



North Carolina Federation of Cooperative Extension Associations

2010 Federation Forum Minutes Johnston County Agricultural Center-Smithfield, NC Friday December 10, 2010

President Elect Becky Miller opened the meeting at 10:00 am. Becky presided over the Forum meeting due to President Heather Lifsey has taken a position with the NC Dept. of Agriculture. Becky will preside as Federation President for 2011.

Becky welcomed the guests: Dr. Joseph Zublena, Dr. Marshall Stewart, Dr. Ed Jones, Dr. Celvia Stovall, Dr. Claudette Smith and District Directors, Mr. Greg Hover, Mr. James Cowden and Mr. Travis Burke.

The Director of the Johnston County Extension Center, Mr. Brian Spivey welcomed the group to Johnston county and gave due credit to his staff for setting up the meeting space.

Secretary Deborah Cox then called role and established a quorum.

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DISCUSSION

The above mentioned guests were on the panel discussion that gave opening remarks and answered questions previously submitted and those questions from the floor.

In Dr. Zublena's opening remarks he thanked the members for the work of the past year. He wanted to encourage all DED's (District Directors) and CED's (County Extension Directors) to get good data into the system. He also encouraged all too really take time in crafting your plan of work so that you know what the end result will look like. We need all counties to be doing great work.

Dr. Zublena stated that our jobs are in a secure position right now; there may be some bumps in the road if the cuts go deeper but the counties are secure at the moment.

Dr. Celvia Stovall thanked all the associations for working hard and developing and delivering good professional development programs. Dr. Stovall reinforced that all associations need to submit their professional development plans for review in order to allow agents use of travel dollars. Dr. Stovall and Dr. Zublena will be working with DED's and Dr. Jay Jayartne on our ability to really access behavior change over time. Real behavior change happens 3-6 months after your educational programming and that is what we need to improve our methods on collecting.

Dr. Ed Jones commented on work in Natural Resources that will be providing more programming possibilities in the future. He encouraged agents to take trainings which will provide them the skills in facilitation and advocacy so that we can help our

communities deal with complex natural resource and human interaction in governance for the future.

Dr. Keith Baldwin will be in contact with DED's in the next year.

Questions presented to the panel by Janine Rywak:

Q. Will there be a salary study for Secretaries? Will there be career banding?

A. This study is on our radar. It has not happened because we have not hired a consultant yet. Then once we get the report we will need the money to implement the results. We will need more in the budget to move this idea forward. Career Banding- not banding for counties because County government secretaries do not band and this is where our funding comes from for these positions. Dr. Z asked District Directors to discuss Secretary Salaries when they meet next.

Q. Employee Morale is low what do you suggest we do to improve it?

A. Dr. Celvia Stoval stated that additional money and raises have been difficult to come by as we all know. They have discussed this topic in DED meetings and without the authority to give us all more time off they have worked hard at recognizing good work and encouraging people to put in applications for Awards and recognition. Then she turned the question back to the group assembled and asked Can you tell us what would help? Phyllis Smith asked for more deliverable program materials of high quality like we have seen of late in FCS. Jayne Burney encouraged us to all encourage each other. Furlough's by counties were brought up as a concern some folks were worried about and Dr.Z stated that as of this moment he has worked very hard to ensure there are no double furlough's enforced by the county. However, County controls their salary measures and State controls their salary. Deb Cox suggested we have more interactions with Administration at trainings on an informal basis during meal time to improve communication. Dr.Zublena also stated they continue to work on increasing travel dollars so that trainings can improve to face to face and as needed. A 4-H agent requested more resources on evaluation forms in their department, ready made press releases and other resources that assist them in working more efficiently. Dr. Z announced that he is working with the Extension Operations Council and the NC State Climate Center on a tool to have local weather conditions automatically placed on county websites with updates when conditions change. He also encouraged all in the room to work more diligently on keeping your websites, current and VIBRANT. Dr.Z is also securing headset microphones and small video cameras (one per district) so agents can have format ease for U-Tube videos on the sites.

Q. What about a 4 day work week?

A. We would like to recommend that people read the standard operating procedure manual for the way our organization operates. The CED is in charge of all scheduling in order to meet the needs of the county. They will take the lead. In terms of professional scheduling which we have to explain constantly it is helpful if we thank people when they put in the extra time that we know they put in but also we all need to know that professional scheduling is not an hour for hour return for the time spent. For example if you worked 6 hours over your regular

40 hours than you would be entitled to 3 hours off at another time. It is in place to assist folks to have time for dentist, dr. and other appointments as needed and not as a means to get additional days off. ½ day is o.k. CED is in charge of ensuring the policy is followed. One agent mentioned she only gets an hour. Dr. Z suggested she speak with her DED. The state looked into a 4 day work week not long ago and found no cost savings in utilities since someone is working a 40 hour work week in the office. They also found customer service suffers.

Q. Will you be giving us more tools and techniques to improve our reporting to the program leaders?

A. YES, YES, YES- Program leaders are preparing new tools and calculators and economic indicators for drop out prevention, food and nutrition and weight loss and economic value of festivals and other educational initiatives. Dr. Marshall Stewart explained that FCS and 4H has continual been increasing training programs to meet the needs of all the newly hired agents. They like to see the system developing whereby there is continual training for new and senior agents. Dr. Sandy Wiggins is heading up the training projects for new and senior agents. Dr. Zublena added that he would like to see the agents learn how to write a success story with content and information they can count on for reporting. He stated that the Programs have to decide what is the big impact we want to accomplish in the end whether it is crop improvement, youth development, weight loss or plants saved-more specifics on how the impact will be measured uniformly.

Q. Are Travel Authorizations for Association meetings the same this year as last?

A. YES but just like the State Association meetings the District Association Presidents need to submit an agenda and description of the educational component of the meeting for prior approval.. Send the agenda and educational speaker/topic to the Program Leader or District Directors who then send it on to Tracy Brown, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Zublena. Clarification was also made that Federation Association and the Forum are viewed as Administrative work so it too is covered by county level travel dollars.

Q. Are there limits on the amount of vacation time an employee can take at a time?

A. It is mostly based on the Supervisor and the view being that work will be completed and your programming will not suffer.

Q. Will a task force be composed to re-evaluate ECA in NC?

A. Dr. Stewart noted that the new format whereby Geri Bushel and Dr. Stewart have worked very effectively this year in improving ECA structure and mission will continue. They will be working on further Board development and clarifying the support of FCS agents this year. Dr. Stewart is very pleased with the support he has received by the hard working ECA members.

Q. This week we learned that NCDA/CS will no longer provide blank forms for soil sample reports and they will no longer be mailing reports to landowners. This results in another cost being passed on to the local level. What concessions have been asked for by this Administration from NCDA?

A. Dr. Ed Jones noted the concern and will look into it-it was suggested Heather Lifsey may be able to answer this for us!

Q. How will NCCE review/give clarification regarding the expectations of HOW TO implement the “ Local Foods” initiative?

A. Dr. Jones noted that his Team and DED’s are working on it to give further clarification. Right now they would like promotion and website presence of the campaign.

Q. There are 3 Leadership Development opportunities:

1. FCS
2. Dr. Bruce (?)
3. Aspiring CED

Why are you using so many resources when there are so many county vacancies: Are we creating too many Chiefs but not enough Indians?

A. Dr. Zublena stated NO we are not creating too many Chiefs. In actuality you are all Chiefs or LEADERS as we see it. You give leadership in your communities on a wide variety of topics. Each program area needs this training at this point in time. We have hired over 150 people in the last two years. We need to continue to bring new agents up to speed on their program materials and we need our senior agents ready to provide coaching and mentoring. We shall continue these initiatives as an on-going part of our mission. Again we need to be out in front of our county partners and the public so they know what we are doing. Be thoughtful of the Target audience and the market. Stay connected and develops good strong relationships in your community. Teach your advisory leadership who all the NC committee chairs is for the 2011 budget year. Research their chairmanships and contact numbers if needed. Keep the grassroots’ connections strong. Remember we need to be doing more advocacy for the people since we are not a mandated service. We need to remain relevant and connected.

Q. Gov. Perdue mad an announcement yesterday about State employee positions and department cuts. She also said that “education” is a priority to keep. How will this affect Extension?

A. See previous response. But also Dr.Z noted there is a freeze on Increases so this can be handled another year. Regarding budgets NCCES brings in \$7 MILLION federal dollars for salaries over and above the state money. They will not want to turn that away in Raleigh. The 10% cut has been recognized in Extension with all the positions we currently have open. NC State will most likely ask for a tuition increase of 6-8%. NCCES is asking that all cuts be made equitable if more come and that may mean cut of salaries or other dept deep cuts. Dean Wynne is working out details. Ced’s are working out scenarios’. We have 4.2 million in NCCES salary budget and County side has 2 Million worth of positions vacant so we can meet the cut in some measure by those positions. We may be hurt if offers have not been made yet. It is challenging to make a sustainable staffing plan in these economic times. Your productivity and IMPACTS are so important to the process of cuts. Tenure faculty is protected but specialists are not always

protected. Each Department will make its own decisions. Counties will probably be protected as this is where the community value is achieved if you are doing your job.