

State Advisory Council Meeting – April 20, 2006
NH Higher Education Assistance Foundation, Concord, NH

Present were:

Kathy Conway-Frangione, Maria Callahan, Carolyn Buskirk, Linda Smith, Denis Ward, Connie Campbell, John Ferguson, Laurie Conrad, Holly Avery, J. Hiram Watson, Jane Hunter, Brenda Vigneault, Anne Krantz, Lee Sawyer, Beth Todgham, Anna Boudreau, Paul Bonaparte-Krogh, Wendy Brock, Juli Brussell, Jim Grady, John Pike, David Foote, Holly Young, Phil Auger, Peg Boyles, Frank Mitchell, Amanda Stone, Larry Barker, Lauren Bressett, Deb Cheever, Sumner Dole, Lynn Garland, Ann Hamilton, Kathy Jablonski, Geoffrey Njue, Dan Reidy, Charlene Baxter, Brian Doyle, Chuck Hersey, Seth Wilner, Sue Cagle

Anna Boudreau opened the meeting with a review of the minutes. Motion to approve October 20, 2005, minutes made by Denis Ward, second by Linda Smith. Unanimously approved.

Paul Bonaparte-Krogh announcements:

Noted posters on the wall announcing upcoming events. These included County Conversations II dates; administrative visits to each of the counties (meeting with staff in afternoon and council in the evening); proposed date for summer outing of August 1 – Great Bay Cruise from 9-2 pm; July 17th 4-H Day at the Fisher Cats baseball stadium; 4-H golf tournament May 19th at Canterbury Woods Country Club

Cheshire County Photo Project – Maria Callahan

Maria thanked everyone for the opportunity to share this project – project began because Council felt it needed an additional component to the staff reports to fully understand what educators did. Council members also were encouraged to attend as many events as possible, particularly those events they might not attend on their own. The Council felt the photo project was a plus and accomplished its initial goal of understanding the hard work of the staff and the “crazy hours” they spend at work. This documentation best summed up by outgoing Council member, “I wish I had made such visits 5 years ago – I would have had a much clearer understanding” of what staff does. She strongly recommended council members attend at least two events a year.

Maria went through each slide and explained what the event was and who attended. Maria also noted she had written Smuckers and they sent us “many jars of jelly.” What’s jelly got to do with UNHCE? Food for one thing, but Smuckers has a magazine article about the value of their employees and Maria felt it related perfectly to the work of the Extension staff. She also wrote to a tea company for the same thing. She noted there were many ways to use this type of effort and felt it had made a big difference in how the council views the Cheshire County staff, which became much more appreciative of their efforts.

Grafton County has already purchased a camera to hopefully do the same. Paul also showcased the “Cheshire County Survival Kit” as an incentive to new council.

County Reports

Cheshire: Maria attended two budget meetings – budget did pass. She will be serving on the selection committee for the new forestry educator.

Hillsborough: Currently in budget process. Commissioners this year asked why Extension existed and had to provide documentation for them. Process seems to be going fairly well, asked for further documentation on travel – Hillsborough does about 75,000/yr – pretty good chunk of travel. We're closing out Year 2 of CYFAR in Hillsboro and Deering; happy about progress there. Jon Nute recently did an assessment of county forest, over 460 acres. (This includes developed land.) PAT Team, chaired by Jon Nute, is doing a couple of things: working on a new software program "Indesign" and county newsletter. Also looking at legislative interest and where matches might be with some of our staff so they can connect and let them know what we're doing. Connie noted funding now available to replace 4-H educator; had between 35-40 candidates who were exceptional; narrowed to 2 interviewed in person; hopefully we'll have an announcement in the next couple of weeks. Anne K. talked about Tree Steward Committee and Big Tree Team.

Coos: Larry B. talked about mud breakfast being hosted by Sam Stoddard today. Topic is wildlife and endangered species, and it attracts loggers and others. Shared Cost Agreement with other departments in the office building Extension now complete. Budget passed in March, and the Shared Cost Agreement, negotiated with commissioners, proved helpful. Will be looking for new NC person to replace Helene Grobman who is moving to Alaska. Ramona Chessman named Public Service of NH Volunteer of the Year, due almost entirely to her role in 4-H.

Merrimack: Budget passed. Council wanted to share a "highlight" report, designed in-house, which Deb passed out. It showcases that Extension was in every city and town in the county. Deb also shared a news article sample from Council members, with a note about who each person is and hoping it will be used in weekly newspapers. Merrimack also has a speakers' bureau for MG; already getting responses. Blasting taking place above the office building. Commissioner, JD Colcord, attended a council meeting to update the group on this effort.

CCII held in Merrimack – held at Rundlett Middle School in Concord – good turnout, including legislators. Today an article in Concord Monitor refers to the after school program at the school – made connection to bring kids into the CCII event, with Liz Martin.

Carroll: Linda talked about visit from John Pike on Tuesday of this week. Went well. Carolyn talked about forestry position efforts, now being advertised. Feel very important to replace Peter Pohl, who has been there 37 years. Noted high elderly population in the county and growth of assisted housing, but on the other side, new schools being built. Ann talked about budget, which did pass with \$25,000 extra for forestry position. It was a well-rounded approach; Dave Babson got on the band wagon to help support this effort, calling on members of the delegation. Council members followed up with phone calls to each delegation member. A letter went to 50 people who had benefited from the forestry position; they were asked to write to the delegation to note how they had benefited from the position – extremely well received. Received a lot of support at hearing, where commissioners came to our defense, pointing out work Peter did with the county, including a detailed report.

Stafford: Hiram reported things are going well in the county, despite temporary quarters. Lost four council members in the past year; two new members onboard, but having trouble getting a youth member. PAT efforts; don't have team, but everyone works toward public awareness. Maple Syrup day

with Don Black and Linda Willard went well; about 65 in attendance. Talked about recent events in the county, including twilight meetings. Noted new F&C Resources educator, Ellen Rondina Paul, is doing well; a real asset to the county. Budget has passed. John got a call from Peter Miller in Rochester who said an Extension educator (FHGEC Rachel) had been helpful and wanted to write a letter to “spread the good word.”

Grafton: Denis noted the budget has passed. County Commissioners taking turns coming to our meetings and are very supportive. Now have a legislative representative at our meetings, Martha McLeod who has been to every meeting since, very supportive. 4-H program booming in the county and the council wondered if Kathy needed help; decided to establish a committee to see if Kathy needed an assistant, appears to be some support there, and may in the future put some money in there. This year, we added some money into “special projects” for Kathy’s program area to hire somebody to help her for major events.

CCII coming up on May 8. Donna Mitton pulled together a 3-ring binder of the Council Handbook and the council held a special meeting to review it (up on website, too.) Put question asked by educator of *what does the Council do* as a topic for upcoming meeting; easy to be supportive since we have a “great bunch of Educators” but Denis feels Council does have a purpose and there may be issues we should be more involved in.

Anna noted that is a question that should be asked, (what is the Council role,) and why the PAT efforts came about a couple of years ago.

Paul also noted training for council members will be “ramped up” in the future. Jim noted we used to have specific training for new council members; would that be helpful to hold twice a year where new council members might come and learn about the mou’s, partnerships, what USDA is all about, and council member roles. In Sullivan County, Seth said even veteran members also wanted the training. Recently spent an entire meeting on that review. Paul reiterated that with Pictel, we can do training just about anytime and are willing to do so.

Kathy noted Van Anderson was nominated for national 4-H Hall of Fame. Thanks to the Council and their public awareness, lots of legislators contacted. At recent events, we had public officials (commissioner, delegation member of combo) attending as judges.

Rockingham: Laurie noted how public awareness has grown stronger; Paul has done an excellent orientation of new members. Good attendance at meetings. Use a marketing poster to spread the word and validate work of our educators. Recently held second CCII, which went well. Council members called legislators a week before to encourage them to attend. Feedback received from commissioners positive; non-controversial event that displayed the partnership with UNH. Lynn noted fortunate to have good connections with other department heads in the county.

Belknap: Kathy talked about lengthy process of hiring new educator, which started about a year ago. (New educator – Sue Cagle) There were 33 applicants for the position. Sumner talked about the budget process, and full delegation approved it and we have rebuilt our trust with county government. Kathy noted having Thom Linehan helped in the transition process. Sumner will be working on MOU with commissioners. He also will be working on an effort to preserve the Belknap County range, organizing a coalition of county towns to help protect the mountains.

Sullivan: Budget isn’t approved until June; so far, well-received and well-liked. We went after a 5 percent increase for secretaries, as well as a mileage increase to match the federal rate, and GPS.

Everything approved, including mileage increase. Tried to hire part-time secretary, commissioners okayed increase to do so. Complaints from staff about air quality, needed \$2,000 this year to address the issue and \$8,000 next year; also approved. Got in a bit of a firestorm last year with forestry educator position; almost voted down. Strategized to get it folded into educator line item; we didn't want it "hanging" out by itself. In terms of PAT, we switched the focus to program participation by Sullivan County residents. Council members have asked for generic business cards, so they can hand them out to those who ask about Extension. Also decided to educate themselves, so educators were asked to provide information at each meeting. May meeting, Phil Auger will come, it will be filmed for public access TV, and delegation will be invited. We also hold a delegation dinner. Chuck Hersey has done a lot of work with the county farm with management plans, also well received. Doing a lot of public access TV, strengthening families, 4-H, etc. Put a strong effort on collaborative efforts (at Sen. Bob O'Dell's request). Art Bastian started attending our staff meetings to learn more about the issues. Held a civil rights training this past year and also on county handbook and the council's role.

Jane added that the council puts PAT efforts on each of its agenda so it's brought to the forefront. It appears we're getting more comfortable about spreading the word about Extension.

Dean Update:

John welcomed Sue Cagle and welcomed Seth's comments about "mourning" those who've retired, but how the new staff also are great. He commented on the positive visit made this week to Carroll County. He noted Nancy Franz's moving on to Virginia and that effective March 20 Jim Grady became associate director, and continues to wear two hats; new position in Hillsborough County – fortunately in pretty decent fiscal position right now, there are seven positions now recruiting for, including NC position in Coos and 4-H specialist position. Shared letter to the editor from Terry Picard – reason Extension as strong as it is in New Hampshire is due in great part to the volunteers. We're planning a statewide staff conference May 25 – invite you to participate, in particularly lunch/recognition component; Bruce Mallory will be providing a few remarks.

Lynn – presented idea of putting statewide events into legislative calendar when any major events are ongoing.

Community Conservation Assistance Program Presentation – Frank Mitchell, Phil Auger & Amanda Stone

Amanda, as project coordinator, described the program. Overall, CCAP assists New Hampshire communities and conservation groups with land and water conservation planning projects, such as natural resources inventories, conservation planning, land protection, public outreach and building public support. The past year, 31 towns, 2 conservation groups, 10 regional meetings and 1,578 participants took part in the program.

She also showcased about the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition. NROC is multi-organizational, providing assistance to the 42 towns in the coastal watershed. Select three communities and commit to work intensively with them for 4-6 months.

Frank Mitchell talked about the evaluation of the NROC project, the Dollars and Sense of Saving Special Places and the UNH Senior Projects Course – essentially an outreach course between the UNH department and Extension.

Phil Auger talked about how the program is highly dependent on grant sources. In 2005, there were eight different funding sources of a little more than \$100,000, not including federal money. The program is highly important to UNHCE, but one of the problems we're facing now is the drastic reduction of funding from larger sources, who also happen to be Extension partners. It's time to look at the long-term viability of CCAP. Phil's retiring in September, 2007, and there may be other changes in 2008. What Extension needs to think about is a smooth transition – our vision is to include current staff in more CCAP efforts. First, we think it will be important to refill our positions and that when new position announcements go out, there is a component that refers to these efforts. It may also be time to put the program under a specific “umbrella.”

Jim talked about the visit to Carroll County and how land and land conservation issues in the southern part of the state are very different than in the north, where they're facing some very serious economic issues. How does the community development piece that Charlie French is doing fit in? Is there the horse power to work in the north country?

Phil responded that open space needs to be a statewide component of economic development. Largely, our state has growth problems but low unemployment. Our work comes from the community; we react to what that community wants.

Jim wondered if Extension does have a role in helping communities (like those in the North Country.) Anna talked about how the NROC program came into Dover over 5 years ago and because of its efforts, the Dover program is still going strong. Brian noted that other staff were involved in these efforts: Julia Peterson, Shane Bradt, Jeff Schloss and others in the agricultural and forestry area; about 10 Extension staff overall involved. There has to be a role for Extension in guiding good growth for communities. We're continually trying to determine what Extension's role is in a sustainable way.

Issue of charging for programs is become more of a major issue across the country; Extension is tax supported and while Extension may want to recover the costs of holding a meeting, staff time isn't included because of the public tax dollars already going to the program. Extension is excellent at bringing groups together and helping them through process of what they want to be and where they want to go.

Next State Advisory Council meeting takes place October 26, 2006.

Meeting adjourned at 2 pm