



## DECEMBER DRAFT MINUTES (UNAPPROVED)

WAUPACA COUNTY AGRICULTURE AND EXTENSION EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
Monday, December 01, 2025 – 11:00 AM

1. **Call meeting to order and Open Meeting Statement:** Chair Dennis Wengelski called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM and gave the opening statement.
2. **Roll call Committee Members:** Present were Supervisors Dennis Wengelski, Dick Rohan, Larry Eisentraut, and Bernie Ritchie. Also present were Extension Waupaca County Educators: Alicia Utke, Amy Ebert, Christi Gabriliska, Penny Tank, Jeremy Solin, Interim Area Extension Director, and Haley Nelson, program support.

**Absent:** Ken Jaeger

3. **Review and accept Agenda:** Motion by L. Eisentraut, second by B. Ritchie to approve the agenda. Motion carried without a negative vote.
4. **Review previous meeting minutes (10/27/2025):** Motion by B. Ritchie, second by L. Eisentraut to approve the meeting minutes from 10/27/2025. Motion carried without a negative vote.
5. **Correspondence:** None
6. **2026 Extension Contract Review – Jeremy Solin, Interim Area Extension Director:** Jeremy informed the committee that the contract is ready to go to finance next week Wednesday, December 10. There are no changes to the contract.
7. **Memorandum of Understanding for consideration:** Jeremy Solin discussed the MOU details including consideration of practices, responsibilities, funding, and facilities. Jeremy and committee members addressed questions on the MOU contract.

Motion by L. Eisentraut, second by B. Ritchie to look into the MOU and pass to the proper county committee. Motion carried without a negative vote.

8. **Agriculture and Extension Committee meeting frequency:** Jeremy Solin verified with committee members that we will not have committee meetings when we hold county board meetings. Committee meetings in November/December will be combined and there will not be a meeting in January, April, or September.
9. **Administrative Department Report – Jeremy Solin, Area Extension Director:** Jeremy Solin discussed cuts to FoodWise funding and the 5% UW budget reduction. Jeremy discussed AED reorganization, including combining of Areas. Waupaca will be shifted to a 4-county area that includes Portage, Wood, and Marathon. An AED will be hired. Jeremy also gave an office staff update. Christi Gabriliska is the Health and Well-Being Educator starting December

1, 2025. Christi will be 50 percent split between the counties of Waupaca and Winnebago. Funding for Waupaca County portion is being provided by private, philanthropic funds. Haley Nelson will shift from county to state employment on January 1, 2026. Jeremy provided an update on our office phone service, and we will have state equipment in our office beginning January 1.

#### **10. Educator Reports:**

##### **Penny Tank- 4-H Program Educator**

Penny Tank started working with the Marion School District 4-H afterschool program 2 years ago. Penny holds her program on Thursdays at Marion Mustang Academy. Penny implements hands-on projects and skill development for young people, along with the Shawano Co. 4-H Educator. Penny stated that forty to sixty students in grades K-6 attend. Project examples are seed mosaics, monoprints, animal lessons, themed cooking lessons, and Spark Saturday.

#### **11. Outreach Education or Program reminders and announcements from staff:**

##### **Alicia Utke -Human Development:**

- Alicia Utke shared information on the COMET program on changing emotional and mental health. She also shared information on Powerful Tools for Caregivers, Trama Informed Caregiver Program and Planning Ahead. Alicia mentioned that our office is a drop-off location for the HCE Yarn Drive.

##### **Amy Ebert**

- Amy Ebert shared that she is looking to provide support for organizations and non-profits to sustain sustainability. Amy shared that the Fund Development & Donor Relations in-person workshop is coming. Amy is also working on a presentation to help the Shamrock Club in New London measure their impact on the community.

##### **Christi Gabrilkska**

- Christi Gabrilkska wrapped up FoodWise and is stepping into her new role as a Health & Well-Being Educator. Christi shared about the 155 boxes of food that went out for Thanksgiving. Christi shared that she plans to continue working with the Be Well Waupaca Coalition, Waupaca County Hunger Network, and Harvest of the Month program.

#### **12. Next meeting**

- **Monthly Meeting . . . February 23, 2026 at 9 a.m.** at the Highway Department.

**13. Adjourn:** Supervisor B. Ritchie moved to adjourn, Chair Wengelski declared the meeting adjourned at 12:07 PM.

Submitted by,

Haley Nelson  
Recording Secretary/Support Staff



## Community Development

### Amy Ebert- Community Development Educator

**Community Development** provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. We educate in leadership development, organizational development, food systems, community economic development, local government education and much more. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

- A team development workshop (Real Colors) for organizations where participants increased their ability to recognize their strengths and the strengths of others, build rapport quickly with others, understand how others process information, and modify their communication to connect with others. The workshop is intended to help teams work together more effectively.
- Extension met with organizational leaders to assess their readiness for strategic planning and to understand their goals and current challenges. Based on these conversations, Extension designed a customized sequence of mission, vision, and leadership workshops to prepare the board and staff for future planning. This process is helping the organization build shared understanding and capacity, laying the foundation for an effective strategic planning effort.
- Preparation for a presentation measuring the economic impact of the Shamrock Club's St. Patrick's Day week of events in New London. This included preparing and delivering a presentation to the board and members about economic impact options. As a result, the Shamrock Club will be better positioned to raise awareness of club efforts, obtain event feedback, and increase sponsorships, ultimately resulting in greater local capacity to address economic development challenges and opportunities.
- Facilitation and leadership support for Be Well Waupaca County, an organization whose mission is to empower community members to achieve optimal health and well-being by fostering a safe, vibrant, and resilient community in which everyone belongs. Ongoing facilitation of monthly member meetings and board meetings, as well as guidance in group decision-making, improving organizational effectiveness, and pursuing nonprofit status to increase their capacity to fulfill their mission.
- Strategic planning for a community-serving organization where we updated the organization's mission and vision statement, identified goals, and developed action plans. The planning process is intended to clarify the organization's purpose and develop achievable steps to realize its vision.
- Collaboration with Volunteer Waupaca, a cross-sector task force working to increase volunteer engagement in the Waupaca area. Extension advised partners on facilitation, provided nonprofit landscape data, offered input on outreach and website materials, and began developing a volunteer demographic survey to identify current participation and gaps. This strengthened the task force's planning process and equipped partners with community-specific insights to better connect nonprofits with volunteers.
- Planned and co-facilitated meetings with local stakeholders focused on strengthening childcare systems in Waupaca County through the formation of a childcare alliance. Participants explored strategies to support sustainability and workforce development, including substitute staffing pools, consistent wage structures, and use of the Pyramid Model to address provider burnout. The group is developing alliance infrastructure needs, such as hiring a community coordinator, and learned about approaches to group formation, shared visioning,



and collective planning. This effort supports a more coordinated, community-driven approach to addressing local childcare challenges.

- Coordinated the planning of the quarterly Wisconsin Towns Association meeting for the Waupaca County Unit, involving active collaboration with the Unit Chair and community stakeholders. Through this activity the members of the Waupaca County Unit can access educational opportunities on topics relevant to town officials, thereby enhancing their knowledge and increasing their ability to make informed decisions.

## Health and Well-Being

### Christi Gabriliska- Health and Well Being Educator

*Extension's health and well-being educators provide accessible and safe physical activity spaces and connect communities to healthy food sources. By working with local aging and disability centers, health coalitions, schools, and community-based organizations, we promote healthy aging strategies, create opportunities to be physically active, and promote health across the lifespan.*

- Meetings with community partners to discuss the possibility of implementing Harvest of the Month activities while highlighting local WI products is taking place among several community partners within both Waupaca and Winnebago Counties. The goal of these collaborations is to expose youth and adults to WI grown fruits and Vegetables and increase the amounts of fruits and vegetables consumed.
- Planning for the development of a Food Access Network as a subcommittee of the Be Well Waupaca County Coalition. The goal of this network is to unite local food resources, strengthen networking among community partners, and increase access to nutritious food for vulnerable populations in Waupaca County.
- Conversations with community partners across Waupaca and Winnebago Counties are underway to analyze the needs, understand the county's health landscape, build relationships, avoid duplication, and identify where Extension can add value. The goal is to collaborate with community partners to deliver nutrition education and support food access efforts.
- Backbone support to a coalition in Waupaca County on health and well-being where individuals and agencies come together to empower community members to achieve optimal health. The priorities of this group for the next three years include: Improve access and ease of use to community resources, create opportunities to ensure all community members have a place to belong, and build a more diverse & inclusive community.

## Human Development and Relationships

### Alicia Utke HDR Program Educator

*Extension's Human Development & Relationships Institute provides the tools Wisconsinites need to thrive as well-rounded, capable individuals and families. We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness to use.*

- COMET™ (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) training for agricultural service professionals, farmers, and rural community members to learn active listening skills to offer caring conversations as a support

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to people in a vulnerable space and before they are in a mental health crisis. The goal is to encourage the farming and rural communities to activate their noticing skills and to be better prepared to support each other through caring conversations to rebuild community connections.

- A 6-week program, Powerful Tools for Caregivers of adults with chronic conditions, where participants learn the skills for reducing personal stress, changing negative self-talk, improving communication, setting limits, dealing with emotions, and making tough caregiving decisions. The goal is to enhance participants' overall wellness and equip them with tools to navigate challenging moments, ultimately fostering resilience and support in their caregiving journey benefiting both the caregiver and care recipient.
- A 7-session course, Planning AHEAD, held at the New London Senior Center. This program helped older adults make end-of-life financial, healthcare, and final wishes decisions to reduce the stress experienced by survivors and to ensure that their wishes are honored.
- A 6-week program series where parents, caregivers and child-serving professionals learn trauma-informed practices to build healthy relationships with children who have experienced trauma. The goal is to better support children who have experienced trauma and promote family resilience.
- An on-site professional development and support visit for early childhood educators at Victory Childcare in Waupaca, where classroom practices were observed, strategies were demonstrated, and reflective discussion supported educators' ongoing professional learning. This effort strengthens relationships with local childcare centers and supports consistent, high-quality practices that promote children's social and emotional development.
- An on-site professional development and support visit for early childhood educators at Joyful Beginnings Academy, where classroom practices were observed, strategies were demonstrated, and reflective discussion supported educators' ongoing professional learning. This effort strengthens relationships with childcare programs and supports consistent, high-quality practices that promote children's social and emotional development.
- Planning for the annual Caregiver Conference for local family and professional caregivers in collaboration with the Waupaca Caregiver Alliance. Our team has been meeting regularly to strengthen community partnerships and coordinate event logistics, with the goal of offering education and resources that improve caregiver well-being. This work supports a broader effort to enhance community support systems for those who provide essential care.
- Planned and co-facilitated meetings with local stakeholders focused on strengthening childcare systems in Waupaca County through the formation of a childcare alliance. Participants explored strategies to support sustainability and workforce development, including substitute staffing pools, consistent wage structures, and use of the Pyramid Model to address provider burnout. The group is developing alliance infrastructure needs, such as hiring a community coordinator, and learned about approaches to group formation, shared visioning, and collective planning. This effort supports a more coordinated, community-driven approach to addressing local childcare challenges.
- Planning for continuing education workshops in six regions of Wisconsin for childcare providers in collaboration with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network. The goal is to provide high-quality, research-based education to directly improve childcare providers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and indirectly improve child well-being. Waupaca County is one of the six regional hubs.



## Positive Youth Development

### Penny Tank- 4-H Program Educator

*Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow through 4-H clubs, groups, workshops, and camps.*

- A **pen pal project** for youth in grades 5K - 2 where young people practice reading and writing skills in order to create and build new relationships across 8 counties in central Wisconsin.
- Planning for **4-H Super Saturday**, a hands-on project learning day for youth and families, where they learn more about a variety of 4-H projects and meet others with similar interests. The purpose of this effort is to increase project skills (sparks), foster youth leadership, and encourage youth and adult partnerships.
- A **virtual training for 4-H club youth officers** where participants learned about the duties of each office. The purpose of this training is to help youth officers become more prepared for a leadership role in the 4-H community club.
- A weekly educational 4-H club meeting at Marion Mustang Academy, **afterschool in the Marion School District**, with hands-on learning through interactive activities involving communication, teamwork, and leadership skills for youth enrolled in grades kindergarten through 8th grade. The goal of participating in these events is to acquire knowledge and build skills in the areas of personal growth and skills recognition, communication styles, leadership and increase membership in the local 4-H program. The Microwave Mug Cooking unit seeks to connect youth with the identified spark of foods with knowledge and skill building in the areas of food safety, preparation, and careers.
- Planning for a multi-county **Winter Leadership Camp** experience for youth grades 7 and above. The goal of Winter Leadership Camp is to involve young people in a variety of workshops and experiences that build leadership and personal development skills so they can be better prepared in life. Due to extreme cold, Winter Leadership Camp was postponed to the end of February.
- An **open house** where those not familiar with the 4-H program will learn more. This effort was designed to introduce families to the variety of projects and opportunities in 4-H. In addition, visitors were able to complete some hands-on projects and interact with current members and leaders that had displays around the room.
- A **family bowling activity**, planned with the youth Ambassadors, for 4-H members from around the county. Through this effort, members and families had the opportunity to be active, meet others, and have fun. Fifty youth and adults participated at the bowling alley in New London.
- Planning for a **statewide volunteer networking/learning zoom** for 4-H volunteers in collaboration with the Volunteer Advisory Committee members. The goal is to provide opportunities for volunteers to learn about best practices, and allow for a space to network to improve quality of 4-H/PYD experiences for youth. Tank is specifically involved in the creation of the zoom related to 4-H club community service projects, planning, implementing, and follow through.