

Minutes – CEC Meeting – Cotton Town Hall, February 19, 2020

Present: Jim Takala, Keith Nelson, Gary Rantala, Frank Jewell, Rick Pierce

Others: Troy Salzer, Mardi Harder, Patty Swedberg, Shirley Lantz

Chair Jim Takala called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. Minutes from the November 20, 2019 meeting were approved as printed. January 22 planning meeting notes were reviewed.

Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of MN Dept. of Agriculture visit

Troy discussed the original visit date of February 19 being too short of a time to plan for. He has been working between the scheduler and the Dept. of Ag to obtain a date. The March 18 date conflicts with the St. Louis County day at the capitol. Troy gave dates to choose of April 15, May 20 or June 17 – regularly scheduled Extension Committee meeting dates. Frank stated the meetings held in Duluth were to find out what was going on – didn't include any other Ag related subjects other than small fruits and vegetables. This is a great opportunity for Extension to showcase agricultural topics such as maple syrup, wild rice, and basic agriculture. Frank wants to get a good crowd for this visit. Spring may be more of a challenge as it is a busier time for farmers and other Ag producers. Jim would like to see someone from the FSA committee, Ag lenders and other USDA programs invited. Keith suggests the visit not be all show and glitz. We want it to be relevant and not political. Another topic would be silviculture – an example such as Xmas trees – this is also a part of agriculture. As far as Bois Forte or Fond du Lac – they have completely different opportunities. We won't have lots of time so we need to be on message – we need to be asking for monetary support. Don't talk about wolves. Stay away from controversial subjects. Show off what is happening or what is possible. Jim suggested possibly fish farming – aqua culture? Frank suggests showcase what IS here – that is what they want to know – They want to start putting monetary support where it hasn't gone in the past. Reduce or eliminate barriers – Mardi – additional grant resources to support emerging farmers. Keith suggested goats – not a lot of cost to get into. It is more affordable to start small farming because of land costs.

Frank left the meeting at 10:00 am.

Farm Family of the Year

- Troy feels this is an amazing opportunity for a local farm family. It is for a family that also has community involvement. A list of past recipients and potential candidates was distributed. Brian Toivola was recognized in a different way at the county level and can be removed from the nominee list. Pat and Karen Brodeen were recognized as last year's Farm Family so need to be moved to that section. Brad Olesiak, Ron Salveson and Mark Peterson can remain on the nominee list. Jay Juten – Gnesen Township raises Black Angus, has 1,400 acres and is calving about 140 cows this year. They are active in church, on the forage council and are in the process of transferring the farm to keep it in their family. Keith made a motion and Gary second to nominate Jay Juten for the Farm Family this year. Motion carried unanimously. Keith would like to see someone from the horticulture side nominated for next year. He is willing to donate a flag flown over the capitol for the Farm Family. Farm Fest will be August 6 in Redwood Falls. Keith suggested instead of recognizing the Farm Family at the County Fair we do it a County Board meeting outside of Duluth. Shirley will check the county board schedule and Troy will connect with Jay to fill out the application form and select a date for County Board recognition. Keith suggested getting in touch with Dana Kazel, County Communications Manager to help promote this.

Ag Updates

- A brochure from the Minnesota Department of Ag on Coping with Farm and Rural Stress was distributed.
- Troy talked about a Wolf Prevention Grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Seven farmers from this region applied for the grant. There is only \$60,000 available.

Program Updates

- Ag/Hort Intern Update – Emma Severens from Good Thunder, MN will be the ag/hort intern for St. Louis County. She was a 4-H intern and worked at an Ag supply company in Mankato. She is an Animal Science and Communications major at the U of M. She selected St. Louis County as her first choice. There hasn't been a start date set yet. Keith suggested connecting her with Dana Kazel for the communications part of her major.
- Keith said there is a resolution on CWD from the board. There is a moratorium on new operations or transporting through the county – Sheriffs will enforce.
- Commissioner Nelson shared the possibility for use of St. Louis County Environmental Trust funds to be a match of state, federal or grant dollars dedicated for predation prevention efforts in the county. Further discussion would need to occur based on the potential funding match options.
- Farm Transfer Workshop – Floodwood – 37 people were in attendance. Troy will push individuals to continue to move forward with the farm transfer process.
- Spring Gardening Extravaganza – April 18 – Duluth, First United Methodist Church (Copper Top). Once the program details are finalized...you will receive a copy and are invited to attend as a complimentary guest.
- Basic Concepts for Gardening Success - April 29 – Mt. Iron Community Center
- YIA Conference – Was held at the DECC this year. Evaluation results were overwhelming very positive. The extra space was nice to have. They are planning for next year – looking at Fortune Bay, Eveleth Curling Club and a few others. Keith commented that the DECC was the right place for this year. We have to find a place up north for next year – not Fortune Bay – possibly Giants Ridge? The 4 YIA coordinators are outstanding. The keynote speaker was phenomenal.

CEC organizational items

- Elections – moved to March meeting
- By-laws – were last revised in 2012 – please look over for changes needed.
- Vacancies and recruitment – Mike Helstrom, Jay Juten and Mark Baumann have been sent applications. Troy is going to ask Karen Brodeen. Joan Wyandt, a fine wool producer was also suggested.
- St. Louis County has a special statute so can have a membership of 11 rather than the standard 9. The committee is looking to fill 3 vacancies.
- Seija Packila has been absent from several meetings. As by-laws recommend, a letter will be sent to her and signed by Jim asking if she wants to continue serving on the committee.
- Keith would like to keep the quorum at 4 even with an 11 person membership.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 am

Next meeting is Wednesday, March 18, 9-11 am at Cotton Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by,
Shirley Lantz