (and via Zoom) – March 16, 2023

Present: Jim Takala, Doug Hoffbauer, Richard Pierce (virtual), Nancy Nilsen (virtual)

Others: Mary Tennis, Keri Cavitt, Jan Derdowski (virtual), Katie Ecklund (virtual), Hailey Eidenschink (virtual), Kate Preiner (virtual), Nicole Kudrle, Kristy McManus, Troy Salzer, Taryn Burnett, Heather Snesrud (virtual), Cacia Wauters, Nicole Baxton

Chair Jim Takala called the meeting to order at 9:09 am. Roll call was taken. There are four applications for open member seats that will go to the Board of Commissioners. How many are incumbents and how many openings? No incumbents. Three openings, with four applicants. Jim asks for introductions around the room (and on zoom) to welcome new attendees. Agenda was approved. Minutes from November 3, 2022 were approved as printed.

### Feature Program

4-H Youth Development: Jan Derdowski, Katie Ecklund, Kate Preiner, Nicole Kudrle, Hailey Eidenschink, Kristy McManus  
Staff share impacts of helping young people in communities thrive. YD team introduces themselves to the group.

- Katie: Neighborhood Youth Services, Incredible Exchange, YWCA Young Moms' Program
- Hailey: Afterschool & Program Coordinator for The Depot; bringing history programming and historical empathy work into 4-H
- Kate: Afterschool at school sites, virtual programs, camp team for NE Region

Big picture overview in the state: 40,500+ youth & 7,000+ volunteers

Overview in St. Louis County: 406 youth, 60 volunteers, 16 partners.

4-H: youth sparks, belonging, relationships, engagement. Youth exploring their personal sparks – getting excited about their interest and energy to explore, feeling safe and comfortable, and opportunities for growth. More than 70 project areas allow youth to drive their own project choices.

- Youth can explore sparks through virtual afterschool 4-H programs where there's a niche audience of homeschool families & families looking for engaging activities. There are different opportunities to select programs. Hands-on learning encourages youth to follow along at home. The numbers continue to grow.
- 96% of youth learned new things in 4-H. In The Incredible Exchange, 100% of youth surveyed learned skills that they can use in a future job. Specifically: forming new relationships, confidence, taking initiative, communication, leadership, public speaking, taking healthy risks, and developing patience.
- Youth need a sense of belonging and learning in a group helps to create that sense of belonging. Cloverbud Project Days are the second Saturday of each month. They are in-person across the NE Region. They gather at sites or join virtually at home and learn via Zoom. Jan and Kate join in on calls. They read a book to the youth or participate in wiggle time and a healthy snack. Early on six cloverbuds attended and the latest project day had 20 cloverbuds signed up. It is an opportunity to gather within the county.

Statewide: 10,100+ first year members – up 54% from 2022.

St. Louis County saw 179 first year members in 2022.

- Explore the World of 4-H: an opportunity for new members with stations to view: camp, horse, dog, cloverbud, livestock, clubs, ambassadors, leadership. Over 40 kids attended.
- Virtual afterschool programs: Gross Science, Crazy Contraptions, Arts & Crafts, Exploring Spring, Creative Writing, Healthy Living. If youth do one virtual, they often come back for more than one. 2-3 virtual programs per week.
- Hailey leads Creative Writing with Jess Waldbillig. Third session starting in Spring, with a core group participating. There are a dozen youth that participate, where they bond and open up to each other. It is a creative space for their spark.
- New program partnership: YWCA Young Moms' Program. Katie works with young moms to build social emotional skills and how to implement coping strategies to regain control. She works with Natasha and Rhonda.
  - Natasha Lancour is the Director of Young Moms' Program. She is honored to work with Extension. Rhonda works closely with Katie and the moms.
  - Rhonda is the case manager, and she says that Katie works well with the moms. Focus now is on resilience and the emotions and feelings that go along with that. An emotions poster hangs in the space for moms to utilize. They value their time with Katie and the Extension program.

- 4-H youth are up front, leading, and helping 4-H in programming by being engaged and sharing power. In 2022, South St. Louis County Ambassadors created a bag drive for Safe Haven Shelter. Worked with Youth in Action and collected over 40 totes/bags and 14 boxes of new backpacks and school kits. It was youth driven and youth led.
- Youth Teaching Youth is a newer developing program. Two youth that participated will be camp counselors this summer.
- To highlight youth sharing power: Eli with the horse project club has been in 4-H over 7 years. He has taken ownership and leadership of that program. He puts together agendas and communicates with Nicole. The club brought back pancake days at Lavell Town Hall, brought in clinicians to help with riding skills, drill team, and horse bowl team. It is youth led but working with adults. Jess Waldbillig (4-H alumni) and Ryan presented on a youth panel at the University Extension Conference at the DECC. A youth panel was brought in to talk about what they're noticing around them. The conference was impactful to him and Ryan still participates in the Youth Equity Team.
- Connections that youth build in 4-H could be with other youth, volunteers, other community members, or content experts. Through Incredible Exchange – 92% said they connected with a positive adult mentor.
- Program partners: YMCA Key Zone, Neighborhood Youth Services, YWCA Young Moms', South Ridge Community Education.
- Offer training for partner staff: YMCA Key Zone, UMD College of Science & Engineering, Ely Community Center, Duluth Community School Collaborative.
- Opportunities to provide training on a more individualized basis: YMCA Neighborhood Youth Services and Boys & Girls Club of Duluth.
- Neighborhood Youth Services is under new leadership and it's a great opportunity to partner with them. They're elevating the experiences with youth directly and with their staff.

#### Questions:

Jim asks if there is a substantial increase in numbers and more to do – are they getting more volunteer leaders from the community and how do they recruit them? How is that going?

- Jan replies yes, they are recruiting more through individual partnerships, parents, and community members. Nicole has examples of her recruitment for community clubs. Nicole tries to recruit parents of individuals already there, then reach out to individuals within the community. They are seeing an increase in volunteers.

Do you have to screen them?

- Yes, they fill out an application form, a background check, and have an orientation to prepare them.

Is there a substantial cost to background checks? Is the budget strained by increasing volunteers?

- The University absorbs those costs and it is not a strain on local budgets.

Mary comments that watching 4-H work through 2021 up to now and develop has been amazing. The participation, engagement, and direction is fantastic.

#### County Commissioner Update

Jim asks if Annie Harala is the new member. Mary replies yes, she replaced Frank Jewell. She has a strong business background, loves business development, and community building.

#### Business Items: Election of Officers

CEC needs to elect a Chair and Vice Chair. Doug comments that Jim is doing a wonderful job and he nominates him to continue in his duties. Nancy seconds the motion for Jim to continue. Jim calls for any other nominations. Doug is nominated for Vice Chair. Call for other nominations. Nancy seconds the motion for Doug as Vice Chair.

#### Regional Director Update

Tourism Center – wants to highlight that it exists and see how it might engage further with the Depot and Mary's work. Invited Xinyi to talk at the meeting in October about the Tourism Center. Agritourism is a growing industry – alternative sources of income and options. Future of mobility – access to outdoor recreation in rural areas. University of MN public engagement footprint database – interactive system designed to illustrate different projects throughout the county – highlighted on map for those curious about different things happening throughout the county (or other counties) that the University is working on. St. Louis County Board approved distributions of \$712,000 of state funds for seven different projects to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. Similar to EMG or Master Naturalist program, there are aquatic invasive species detectors/volunteers in St. Louis County. Launched in 2017 – over 1,000 hours logged. Trained to look for

and identify invasive species – then confirmed by DNR. On March 20<sup>th</sup> – another AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) Detectors Core Course offered for St. Louis County. Timely highlight: Mold from flooding – partnering with the University School of Public Health and they are offering a training on Mold Remediation Awareness – April 11<sup>th</sup> from 9 am – 1 pm online via zoom. Neil Carlson – Public Health Specialist heading the course. For newly elected, there is a CEC leadership training on March 22<sup>nd</sup> from 12 – 1 pm. For all chairs and vice chairs throughout the state.

### **Word Around the County**

Doug has a connection with research that's relevant and can help him – especially the connection with Troy who helped with a pumpkin trial. He's willing to do things to help facilitate research. Jim attended the Youth in Action Make a Difference Conference. Thought it was good and had some comments – speaker was very good, but there were no notepads at the conference and that should be part of the bag. A copy of the proceedings could be useful– something from presenters ahead of time to hand out to the youth – so the youth can take notes. Doug suggested handing it out at the beginning of the conference so youth can take notes in margins. Jim noted that some of the speakers should know their timeline better. One group didn't complete and ran out of time. Taryn did a rehearsal to time out their presentation and MIB was about 7 minutes behind on time because they were nervous. Troy commented that it is fun to feel the enthusiasm of young people coming together and he knows that it's impactful for them.

One of the key points of the speaker (Steve Fredlund) was leading the safari way. The core message was to pick the right people to surround yourself with and get the right people in your jeep. The speaker had been on five safaris. Taryn noted that Cacia and Sarah were compiling evaluations and that was the key takeaway of the youth – to get the right people in your jeep. One other point was to be intentional and courageous, take the initiative, and have a good vision on how to implement that. There were about 265 students, with some cancellations due to weather and other conflicts, like Cherry and their band concert. Mary mentioned that we've already had one debrief to talk about what was successful and what we need to work on.

Jim asks Troy if he has any comments on the County's biggest strengths or opportunities that are out there and could be facilitated? Troy speaks on Agritourism – has looked into it quite a bit and is participating in a statewide tourism committee. Has a meeting scheduled with DeeDee LeMier (Extension Educator, Community Economics & Tourism) because she has engaged in Agritourism efforts. Troy has a strong passion for this because a lot of producers in St. Louis County have opportunities in increasing revenue generation. His background research, Thompson Hill Center staff don't have a connection to agriculture in this region and they should be aware of it. Troy dreams of having a large conference in this region and bringing folks interested in agritourism from MN and WI. Thinking of places like Bayfield and Ashland, and how they embrace agritourism. North Shore should participate. Many farms have individuals that work off the farm at a day job and could utilize their farms (+ other resources) as their day job.

Jim asks in terms of developing that (economics) what kind of potential charges and revenue streams can they look at? Doug notes it's a niche development and farms should find what people want that no one else is doing. The downside of pick your own can be rainy weather. The cull rate is much higher and gross revenue is reduced. The educational process is extensive and never ending. A lot needs to be considered – liability, zoning, political, parking, noise. Driving purpose: to educate people where their food comes from – drives more than gross dollars.

Troy talks about utilizing the natural resources we have here – deer hunting, snowmobiling – there are opportunities in those areas (other than pick your own). Should think about the diversity of enterprises that can be offered. Can be more collaboration between farmers to offer bed and breakfast days or those sorts of things. Corn mazes have done really well; but weather, site prep, parking, staffing, hayrides, what else to offer, etc. – is there enough revenue there to justify it? Can we have and host people on the farm – what does that look like? Mary spoke of the Explore MN Tourism Conference she attended, where their Executive Director was involved in agritourism. One of the highlights they touched on were Pizza farms down in the south and what an opportunity that is. Maybe Explore MN could support here. Doug notes that we're limited here and the competition is higher there. It's doable with good agronomic practices and we could get things done here. Thompson Hill has 6,000-12,000 visitors a day. Staff there don't know about corn mazes, pick your own, etc. We need to help educate them so they can get information out to visitors in the community. How can we help educate the farmers so when they are doing searches to find opportunities, what ways can the farmers identify those unfilled needs? Troy suggests a conference, developing the website, sharing info with Explore MN (other than MN Grown). Doug states that MN Grown is completely agriculture, not other events. How do we get rural recreational opportunities encompassed in their overall message? Troy mentions maple syruping and opportunities for people to participate in that process. Doug offers tours to school groups. Jim suggests a lesson plan on building immunities. (When

hiring young people to work on a dairy farm and if they're not from the country – after a few weeks they get sick for a week or two because they're not exposed to bacteria. Part of growing up is building immunity.)

Mary asks Troy if he is trying to put together a conference. Troy is very interested and it has been a passion. He has spent the time to do the background and research, but tentative about his time management. He will continue to reach out to DeeDee to see what resources they have and where that would go. He has worked with her on a short day long program and she's got great skills. He's hoping the center will be able to help. Doug mentions he will help in whatever way he can. Mary comments that she is a recent board member of Visit Duluth. They want to have a visitor center – like Thompson Hill – with people trained to tout what our area has to offer. Troy states that Duluth has a great agritourism draw, but would like to expand to other areas and figure out how to continue to share that. Jim talks about getting people to participate (because those in agriculture are more introverted) and we need extroverts to do this because they have to sell themselves, their farm, and their product. Troy mentions Allen Finifrock, who took tours out to the ag community in Alaska. He is extroverted, facilitated the tours, and allowed the farmers not to be extroverted. It helps to be very extroverted but people can work strategically through those things to put together a tour package to do 4-5 operations in an area. Doug notes that a few times through they would gain some confidence and get people over that first apprehension or first fear would help. Mary comments that sales is a skill set and some of the most introverted people are the best at sales. Keri will share some information with Xinyi before the October meeting.

(5 minute break)

### **Business Items: Farm Family of the Year**

Doug nominates Phil Smith for Farm Family of the Year. Keri adds to the master Farm Family document. Philip A. Smith, Law Farm. 4311 Normanna Road, Duluth 55803. 218-721-0420, cell # 218-721-3838. Farm focus is regenerative agriculture utilizing sheep and cattle. They make a majority of their forage in Sturgeon Lake and truck it north of Island Lake. Keri updated the document and will send the information.

### **Business Items: Review finalized 2023 County Extension budget**

Mary – all should have a copy of the budget. Spent less in 2022 than we were planning. 2023 is in accordance with inflation and moving the dial up a little bit, and so is 2024. Very interested in tweaking the budget for 2024. Working with program leaders to make sure we are where we need to be to make sure we can deliver the programs we want to deliver. Need to plan and can make anything happen. Doug asks what the tone is from the County Board. Mary replies that it's positive. Extension offers something different than other areas like PHHS. Feel like we have a lot of support and feels like we have a lot of leverage. Programs are growing, fast, and budget hasn't kept up with that. It's easy to increase revenue. Youth in Action has started a small line of clothing to sell. Helps offset and justify. Shows that the public is interested. Doug notes we should be careful how much we push that (hort program) fee.

Jim asks, to lighten Troy and Bob's workload, can they get help to answer basic horticulture questions? Mary replies that two interns are built into the budget. Troy is actively recruiting folks and has fallen short for potential intern candidates for St. Louis County. Support staff and interns help Troy get stuff done. He's concerned we don't have an intern coming on. He falls short because assistance is needed to do bigger things like an agritourism conference. Hort calls are very important and, if no one can help, he's not sure what that's going to look like. Mary asks Keri if she has any suggestions on how we can generate some interns here. Keri can do a better job advertising locally and add to the County page and asks Troy to let us know what has been done. Troy has made an effort to reach out to CFANS, River Falls, SDSU, UMD, and others to advertise. Also, fraternities and sororities through UMN to make direct connections. He's trying to get the word out. Another aspect is their level of knowledge of science, gardening, etc. – don't want to start from no knowledge base. Taryn B. asks if they have to actively be involved in an education program or can they have an interest with the knowledge? Troy replies that if they have a passion, then no. It has helped develop an interest to the point of going on to school. Taryn B. asks if they need to be over 18 and are they compensated? Troy replies that generally yes, they should be over 18, and they are compensated. Doug asks about an older gardening group. Troy comments that we really need that passion and skills. Doug asks about the master gardener group, although there's a lot of demand for them and they can only be stretched so thin. Mary asks what support he has, can he train an intern, and does he have a checklist? Troy mentions that Betsy Whelan (UMN) in the main office for AFNR is the support person for that intern aspect. They meet once weekly to engage with other educators to get an understanding of AFNR. Interns attend workshops/programs with educators and there are different responsibilities for the interns. Mary asks how he feels about tapping into master gardeners or another program. Doug talks about graduates of 4-H that are active in gardening, looking for someone established in community, volunteers that have already been involved or that may have run a 4-H gardening program.

(Nathan Winter joins on Zoom) Keri is wondering whether or not interns are the best source for on-going support of horticulture questions and whether or not they have the expertise and level of engagement, recruitment is a concern, funding in the 2024 budget. Doug mentions that for this year, in a month or so, home gardener questions will start coming in and that takes up Bob and Troy's time. Nathan can re-leverage funds for things, but what kind of candidates would we get? Are we expecting them to do Extension Educator work, but pay them differently? The University doesn't like that. Doug asks if we have money from the County for interns? Mary replies yes for interns. Doug notes if we have the money for it, how do we find the people? Troy is interested in exploring options and will continue to reach out. Mary thinks leveraging our connections with the University would be a great start and going directly to those programs, that's where those knowledgeable people will be coming from, and tap into 4-H grads with an emphasis in horticulture or agriculture or Master Gardeners. She is happy to facilitate another meeting or take notes. Nathan comments that some colleges are down students and people and they're trying to reach beyond UMN. They have had a lot from NDSU in the past.

Motion to adjourn. 11:03 am.

Next meeting: April 20<sup>th</sup>, 9 – 11 am, Camp Esquagama

Respectfully submitted by,  
Nicole Baxton