

Minutes – CEC Meeting @ Virginia GSC Yellow Birch Room (and via Zoom) – November 16, 2023

Present: Mark Baumann, Gary Rantala, Nancy Nilsen, Jim Takala, Doug Hoffbauer, Keith Nelson, Richard Pierce
Others: Keri Cavitt, Troy Salzer, Nathan Winter, Bob Olen, Heather Snedrud (virtual), Nicole Baxton

Chair Jim Takala called the meeting to order at 9:04 am. Roll call was taken and pledge of allegiance at 9:04 am. Agenda was approved. Minutes from October 19, 2023 were approved.

Feature Program: Agriculture, Horticulture, & Natural Resource Systems, Troy Salzer

Chase Durovec, summer intern, created Raised Bed Factsheets for the community.

Pressure gauge tester purchased through the County for testing at farmers' market events and Salsa Fest event. Discussion about how many were tested and how many were off. Tested about 40-50, with an almost 25% failure. Discussion about recommendations if gauges were more than 2 lbs. off – should be discarded or within a 2 lb. zone – adjustments can be made. Discussion about pressure canning vs. water bath. Salsa Fest event – a celebration that included a recipe book, tasting event, and food preservation presentation. Recipe books can be handed out at future meetings.

Northeast Minnesota Forage and Grassland Council Field Day at Wes Johnson Ranch in Orr – seven different topics discussed. Three speakers are coming for the winter meeting. Seeding experiment discussed at the event with four different methods. Discussion followed about seeding methods.

Northeast Minnesota Forage Council Bus Tour – visited three farms and toured three facilities – PotlatchDeltic in Bemidji, American Crystal Sugar in Crookston, and DigiKey in Thief River Falls.

Discussion and questions. Monthly newsletter goes out every month, Facebook is used, and the media is contacted to inform the public about Agriculture.

County Commissioner Update: Keith Nelson and Annie Harala

CEC members will start receiving a \$100 stipend for every meeting they attend, to begin in 2024.

5-minute break.

Extension Director Update: Mary Tennis

Not present.

Regional Director Update: Keri Cavitt

Keri gave an update on Mary's behalf for the Youth in Action Conference. Held at the DECC on November 9th and had over 300 attendees.

The Joint Powers Board worked with Extension on data of trail users and is in phase 2 now of data collection. A joint effort by Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis County. Keri agreed to send the video of the phase 1 work that Brigid Tuck, Senior Economic Analyst, did after the meeting.

Cloquet Forestry Center (CFANS) is in communication with Fond du Lac on return of lands. Listening sessions for community members will be held at the Forestry Center in December and January.

Train the trainer in Hibbing area on Green New Deal housing and how to incorporate green energy.

Word around the county

Doug Hoffbauer discussed the 100 farms program, peonies, and the assumptions that were made by staff.

Business Items

Discussion about ANR position. Work would focus on small farms, education, and technical assistance. Tourism partnership component would equal .25 of the position for the northeast region. Keith wants the position based in St. Louis County. There is concern over agritourism component (competition) in other counties within

the northeast region. Discussion about Pine County being included within the northeast region and involved in the position description. Tourism Center position (.25 allocation) would create templates, documents, and/or rubrics to support farmers with their infrastructure for agritourism.

Gary Rantala moves a motion to move forward with the position (with services for the .75 ANR portion to be rendered in St. Louis County) and recommends it to the County Board. Seconded by Richard Pierce. All approve.

Gary Rantala discussed Farm Family nomination – Bear Creek Acres farm in Embarrass – all organic, local, and a small farm. Recommendations can be made [here](#) and will be discussed at the meeting in January.

Input to Performance Reviews: Committee closed session

Meeting adjourned approximately 11:30 am.

Next meeting: January 18th, 9 – 11 am, Cotton Town Hall

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Baxton