

**State Advisory Council
Minutes
October 20, 2011**

In attendance: Anne Kranz, Rachel Maccini, Fred Borman, Emily Schmalzer, Isobel Parke, Ann Hamilton, Miles Watzl, Sandy Brocaar, John Lyford, Deb Cheever, Erick Leadbeater, Eloise Clark, Steve Roberge, Suzanne Harvey, Dan Reidy, Sue Cagle, Wendy Brock, Jim Grady, Charlene Baxter, Lisa Townson, Martha McLeod, Heather Bryant, Larry Barker, Everett Frizzell, Seth Wilner, Greg Chanis, Carol McShane, John Pike, Anna Boudreau

Called to order by Chair, Anna Boudreau. John Lyford moved to accept the minutes from previous meeting and motion carried.

Roundtables:

Sullivan – Program highlights include Family Life Program in jails and hurricane relief for damaged fields and lands. Their forester (Chuck Hersey) resigned in September and they are grateful for coverage from other counties (Cheshire and Merrimack). 4-H clubs strong; robotics club is going to the national competition in St. Louis. Greg Chanis (county manager) is very appreciative of the way that Extension integrates its work into county operations.

Rockingham – Lost two educators to retirement (Claudia Boozer-Blasco and Phil Auger). Their budget was cut last year and there will likely be a cut this year again. Costs for county health insurance have increased – so all departments will be stretched.

Coös – Lost their FCR position (Sue Buteau) to retirement and Heidi Barker is filling in – this is working well. Their budget is just going in. They have a very good supporter on their county delegation. Received a Tillotson grant to install a new high definition voice and video system in the small conference room. This is a great tool – saves travel and will be increasingly important.

Grafton – Fully staffed right now. Thanks to administration for all of the information on budget and reorganization. New economic development – SET – Strengthening Economies Together that Heather and Deb are working on. Lost about \$10,000 in budget that was in staff travel line. Commissioners and county administration are very supportive. AC members went to county delegation meeting. The jail coming on line will be a challenge because of the cost of this is putting pressure on everyone else's budget. Ag Commissioner and Corrections Commission were there visiting the Co Farm visit recently.

Belknap – had to move this year and was able to cover the cost of the move in their budget (right downtown) – submitted next year's budget - \$6900 less. Met with commissioners yesterday and the mood was very positive. They were pleased with the ability to move without additional costs and were pleased with a budget that was lower. They are still talking about purchasing the state school in Laconia – if that happens, they would very much like Extension to be involved in planning – land use, etc. They

do a lot of delegation outreach, work with the jail quite a bit, nursing home, facilitating groups, county lands. The message they hear from delegation is “It’s not that we don’t value Extension – but it’s about having enough money to support it.”

Hillsborough – 123 delegation members and it’s “like the wild west”. Budget was reduced last year and the county as a whole cut more than 50 positions. Delegation has made it clear they won’t let taxes increase. With a loss of stimulus money – need to find \$4 million. They are looking at ONLY what they are required to fund. There are a few members who have threatened to defund Extension in 2012, but not sure they will have the votes. Staff is so valued for their expertise and work. The public awareness team developed a series of posters – concentrating on different aspects of what Extension does. These have been disseminated to libraries and town halls, etc.

Cheshire – Challenges getting the county delegation to appreciate Extension. There are some delegation members who only care about cutting – not programs. They are only looking at the bottom line – how much will this cost. The delegation is worried about the state passing on their cuts (in Extension) to county. The jail and healthcare costs are greater – putting stress on overall county budget. It’s not a spending issue, it’s a revenue issue. Very appreciative of staff assistance with closing the county farm. Extension has helped the county with looking at what to do with the land now. Steve helped with timber sale. Carl helped with closing of buildings and plans. Nancy has been working with jail population on money and nutrition programs. Concerns about changes in land conservation practices on county lands.

Merrimack – Budget was submitted already and they will be meeting with commissioners in a week. \$439,000 requested. 4-H Life – was honored at the Annual Extension picnic and the plaque will be displayed at the jail (shared with Sullivan). Have a new Nutrition Connections staff person. Good AC meeting attendance by county commissioner and one of the delegation members. Have some new council members and a very active council.

Carroll – delegation recently met and told them they shouldn’t increase the budget request for next year. This is due on November 8. There has been some movement by Republican Committee members (not delegation) to do away with Extension. Public meeting in July had more than 80 members of the general public – very supportive of Extension. Still debate about the old nursing home and whether or not to renovate and/or move Extension there. There may not be a financial reason to move and the Conway office is closer to the larger population of the county. Held 2nd Carroll Co Farm day in August with more than 500 in attendance. Have lost their Nutrition Connections staff due to a retirement. Ag is working with landowners/farmer with flood damage from the hurricane. Some of the commercial farms along the Saco River lost their entire crops. The flood stage of the Saco has lowered by 2 feet as a result of some of the changes.

Ed Center – in Manchester – toll free line staffed by MG volunteers who answer questions/emails. Last year answered about 6,500 calls and emails. Topics cover everything – backyard livestock, insects, gardening, food, etc.

Re-Extension – NH’s support and success is very much due to the citizen volunteers who help us through membership on County Advisory Councils. Their input in hiring, performance reviews and budget requests is invaluable to this organization – not only at the county level, but also at the state level.

Three regional meetings were held regarding Re-Extension, in Durham, Goffstown and Woodstock – with about 200 people in attendance. John handed out a draft summary of the reorganization plan to members and went over the high points. A 14-member team has been working on this plan for the last 90 days to come up with the draft. Getting feedback from folks is a high priority for this team. There’s a survey and the document up on the web (the Extension Update) that we are soliciting feedback on until Oct 31. The Re-Extension team meets again on November 9 to come up with a final draft with plans to begin implementation in early January. Timing is a challenge as seven county budgets are in the middle of their process now – before we really have all of the hard figures in place.

One of the goals is to come up with county appropriations that are more equalized across all counties, and doesn’t pass on the state cut burden on to county government.

Questions/Comments:

- Is it possible for this group to influence UNH’s percentage support for Cooperative Extension?
- What is the political complexion of Extension supporters? There seems to be a pendulum swing again.
- Historically, when UNHCE was a separate part of the state budget (not part of UNH’s) – we seemed more able to bring more people to the state house to lobby on our behalf. We don’t seem to do this anymore. It feels like we’re rolling over and taking it more than we used to. Will more proactive lobbying hurt us or help us?

John reiterated that UNH administration could have cut our budget the full 48% this year, but they didn’t – only cut us by 23% instead. John’s hope is that when a final plan is released - UNH will find it reasonable to not cut our budget any further. This is tough – UNH only gets about 6% of its revenue from the state. It’s difficult to justify being a state land-grant university with such a small level of support.

One way to look at this is talking about the positive aspects of our programming – and how this fits into the very conservative approach of some legislators now. E.g. 4-H teaches kids about robotics and this makes them more successful in the future, contributing members of society who are less likely to need public assistance in the future.

One of our challenges is many of our program impacts are very long term – e.g. with multiple generations on nutrition – to help break the cycle of poverty. Counter this with the short-term investment of building and supporting jails. This state (society) is much more likely to invest in the short-term than the long-term impacts of prevention programs like youth development or land-conservation.

Several suggestions regarding communicating the impact of UNH Cooperative Extension:

Invest in UNH Cooperative Extension programs – invest in NH's future!

Many decision makers seem more likely to react to economic impacts – how do we communicate this impact in a more compelling way.

We need to be very thoughtful about who we market to and our messages. Target the ones that are reasonable and willing to listen. There needs to be multiple messages for various people. Sometimes it's all numbers and economics, sometimes it may be stories about a family or individual's life that has changed. More diverse messages are needed. Communicate with legislators – how many of THEIR constituents were at our meeting.

In general – we need a year-round effort communicating with legislators. The climate in Concord is very different than it ever has been. The arm twisting and cajoling of moderate legislators – by more conservative legislators is very strong – never has been this way before, making it even more difficult to change one's mind.

Greg C. felt there seems to be a disconnect between how delegates act in the county and how they act in Concord. It is important to tailor the plan for what's the right thing to do, not where the political pendulum is right now.

UNHCE provides an infrastructure in the state – to help people help themselves. We support many other state and local agencies that work to help people as well.

We used to have a document (in Extension) that explained what each role in government (co rep, co commissioner, etc.) is. Should we do this again?

There are not many things that county delegations CAN cut much – i.e. nursing home, health care, jails, so they DO spend more time debating on the things like UNHCE that they can cut. If taxpayers aren't willing to pay more, they have to cut somewhere.

Work with business and industry – to talk on our behalf.

Lunch – COA's met with Jim Grady.

An afternoon presentation of Heckle Award winner for 2011 – Debbie Luppold talked about the work of Nutrition Connections in New Hampshire.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.