

**MINUTES**  
**MANITOWOC COUNTY**  
**Extension Education and Agriculture Committee**

**DATE: Thursday, August 20, 2020**

**TIME: 4:45 P.M.**

**PLACE: Manitowoc County Office Complex, 4319 Expo Drive, Manitowoc, WI**

**MINUTES:**

1. **Meeting called to order** at 4:45 PM by Catherine Wagner, Chair.
2. **Roll call:** Present – Catherine Wagner, Tyler Martell, Jonathan Niels, Paul Hansen, Bob Cavanaugh. Also present: Rob Burke, Department Director; Judy Knudsen, Interim Area Director.
3. **Approval of Agenda.** Motion by Cavanaugh, second by Hansen to approve agenda. All aye, motion carried.
4. **Public Comment** – None.
5. **Minutes.** Motion by Niels, second by Hansen to approve the MINUTES of the June 18, 2020 meeting. All aye, Approved.
6. **Correspondence** – Catherine Wagner noted receipt of Judy Knudsen’s letter introducing herself and her role as Interim Area Director to the committee.
7. **Program Highlight** – Judy Knudsen introduced herself to the committee, Judy will be serving as the Interim Area Extension Director in place of Rob Burke who is retiring from the university effective August 31. Judy has over 30 years of experience with Extension and is looking forward to working with the committee. Burke noted that Kevin Palmer, Manitowoc Youth/4-H Educator has agreed to assume responsibility for many of the day-to-day functions of the office including approving time cards, authorizing budget expenditures, and liaison with Judy.
8. **Dept. Director Report:**  

To manage the vacant Ag Agent position in Manitowoc County, Burke reported the office has established a group of active agents and Extension specialists who are available to answer questions and respond to requests for assistance from the Manitowoc agricultural community. Extension office support staff are already referring calls and inquiries from agricultural community constituents to the appropriate specialist or educator. For example, the Sheboygan county ag agent has agreed to handle calls/inquiries relating to crops/soils/forages. The Kewaunee ag agent will field inquiries regarding dairy/livestock and farm management. Brown County extension will handle questions regarding home horticulture. The Peninsular Ag Research Station in Door County is available to advise commercial orchards and tree fruit growers.

Bob Cavanaugh questioned details of the hiring freeze and its effect on refilling the open Ag Agent position. Burke responded the UW-wide hiring freeze is still in force and currently prohibits us from starting a search/hire process for the county ag agent, however Judy Knudsen is making renewed, urgent efforts to persuade Extension leadership to seek a waiver of the freeze to allow the process for hiring an Ag educator to proceed. Burke noted that the Ag Agent position is the highest priority opening to fill in this area, and he expects that a full-time ag agent will be hired dedicated just to Manitowoc County. Bob Cavanaugh expressed his hope and expectation that when the interviews take place that members of the ag/dairy community in Manitowoc be included on those interviews and provide input into the ultimate hiring decision. Burke responded that is a highly desirable best practice, and he believes it will be done.

Burke reviewed performance of the budget for the county extension office. Some substantial 'savings' to the county will come from Scott's absence, and these savings have been communicated to the county comptroller.

WEXA Dues: The newly formed Wisconsin Extension Association (WEXA), formerly the Wisconsin Association of County Extension Committees, is sending out invoices to the county oversight committees for annual dues in the amount of \$50. Burke noted that funds are available from the county extension budget. Motion by Hansen, second by Martell, to pay the invoice up to the amount of \$50 for annual dues, upon it's receipt.

August newsletter was circulated and reviewed by the committee. Catharine Wagner asked that the FoodWise Coordinator and Educator be the featured programming highlight at the next meeting.

**9. Next Meeting:** Thursday, October 15, 2020, 4:45 PM

**10. Adjournment:** Motion by Hansen, second by Martell to adjourn. All Aye. Meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.

Recorded by Rob Burke, Department Director



August 20, 2020