

Minutes – CEC Meeting @ Camp Esquagama (and via Zoom) – April 20, 2023

Present: Jim Takala, Doug Hoffbauer, Keith Nelson, Richard Pierce, Annie Harala (virtual), Gary Rantala (virtual)
Others: Mary Tennis, Keri Cavitt, Jim Gottschald, Bob Olen, Troy Salzer, Nicole Baxton

Chair Jim Takala called the meeting to order at approximately 9:17 am. Roll call was taken and pledge of allegiance at 9:19 am. Agenda was approved. Minutes from March 16, 2023 were approved as printed.

Feature Program

Master Gardener Volunteer Program: Bob Olen

Features that have been significant:

- Mission statement – trying to develop a comprehensive research-based Hort program designed to improve the lives of the people in St. Louis County
- Trying to leverage resources to impact as many people as possible
- Completed two educational conferences – Mt. Iron on March 8th and Spring Gardening Extravaganza on April 15th
- Applied research program through the University
 - Rely on Canadian resources because our climate is closer to Ontario than to Minneapolis, MN
- Community outreach and numerous other things that take time
 - Phone calls, voicemails, emails (3,000 – 4,000 every year)
- Mt. Iron conference – expanded program and included lunch
 - Evaluated program – what people were really interested in – soil fertility, flower component, and edible component
 - Great feedback on what they delivered, comments were extremely positive, and great food
- Spring Gardening Extravaganza – bringing cottage garden landscape ideas into MN (like the Bridgertons)
 - Theme resonated with people
 - One satisfier is having a vision for something and seeing it come to fruition successfully.
 - Not everyone was interested in landscaping – afternoon was dedicated to gardening basics
 - 13 speakers, volunteers and professionals gave their time to the people of St. Louis County
 - Workshop session information gathered for the resource book that was given to attendees
 - A lot of time and effort went into the resource book and others would like it reprinted and want to use it; very good reference to the County
 - Didn't expect 250 people at SGE; 50% higher at Mt. Iron and wanted 50% more at SGE (planned for 140-150)
 - TV reporter from WDIO said he'd never seen such a beautiful display of a conference
 - Bonita Nelson, EMG volunteer handled all decorating
 - Tried to deliver value for people – basil seeds handed out (re-packed by EMG volunteers) to improve diets
 - Able to use the Depot theater – spent money on AV to have a backlit screen and good sound
 - Pat MacDonald and Roger Hill – two professionals – consulted with the community in the afternoon
 - Make and take houseplant workshop – no difficulty recruiting people to help with workshops

Carol Christenson's Houseplant Project – began speaking to 4-5 people at a garden club – Bob suggested finding 30 people to make sure it has impact

- Took this project into assisted living facilities and was covered in the Senior Reporter (11,000 copies distributed to the community)
- 8 volunteers at 6 assisted living facilities in 2022
- Business North magazine article - how houseplants can help with mental health
- Another article coming out in Lake Superior Magazine

Extension Master Gardener Program – no advertising and people are waiting in line to volunteer

- Access to great information through the University system
- 100+ volunteers in the program
- 50 hours needs to be done by December 1st – some are not a good fit
- Tries to get recognition for St. Louis County in the University publication
- Tries to encourage volunteers by creating teamwork between them

YWCA Young Mothers Project – no understanding how to grow – has to be educational, research-based, community value/outreach, and long-term sustainability

Questions/Comments:

Jim Takala asked about leveraging and integrating Youth in Action in nursing home projects. Bob comments it would need to be a different working relationship and that time is valuable.

Jim Gottschald talks about the interaction with the Young Mothers Program. They asked the board for funds for rebuilding needs and providing a home for young mothers. They were also seeking volunteers for a raised garden plot that they are hoping to get up and running for summer. This is how we get other departments to help each other. We have Youth in Action students that need to volunteer and have some outstanding people on the Extension team. Bob changed their entire plan because they needed to do something different. This was an example of how a group comes to the County in time of crisis and this is how Extension comes in. Bob's goal is to have them take ownership and see these vegetables on the table. Everyone appreciates Bob, Julie, Kathy, and other volunteers that came along.

Bob showed up with two shovels and tore everything out. He wanted them to put in their own garden – wanted engagement and physical activity. Checked on gardens – hadn't been maintained. Taking a more comprehensive approach this year.

Everything is mission-driven, and Extension has the potential to deliver information that is extraordinarily valuable, not just education.

Program Update: Troy Salzer

Farm Family – meeting with Phil to fill out the information.

Struggled to find a good summer intern, didn't have much for candidates until about two weeks ago, then two came through this week. One will be interviewed next week, a student that grew up on a farm in this region. Presentation at Cherry School on beginning basics of sheep and goat nutrition and the need to forage test. One of the former interns put together a well-done video and that was used in the presentation. Interns help Troy do the work that he does.

Wildlife habitat improvement series – charged outside St. Louis County, but not those inside St. Louis County. Four local educators put it together and developed resource materials for each session: pollinator habitat, amphibians, birds, and mammals/deer plots. First week of January – received six calls alone on deer habitat. Good number for the first year – 70 participants. No advertising outside of the counties.

Questions/Comments:

Doug – how many were from St. Louis County?

Troy – about 23

Jim T comments that Troy and Bob are doing a great job at getting information out.

County Commissioner Update: Keith Nelson and Annie Harala

Keith – Interest in food plots – that audience is so big. If we come up with some program/suggestions – suggests looking at the MN Deer Hunter's Association or Cabin Lease owners Association – could have an impact on numbers in the county. This county is so big and diverse – so many special interest groups. The more food plots that can get planted – the more they'll stay out of hay/food for livestock. Deer hunting has a big economic impact in St. Louis County.

Troy – without colleague support, he knew it was out there but just didn't know how to address it and wanted to go into it with a strategy. Trevor (intern) put together five fact sheets that are available to those different

groups and hope to reach out to groups that are interested in that. Focused on sustainability of it all - pollinator habitat and fish habitat – not just deer hunting.

Keith – in terms of economic impact, the interest is in promoting that in the land department so if we can couple those things together for the land department, they may embrace it.

Jim asks for other updates.

Annie – proud of all the volunteers and staff at Spring Gardening Extravaganza. Thanks to Depot staff and Extension staff for the invitation.

Keith thanks Commissioner Harala for stepping in. It's important to have a commissioner at these presentations/programs so the community understands commissioners are working for them.

Extension Director Update: Mary Tennis

Working with Keri and Nicole on budget items to make sure we have a tight grasp to understand budget.

Working with the St. Louis County process to evaluate and plan better. Should have numbers to present around June/July.

Regional Director Update: Keri Cavitt

Extension opportunities and programs to highlight – ice dams/flooding

Presentation was taped and the link will be sent out.

Partnership between the University of MN Extension and the University of MN Public Health – mold remediation training. The presentation was relevant with questions they get from residents about health, infrastructure, and property concerns. Will send presentation out to be shared.

On April 10th Regional Educator, Anna Stockstad, Forest Ecosystem Health started at the Cloquet Regional Office. She is serving NE MN and she will be leading the Woodland Master Stewardship Course for residents to learn how to manage their forests. She can help support St. Louis County.

Questions/Comments:

Jim G comments that Keri and Mary have worked hard to source CEC candidates to fill vacancies. The board letter goes to the committee of the whole on April 25th. Goal is to have three new CEC members for the next meeting.

Mary – Four names and three spots. Mary Shaw, Paul Fish, Susan Sauls, and Edie Carr.

Word Around the County

Jim G – after the ice dams melt there will be visible, long-term damage to smaller shrubs where they're laying down. Any value in advising people? Will things come back? Recommendations for citizens?

Troy – pruning workshop at SGE had a lot of questions about that. It is a significant issue. Selectively harvesting stands is the recommended approach to control fire damage and deter insects.

Doug – ornamental cedar trees took it bad.

Troy – call about lilacs and how to handle them. Take 1/3 to get it back into a healthy state, or back to the base to allow for growth.

Bob – has done one segment on repairing winter damage on WDSE and on the radio. Will highlight those issues on tv and radio.

Jim G – Dana Kazel has access to forums, and we could tap into forestry staff to get the message out there. Should we organize something to help advise property owners?

Doug – Street appeal is important, and timeliness is important for property owners getting ready for this.

Jim G – could organize a press conference.

Doug – maybe a fact sheet online.

Jim G – Will reach out to Dana and coordinate with Mary.

Bob – technical information needs to be communicated.

Mary – depends on urban or rural environment.

Bob – years ago, put together a series on chainsaw safety and could use some of that too.

Doug – what materials should be compost, burned, hauled off site. People need to know the options.

Keith – don't want to dilute message. Concentrate on things that we believe are the most egregious. Some basics. Get the message out with fact sheets and on the website. Maybe the University steps in and does a broader approach.

Annie – suggestion – morning shows look for information – to film a segment and those are shown multiple days during the day.

Keith – this ties in with efforts to engage someone to get messages out on all social media, which is one of the most effective places. The audience and hits through social media – great at getting the word out and it can be tracked. Should focus efforts on social media and where we can be more impactful.

Business Items

Keri – CEC member survey is the civil rights responsibility and accountability for federal funding. They want us to survey every year to get an idea of what the demographics are. The survey is linked on the agenda and there are paper copies available.

Jim T – any other business items? Looking forward to a bigger committee and more members.

Jim G – What do we have planned for the next CEC meeting?

Jim T – we should appreciate the setting at Camp E.

Keith – 86 other counties would love to have Camp E. Approximately 20 with special needs will attend, and have one on one counselors with them. There are opportunities to expand this program. Should schedule here again. Spent a lot on improvements. Wants us to be ambassadors for Camp E.

Doug – mentions to other 4-H kids and they're envious of the facility.

Keith – they're welcome to come to Camp E and wanted Camp E open to everyone. It's cheaper to have kids at camp than in out-of-home placement. There's a day camp and an advanced camp for teenagers where they'll canoe and camp in the area. County purchased the area near the highway to keep that distance.

Jim T – good job maintaining and restoring it.

Troy – has been working with Robert on winter/woods harvesting class coming up on May 24th in the afternoon. Has a Harvester Handbook resource that the University has available – will be at Camp E providing education on that process.

Keith – facility can be used for a lot of different things. University has opportunities to bring groups.

Rick Pierce – Invite Principals and Superintendents to have an educational meeting at Camp E.

Keith – So many opportunities. Heated and air-conditioned year-round, commercial kitchen, best food, and fireplace. Any experience kids get here is valuable.

Mary – to promote camp – Depot and Camp E have been talking and there will be a Camp E Day at the Depot this summer. Canvas tent in the Great Hall, camp activities all throughout the building, and up for a week ahead of time. Not enough people county-wide know about Camp E. Want people to know that St. Louis County owns the Depot and St. Louis County owns Camp E.

Keri – (replying to Jim G) next meeting is in June with a presentation from Youth in Action. September is a presentation from the Regional Sustainability Development Partnership with projects happening in St. Louis County. October is a presentation from the Tourism Center to talk about Agritourism. November will be a presentation from Troy and SNAP-Ed.

Motion to adjourn. 11:02 am.

Next meeting: June 15th, 9 – 11 am, Cotton Town Hall

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Baxton