

Minutes – CEC Meeting @ Camp Esquagama – April 25, 2022

Present: Jim Takala, Mark Baumann, Frank Jewell, Keith Nelson, Nancy Nilsen, Richard Pierce, Gary Rantala
Others: Mary Tennis, Jim Gottschald, Keri Cavitt, Shirley Lantz, Nicole Baxton

Chair Jim Takala called the meeting to order at 10:14 am. Roll call was taken. Agenda was approved. Minutes from March 28, 2022 were approved as printed.

Recognition and thank you of Shirley Lantz

Recognition by Jim Takala, Frank Jewell, Gary Rantala, Keith Nelson, and Mary Tennis. Mary read Shirley's certificate of appreciation. Keith or Frank plan to read her certificate of appreciation at the next board meeting. Shirley and Bob both started in August 1976.

Youth in Action Position

Mary's update: Elise Rigney has resigned and we're using this as an opportunity to explore developing the position along with PHHS. Under advisement of Commissioner Nelson, talked with Linnea at PHHS and had great sessions with key members (PHHS, Child Services, YIA) about how we serve youth in SLC.

- Developing YIA in a direction that addresses homelessness and mental health crisis that youth are facing right now.
- YIA has been a fluid type of service and met needs of youth in a variety of different ways throughout the years.
- There's a grant that PHHS is seeking to find funding for youth interns that would aid this project.
 - Would like to load 50% of a position towards this effort.
 - County-wide project/set of programs tied in with several already existing organizations.
 - Something we could guide and could keep close tabs on.
- Nothing solid to present yet, but happy to answer questions.

Comments:

- Gary attended a very beneficial course on suicide prevention/mental health crisis. People don't realize the benefits of these types of programs and they're vital.
- Frank just read a New York Times article about mental health crisis and lack of connection due to covid. Adolescence is hard and therapy and those that connect make the difference.
- Mary states this position would be one of those things where we'll be able to foster leadership. YIA is about leadership and advocacy. Auxiliary or continuation of care, not emergency assistance, that is youth led.
- Frank asks if these interns are high school students.
- Mary answers that they are youth, which can be anyone under the age of 24.
- Keith mentions YIA has been around a while, but county-wide it's been around for 4-5 years. Initially struggled integrating in schools in Duluth area. YIA has been a conduit for a lot of kids – not just jocks, brainiacs, or national honor society, but the kids in between that don't have a lot of connections in the school. Graduation rates go up dramatically when kids connect to their school. Would like to see graduation rate of people of color go up. Putting these pieces together under Mary, with the Depot and Camp E, and somehow marry these facilities to build more connectivity between services that we do offer and some places where we can do a better job of offering services. 1/3 of the children that come to this camp are out of home placement children. Can send them to camp cheaper than out of home placement. It gives the children the opportunity to experience camp, build connectivity, and make the kids feel like they belong. We have opportunities in bringing these positions together. Appreciates what Mary is looking at and trying to marry these different positions together. Would like to fill cabins for leadership courses at Camp E in the fall.
- Frank mentions when we started creating these two pieces in 1995, in Duluth, youth would do a volunteer activity and receive a gift of some sort. Up north, Liz Prebich was thinking about YIA. Both were based on the Search Institute research on resiliency, which looked at what it is for kids to be successful. Key to resilience was the number of connections in a community. What we have not always been good about, is the people that sign up are not the people that need it the most. The key to any program is to go out to ensure that those kids (those not graduating) are getting pulled in. The design of this sounds like it aims at the right place. Made comments to Mardi in the past about focusing on kids who are not the ones doing well. Search Institute research on resiliency is exciting/interesting and used by Extension all over the place.

- Jim T says you need a carrot to draw them in because a lot of times it's generational.
- Frank states you almost literally have to go find them. With the reading program in Duluth – had to go to houses multiple times to get permission to allow someone to read to their kids. Part of it was so much else going on.
- Gary has an observation that parents that read to their children have a much better outcome in life and are more productive. Reading to kids should be an obligation.
- Frank mentions that if no one ever read to you, the likelihood of reading to your kids decreases.
- Keith mentions YIA going into grade schools and reading to kids. Ruby's Pantry gets the Cherry kids involved, as well as South Ridge. Cherry kids decided to do Ruby's Pantry. Something to be said for that involvement and that commitment. YIA is unique and don't want to lose it but know it has changed dramatically and continues to evolve. Hope that the committee can embrace it as it moves forward.
- Jim G plans on bringing forward a resolution through PHHS. Applying for a grant and better positioned to demonstrate how we are going to make the funds work. No choice but to replace Shirley's position and want to be very purposeful in how we staff this YIA position. The connection and interaction with schools has changed over the years. They see the value in offering these non-mainstream activities but see a duplication in these services. That has served its purpose. Started out with traveling DJ doing karaoke and publishing periodicals and transitioned to leadership forums and done great work. Schools are now doing a lot of that work themselves. Gives us an opportunity to pause and see what is the best use of our time, resources, and support for our schools and students. Maybe we should be looking at services the schools aren't well positioned to deal with and make use of different funding streams. Want to look at best role going forward and do more of a preventative strategy in working with families in crisis in one position or spread out over a couple positions. There is a struggle in the north too, but not as noticeable, and could be more of a challenge to address. Going to look at this and sit on this vacancy longer than the Information Specialist II position coming up. Not just going to fill the position but are being thoughtful and purposeful on how we fill these positions. Want to provide best level of service.
- Gary asks if it is a possibility that this group could put out a magazine that has articles written by students addressing this issue? It would cover reading and youth development at the same time.
- Keith says Gen W was wildly popular, but the problem is no one reads the newspaper anymore. There are other opportunities, other ways, to figure out how we're going to get to a lot of the kids of today. They watch short videos. How do we get to them with something they're actually going to watch and absorb? Not just going to fill the position. We need to consolidate or figure out how to get the same level of service without having the people. Can only raise taxes so long. Should not do more with less, but can get more done with better collaboration.
- Frank says Mary brought a great idea and it has great energy and interest.
- Mary mentions, if interested, that she can send talking points to all. Didn't want to overload or inundate everyone with the information.
- Jim G mentions that two years ago, when all students were virtual and YIA was on the outside looking in, we partnered with NAMI Minnesota and they have a presentation on youth suicide. We asked them to take that class and address isolation and mental health and then present at the Make a Difference Conference on this topic. We just need to connect those resources to the students.

Tour of Camp Esquagama at 11:05 am.

County Commissioner Update: Frank Jewell & Keith Nelson

- Keith says the county board has invested a great deal in this facility and everyone should be an ambassador for it because it is currently so underutilized but has potential.
- Jim T mentions that what Doug finds problematic with land and minerals or the forestry department is the response time on getting permits for balsam boughs or birch logs. They get an order that comes in and they can't say if they can fill it right away because approval time is about 10 days with St. Louis County. Aitkin and Itasca can get a response in 24 hours that there's a pre-package inventory and they can get a product they want and approval right away vs. 10 days and you've got a chain store and they're looking for something next week and they can't fill it.
- Keith had a conversation with Juli Marinucci after the last meeting. SLC used to be the world's capital for black spruce tops. Have gotten back into that specialty market for forest products. To follow statute, we have to pre-

package some of these things. It needs to be ready to go so if someone needs it they can walk in the door and say what they need – birch sticks, dogwood. The market for dogwood is unbelievable. In terms of annual contracts, we are doing several hundred thousand dollars worth of spruce tops. Pre-packaging them and having them ready to go out the door is what the other counties are doing. They're following the same laws, but there are ways around it. We need a work around and still comply with the law.

- Jim T states that the response time is so slow and that's how you get the black market.
- Keith mentions that 6 foot birch poles are \$1.60/\$1.80 a piece. Princess Pines is another one that can be ready to go – on a smaller scale. Gives an opportunity to help out smaller producers.
- Gary says Princess Pine is one of the oldest plants known. It's been around for millions of years.
- Rick says there are two problems that he sees with spruce tops. Organizations from out of state bid on these contracts in excess of 150% of price. They're coming in with out of state people and harvesting or over harvesting. Can't compete with that 150% bid up. Spruce top income services a group of homeless people that rely on that income. If we don't allow them to cut at all or legally they'll find a way and that results in them being fined/ticketed. When we deprive them of that income it's creating a lot of harm.
- Keith owned and operated a convenience store for 20 years. Those individuals were customers when they were cutting and picking. They were a lot of at-risk people. Need to at least consider, not something the statute allows to consider, need to tailor some of those down so the cuts aren't as big. Need to quit letting them bid and not cut. Would let them bid, purchase large tracts, give 20% down, and just never cut. That would tie up resources and capture the whole market. They kept everyone else out of the market. If you don't harvest what you purchase, you'll lose your ability to harvest that lot. Barred from bidding if they don't perform. Using harvesters of spruce tops as a means of thinning. A lot of the ones bidding are out of the cities. They refrigerate the spruce tops so they can harvest early, where small operators can't harvest early because they don't have the ability to put those tops in those refrigerated trucks. Finding ways to address it and do it with smaller contracts – identify smaller tracts so we can have them targeted and ready to go. Can do it by fall. Same with Balsam Boughs – used to be profitable but has gone downhill – not paying as much anymore. We want to get balsam cut out of a lot of these spots and have to identify them and get them ready to go.
- Keith talks about the commitment to Extension. When Frank leaves at the end of the year he'll have to find another partner on the board.
- Gary mentions there are so many possibilities for northeast MN. Other uses for cattails.
- Keith – Natural Geographic has a special issue on forests. People writing about forests don't have a clue and no concept on what a renewable resource it is and talk about carbon sequestering. There's more carbon sequestered in a growing forest than in a mature forest. Seems like the environmental movement has declared war on logging and forest product. Almost every piece is attacking a renewable industry.
- Jim T states that all new wealth comes from the earth.

Administrative Update: Mary Tennis & Jim Gottschald

- Jim G says board approved the amendment to the memorandum of agreement to add the additional position for the Depot, which included the apportionment from the ARPA funding. Thanks to commissioners for that idea. Now we have a great storyteller that is going to become a member of our permanent Extension family and not services that we purchase through a temporary agency.
- Keith asks if we can we get her at one of our upcoming meetings to give the rest of the group an idea of her unique talent. Jim T agrees. She has a unique ability to get to kids early and teach them the possibilities. She has that ability.
- Mary replies that we'll get her on the agenda hopefully next meeting and possibly show the films she's made. She's been so successful that she also has a nighttime gig working for WDIO. A program called Historia - all about history that stars Hailey Eidenschink. Everyone identifies the talents that she has. Very humble, not shy but kind of reserved. She's a gifted storyteller. Not a fame seeker, but people gravitate to her.
- Jim G comments that the platform to tell the stories means more to her than the recognition to tell the stories. In order to see Hailey in her element, maybe we should have a meeting at the Depot.
- Keith says that it would make sense if we can do that. Sees bigger things on the horizon for her involved with the University. Her skill set is going to be used and replicated if she is as effective as he believes she can be because it's impacting young kids.

Business Items, Announcements, Other:

- Jim T mentions that Doug had comments on meeting times. Should talk to Doug and maybe have more lead time for meetings.
- Keri stated that they did send a doodle poll around – only a few responded. We would all love more lead time and want to make sure that if it's a rotation schedule that we can assign locations to plan for in-person or remote. Want to make sure majority can attend when we do set a date – would be helpful for us to get it on the calendar and have more lead time. Can give a call and can respond on behalf of members.
- Keith wants to emphasize that anybody who comes to visit this camp gets a title of an ambassador. As an ambassador, go out and tell community about this camp because it's one of the best kept secrets in the county.
- Jim T suggests Lee should do an article about it. Just getting the word out there and people knowing does make a difference.
- Ketih says more kids are signed up for camp than we had in our record breaking year at this time. Success breeds success. You are all our ambassadors.
- Keri mentions that the Halstroms did submit for farm family of the year. Is there any flag or anything that needs to be ordered?
- Jim T mentions that the recognition is at the St. Louis County Fair. Keith agrees.
- Shirley says they would want it on a weekend.
- Jim T says it's a Saturday afternoon.
- Shirley mentions there's a stage right outside the 4-h building. Can give contact information.
- Keith has flags in his office. These are ordered from Congressman Stauber's office and are actually flown over DC. Gives one to every century farm or any veteran centurion.
- Keith would like to see the program on the short films. Look at it as an opportunity to tell a story about St. Louis County and all of the different facets that make up St. Louis County.
- Keri brings up the new Ag Intern, Becca, starting this week.
- Gary mentions that there is a tendency by the University of MN to think that northern MN ends at Hinckley.
- Keith mentions that it's a big state and a land-based university. Every freshman gets a scholarship from the mineral fund that is derived from lands in northeastern MN.
- Jim T asks what is the name of the scholarship?
- Keith says that's a good question, it's given to every freshman, within the University system.
- Jim T asks how do the freshman find out about it and how much is it?
- Keith says it's about \$1700. Don't know the exact name – it's a mineral scholarship from the mineral fund trust.

Meeting adjourned at 1:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Baxton