

Buffalo County Minutes

Committee/Board: Agriculture and Extension Education Subcommittee

Date of Meeting: Monday, April 6, 2026

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Brian Michaels at 9:53 a.m.

Board Members Present: Mr. Brian Michaels, Mr. Robert Sendelbach and Mr. Gary Stanton

Others Present: Ms. Mary Campbell Wood, Dr. Kari Weiss, Mr. Lee Engfer and Ms. Roxane Weisenbeck

Public comments Regarding Posted Agenda Items: None

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Minutes of the previous meeting: Motion by Mr. Stanton, seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Motion carried.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Regional Crop Educator Hiring Update: Dr. Weiss reported that preliminary interviews for 6 candidates were conducted on April 1. Ms. Sarah Torbert, the hiring agent, informed Dr. Weiss that the selection committee chose 4 candidates to move forward to final interviews. Final interviews will be held on April 15th with all committee members/administration invited to listen to the presentations of each candidate. More information and the remote access link will be available soon.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Personnel Update: Dr. Weiss updated the committee on the hiring of Bianca Mullen as the 4-H Associate Educator. As a result of Ms. Mullen moving into the educator position, there is a vacancy for the .5% 4-H Assistant position which is included in the 2026 budget. After conversation with administration, she is hoping to move forward with hiring for that position. Dr. Weiss shared that she would like to use funds from the Teen Court non-lapsing account to supplement the position and bring it to a possible .6%. This would allow additional support for the Buffalo/Pepin County Teen Court program currently housed in Pepin County. The committee supported that decision.

Dr. Weiss also shared that the 4-H Leaders Association is donating funds up to \$6000 for a 4-H Summer Intern. The summer intern position is currently posted and will close on April 24th. She is hoping to have an intern in place by mid to late May.

Educator Reports:

Human Development and Family Relations: Ms. Mary Wood, HDR Educator, discussed the following:

- Successes and challenges collaborating with Trempealeau County Jail for Moving Forward re-entry classes which serve both men and women.

- Noted some delays in the hiring of an AmeriCorps recovery coach. This leads to concerns about losing funding secured in 2025 for this position. Several attempts have been made to hold discussions but have been unable to coordinate with Trempealeau Jail staff.
- 26 participants in Trempealeau Jail re-entry classes in March.
- The recent Companions Through the Wilderness, Healing from Loss and Greif classes went very well with participants asking to continue to meet monthly. Ms. Wood shared a link for committee members to view evaluations of the class.
- Discussed the Strong Couples program.
- Provided updates on statewide classes and learning opportunities.
- Planning to conduct a Child Care Clinic at Cochrane-Fountain City School.

4-H Youth Development: Ms. Weisenbeck reported on recent 4-H Youth Development programming in the absence of Bianca Mullen, 4-H Associate Educator.

- 4-H Countywide Service-Learning opportunity: Connections Across Generations is a service project for 4-H clubs to promote intergenerational connections as well as aligning with community needs. Ms. Mullen designed the program with interactive guidelines to ensure educational and impactful outcomes.
- Attended the Early Childhood Screening Event at Alma Area Schools creating connections with youth and families as well as leadership opportunities for an older youth member.
- Discussed the 4-H STEM Discovery Toolkits, including the new projects and materials being added. Explained how the Toolkits are being promoted on social media and featured at 4-H Leaders' Association meetings to increase awareness among the public and 4-H Leaders about the resources available to them.
- 2026 Thriving Survey Results: The findings reflect a strong 4-H program in Buffalo County with 4-H enrollment continuing a consistent trend to the positive.
- Dr. Weiss also shared collaboration with Pierce County 4-H planning day/overnight camps at Nugget Lake Park as well as STEAM Discovery Days for MCYC youth.
- Upcoming programs:
 - o 4-H Dog Project Fun Day
 - o Nature Quest at Merrick State Park
 - o Math & Science night at C-FC

Soils and Crops: No Report. Vacant position.

Area Extension Director Report: Dr. Weiss explained while working with the 4-H Regional Program manager that a focus of Ms. Mullen's work will include 4-H Volunteer training. This will allow 4-H Volunteers to become more involved and confident in teaching young people and be able to assist more with future programs.. She also spoke about her meeting and discussions with the Mondovi Community Youth Center board and potential 4-H programming for this summer and beyond.

Weiss also discussed the 136 Contract with the university for educator's salaries. She explained to the committee the approximate savings to the county due to the vacant

positions during the first quarter of 2026. Depending on start dates of the new hires, there is potential for a \$22,000 deduction of the original contracted amount. That will be calculated and applied on the second invoice from the University issued in November.

Committee Chair Report: No report by Mr. Michaels. Mr. Engfer stated there would be reorganization of the Ag and Extension Education Sub Committee after elections. The annual report was discussed and will be presented to the new committee at the next meeting.

Next Meeting Date and Time ~ The next scheduled committee meeting is Monday, June 1, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

Public comment not related to agenda items: None

Adjournment ~ The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxane Weisenbeck, Administrative Assistant