



Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Iowa Extension Council Association

January 9, 2021

The Board of Directors of the Iowa Extension Council Association met via video conference on January 9, 2021. President Jamie David called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Board members present include Jamie David, Kim Rinker, Joy Prothero, Lori Donahoe, Gwen, Bruce Clark, Kelly Jared, Roberta Hersom, Paul Gieselman, Le Ann Lawler, Al Ralston, Alyson Palmer, Bertha Lammers, Connie Casson, Emily Schwickerath, Melissa McEnany, Jamie Thompson, Mark Davitt, Michael Ryan, Barbara Kistler. Also present were John Lawrence, Andrea Nelson, Gene Mohling, Cindy Gannon, Jennifer Vit, and Julie Baumler.

Joy Prothero moved to approve the agenda. Michael Ryan seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Connie Casson suggested an edit to the minutes from October 3, 2020. Paul moved to approve the minutes, as amended. Michael Ryan seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The treasurer's report was given by Lori Donahoe. We have a balance of \$25,023.57 in checking. The following bills were presented:

- Whitfield & Eddy: \$1,987.00 for November legal services + December ; \$4,050 total
- Julie Baumler: \$88.20 for printing

Lori moved to approve the bills. Joy seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Roberta moved to approve the appointment of Tyler Heeren, Marshall County to fill the Region 9 board position. Connie seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Dr. John Lawrence, Vice President for Extension and Outreach shared an ISU Extension & Outreach Update. The update included the following items.

Six recovery initiatives have been launched in response to COVID-19 with an overall focus to recover from the economy, the derecho, and other stresses we have encountered in 2020. These will help promote multi-disciplinary thinking and programming, as well as increase communication and collaboration across the system and the state. The initiative areas are:

- Increase access to quality childcare
- Reviving the Iowa economy
- Improving financial security
- Improving food supply, safety, and access
- Addressing mental health
- Expanding educational opportunities for youth

Each county has selected at least one of these initiatives to focus upon and have created an action plan. The governor also has taskforces working on setting recovery priorities. We will look at ways that we can partner with them where there is overlap.

An employee well-being survey was taken by extension staff in late November. Results were shared on Dec. 14. On average employees are ok, however there are still significant groups of employees reporting high stress and poor wellbeing. They are working to create better awareness of resources, including EAP, Therapy Assistance Online, and Iowa Concern. Many are aware of the resources, but a lot less are taking advantage of it.

What can councils do to lessen the stress?

- Show empathy and appreciation
- Call and check on staff (email may not be enough)
- Value people's time
- Practice selfcare and use resources available

It is time to complete the 2nd quarter Two-Way Scorecard survey. The questions will be slightly different this quarter. The first quarter yielded about 900 responses; they would like to see more responses from program staff and regional directors. The final report includes all of the comments submitted, in an effort to be transparent. Occasionally, these responses will be identifiable – especially where there are low staff numbers in a county. We may need to look at ways to ensure that we are still getting valuable feedback in light of that.

Dr. Lawrence responded to questions from board members.

The governor has modified her latest COVID restrictions, but Dr. Lawrence will keep the mask mandate for extension through March. He is lifting the program cap with the provision that individuals still stay socially distanced and wear masks.

A County Services update was given by Andrea Nelson, Asst. Vice President for County Services. She reported that staff performance reviews are taking place now. All council members, county staff, and program field specialists will be receiving feedback forms to help with this process. We have found that, on the whole, reducing the size of the regions and adding some supervisory oversight, have increased our ability to provide better assistance to counties. County finance oversight has been one of the areas that has benefitted the most. There is more consistency among counties. There is also an improvement in the number of counties that are in a healthy financial position. County staff are able to identify issues as they come up and they are working with the regional directors, which has helped with sharing those issues across the state and fixing areas of concern. County Services is providing county and regional staff with step-by-step instructions on how to support councils complete organizational meetings and post legal notices for public budget hearings.

The FY22 county budgets are due to be filed in the county auditor's office by March 15. Our two County Services Accountants are working with bookkeepers on year end, and with W2s, 1099s and tax documents needed to report health insurance.

David Brown, Family Life Program Specialist talked with the group about the Mental Health initiative as well as how councils can support good mental health among their county staff members. A recording of this presentation can be found at <https://www.iaextensioncouncils.org/meetings>.

Jennifer shared that the exec committee requested that we have an I-Team presentation at each of our meetings as a way to inform the board of these initiatives.

Executive Director, Jennifer Vit gave her report. Whitfield & Eddy and ISU Legal met on Dec. 9 to discuss cross-over and overlap with a goal of determining who should take the representation when there is a regional director (ISU employee) working with a county staff member. They are working on a possible "Joint Defense Agreement" to help clarify those roles. Other projects Whitfield & Eddy has worked on for us recently include:

- Guidelines for workplace accommodations and disability accommodation form
- Custodian of public record training
- Review of county handbook template
- Adverse Action letter/process for background screening
- Civil Rights Compliance policy
- Tax structure for the association

Jennifer will be contacting CPA firms to identify one we can work with on the IECA tax status.

County audits are about 30-40% complete now. No invoices have gone out yet. Bryan Whaley is leading a team to explore a new vendor to help with credit card processing in county offices. Counties should make sure there a county credit card policy in place for employees who use extension credit cards.

Jennifer urged board members to review both the statewide and county Two-way Scorecard reports. Some of the Quarter 2 questions are the same and some are different. The goal of the questions being repeated is to try to identify trends over the year. If board members have questions or receive feedback from other council members, let Jennifer know.

We have added an education verification search to our background screening options. This would allow screening an employee candidate to verify they received the degree stated in their employment documents. We are exploring other potential vendors for background screening.

We have asked Employees & Family Resources (EFR) to provide a webinar for county staff and council members to better inform them about EAP services and resources. EFR has inquired whether we are interested in increasing our EAP package from a 3-session benefit at \$18.48/employee to a 6-session benefit for \$22.20.

It is time to do an audit of IECA books. Board members with accounting backgrounds should let Jennifer know if they would be willing to help with an audit.

It was decided to put off the IECA Plan of Work meeting until we are able to do it in person.

Jennifer is planning to send out an interest survey to councils to identify their needs.

Le Ann is serving on the Exceptional Effort Awards Committee as a council representative.

The board discussed the two options for EAP packages. As of June 30, there were under 5% of individuals who have accessed the EAP services. This is actually significantly higher than other accounts that EFR services. The group tabled this until we can get more information.

A Legislative Day update was shared by Paul Gieselman, Jennifer Vit, and Julie Baumler. This year the event will be called *Iowa Legislator Insider*. It will be open to all 8-12 grade youth plus council members and staff members. It will be a 2-hour virtual event. The first hour will be coordinated by IECA. We will have a mix of live speakers plus recorded video. Our speakers include Lieutenant

Governor Adam Gregg, a lobbyist (for the Iowa Education Association and Rural Water), a legislator (Ross Wilburn), and the legislative pages. The second hour will be coordinated by Iowa 4-H. The focus will be global food policy through programming with the World Food Prize.

Connie Casson and Linda Schluter shared a Council Conference update. This will also be virtual with a timeframe of 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. with 12 breakout sessions. We are trying to have a mix of workshops that work for both new and continuing council members. Board members will be asked to help with hosting the Zoom rooms. We will be recording the sessions to be able to offer it as training for those unable to attend a specific session.

Andrea Nelson shared a presentation for the board on calculating possible year-end carryover. This has been recorded and shared with other council members on our IECA website at <https://www.iaextensioncouncils.org/meetings>.

Julie Baumler will send a Doodle poll to identify our next meeting date, which will be an evening in early March.

Michael Ryan moved to adjourn the meeting. Bruce Clark seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Connie Casson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Connie Casson, IECA Secretary