

4-H Issue Committee Minutes 2.27.2024

Lonny Schaefer called the meeting to order at 6:06pm.

Rollcall: Members: Libby LePinnet-Kelly, Lonny Schaefer, Lisa Nichols, Jill Coleman, Justin Ruff, Rachael Collins (via zoom after start of meeting)

Additional guest: Donna Jones, Donna Dickson-Noonan, Betty Scott, Carolyn Scobie, Brad Taggart, Kendra Wiggans.

Staff – Dr. Mandeep Virk-Baker, Ashley Silano-Moore, Kaitlyn Conklin.

Dr. Virk-Baker gave an update on staffing. She explained that on Monday, Emily Roach (4-H Team Lead) and Corrine Thompkins (4-H Resource Educator) no longer were with Delaware County CCE. Ashley Silano-Moore was introduced as the interim 4-H Team Lead. Dr. Virk-Baker introduced and explained a recruitment plan in which she is working on getting submitted and posted all open 4-H positions as soon as possible so they may be filled quickly. Dr. Virk-Baker also went over the multiple 4-H postings that were already available for applicants to apply for. These openings included: 4-H & Ag Administrative Assistant, and multiple open camp positions.

Libby Kelly asked for clarification on the 4-H admin position, whether they would still be responsible for camp admin tasks. Dr. Virk-Baker assured Libby Kelly that this position would not need to handle camp admin tasks or HR and that they would focus on 4-H programs. Dr. Virk-Baker also noted that CCEDC would be looking to fill a fair admin role as well, which would be seasonal.

Libby Kelly then asked questions regarding UltraCamp, if other staff had access to the camp system if parents had problems registering for camp, what staff would be able to help them. Dr. Virk-Baker assured Libby Kelly that Stacy Young (Office Coordinator) and Lenora Grable-Grant (SBN Lead-Finance) had access to UltraCamp, however from a finance side. Dr. Virk-Baker went on to explain a few finance changes that she planned to be in effect in the future including looking at changes in credit card vendors so staff could receive itemized transactions. Dr. Virk-Baker also mentioned that she has offered the position of Camp Director to an applicant and is waiting for their response.

Rachael Collins asked if camperships are still moving forward as usual with recent staff changes. Dr. Virk-Baker assured Rachael Collins that CCEDC will do whatever is needed so camperships will continue. She went on to explain that she has been in contact with Shawn Tiede (Cornell 4-H Camp Specialist) for a more detailed plan to move forward with.

Rachael Collins voiced concerns with running camp, 4-H programs, etc. as well as her support for and the importance of the program and how it is needed in the county. Dr. Virk-Baker reassured that she is working on all these concerns and coverage with MOU plans and P.W. Woods.

Rachael Collins asked if Dr. Virk-Baker has assistance with this huge work load. Dr. Virk-Baker replayed stating that she has offered Jonathan Conklin the position of Camp Director and that Shawn Tiede has assured Dr. Virk-Baker that with Jonathan Conklin as Camp Director, camp is not in a “crisis mode”. Shawn Tiede has agreed to support camp administratively.

Donna Jones (CCE Board Member) then applauded Dr. Virk-Baker on her work with coverage planning.

Libby Kelly expressed concerns on how we know if we have the correct fit with seeking outside help from other counties such as Chenango CCE for the positions temporarily. Dr. Virk-Baker reassured Libby Kelly that Craig Brown (CCE Chenango County Executive Director) is going to provide the assistance and coverage that Delaware County needs. Dr. Virk-Baker explained that she has specific goals for these MOUs with deliverables, not blanket coverage.

Moving on from staff update discussion – Kaitlyn Conklin explained that staff no longer had access to the appeals sent in for late enrollments which were supposed to be voted on. Lonny Schafer made a motion to accept all late enrollments this year due to the specific circumstances caused by staffing change overs. Lisa Nicols second Lonny Schafer's motion- all voted in support and the motion was carried.

Lonny Schafer then discussed multiple avenues which he believed 4-H could more effectively advertise to the County and recruit more youth participation. These suggestions included; signage at the fair, adding reminders about 4-H re-enrollment events to the bottom of entry cards or judges forms, etc. Libby Kelly asked if it would be possible to receive texts about 4-H information in addition to emails. Kaitlyn Conklin believes that 4-H Online has a text function, but will need to look into it further.

Rachael Collins pointed out that community members and parents will want to know what programs and events are still being held due to the staff change over. Rachael Collins emphasized the importance of seeming sustainable and the need for transparency.

At this time Kendra Wiggans (4-H Alumni, Parent and Community Member) echoed Rachael Collins' statements adding that she has additional concerns with Chenango stepping in, the need for transparency and the importance of filling these open positions. She stressed that Delaware County 4-H is known as one of the strongest in the state, but from an outside perspective, it looks like it is crumbling from the inside out. Kendra Wiggans stressed the importance of needing to stop rumors and that the public at large needs to be updated from CCEDC on what's happening. Dr. Virk-Baker agreed and thanked Kendra Wiggans from sharing her thoughts.

Libby Kelly then again expressed concerns with finding the correct fit, even via state contacts for these positions temporarily. She admitted to be "pulling information not widely known" and wants to be sure we're finding the right people and that her concern is from past events concerning finance positions filled. Dr. Virk-Baker assured Libby Kelly that she spoke with four different CCE's Executive Directors to try to find an MOU that works. She corrected that she disagreed with Libby Kelly's statements about finance assistance failing previously.

Rachael Collins expressed concerns with if these staff changes will affect the club "Country Bumpkins" as the Bishop family currently runs this club. Dr. Virk-Baker did not have a response to this specific question but was taking note of specific concerns brought up by the Issue Committee.

Lonny Schafer stated that if another meeting was needed to stay informed on staff updates, the Issue Committee could always add a meeting to the calendar. Lonny Schafer additionally asked if the Issue Committee could have a rep in the hiring process of the new staff. Dr. Virk-Baker stated she would investigate the possibility.

Dr. Virk-Baker then asked anyone on zoom or in person who hadn't spoken yet if they'd like the chance to speak.

Donna Dickson- Noonan (CCE Board Member) took the opportunity to state that the jobs will be available online.

Carolyn Scobie (CCE Board Member) thanked the committee for the ability to listen in.

Brad Taggart (CCE Board Member) agreed echoed Carolyn's statements.

Donna Jones (CCE Board Member) thanked the Issue Committee for their professionalism.

Rachael Collins then suggested that some form of notification to the public should be sent out as soon as possible to reassure and comfort the public and 4-H Families. Dr. Virk-Baker stated that herself, Ashley Silano-Moore and Kaitlyn Conklin will work on a statement that would be sent to the Issue Committee for their input as soon as possible.

Libby Kelly asked if there could be a point of contact announced.

Donna Jones (CCE Board Member) then asked how emails are being handled that are sent to Corrine Thompkins and Emily Roach's addresses. Dr. Virk-Baker explained that anyone who emails them will get a response directing them to Ashley Silano-Moore and Kaitlyn Conklin.

Rachael Collins stressed the importance of CCEDC "setting the language" as silence allows community members to imagine their own narrative.

Kendra Wiggans agreed with Rachael Collins for the need for transparency.

Lonny Schafer asked for a motion to adjourn - Lisa Nicols motioned for adjournment, Libby Kelly second. Meeting was adjourned at 7:26pm