Polk Extension Service District Notes

November 7, 2023

In attendance: Commissioner Jeremy Gordon, Commissioner Mordhorst, Richard Riggs, Alisha Hutchison, Commissioner Pope was absent.

1. Commissioner Gordon called meeting to order at 10:00 am
2. Comments for items not on agenda
* None
1. Approval of Agenda. Commissioner Mordhorst moved; Commissioner Gordon seconded. Passed unanimously by the quorum.
2. Approval of Consent Calendar. Commissioner Mordhorst moved; Commissioner Gordon seconded. Passed unanimously by the quorum.
3. New Business
* Richard Riggs, Regional Director, introduced the new OSU Extension Forester, Lorelle Sherman. Mr. Riggs provided some brief background information on Ms. Sherman and then invited Ms. Sherman to talk a little more about herself. Ms. Sherman thanked the Board for their time and then talked about her background history and what she looks forward to doing in her new role. She is a mycologist and has her degree in Forest Ecology. She has planned a Foraging Your Woodland workshop for the Master Woodland Managers program to get an opportunity to meet and get to know the volunteers in the program. Lorelle will be serving Polk Benton and Linn Counties.
* Alisha Hutchison, Office Manager, provided an office update to the Board and staff. Mrs. Hutchison explained a kitchen expansion that they are currently working on and explained what they are planning to do and what types of classes they want to offer to students with this expansion. Their goal is to have the kitchen up and running by the end of 2023. Next Mrs. Hutchison provided a staffing update and stated that once their newest staff member is trained, they plan to have the office open 5 days a week again. Mrs. Hutchison stated that two weeks ago their Facebook page had been hacked, she explained what has been happening to their account and how they are trying to resolve it.
* Rachel Brandon & Andrea Hunter, 4-H Coordinators, provided a Polk County 4-H Program update. They provided a handout to the Board and staff that had a basic overview report of what they have done this year. They were excited to share that enrollment is back up to the pre-pandemic levels and now surpassing it with an increase of 9.5%. The update also went over their current onboarding for leader volunteers, club information and non-traditional programming. They talked about a fair follow up survey that was done to get feedback from the community and their plans to regularly meet with their community partners. Next, they talked about their plans to reach more of rural Polk County and those communities. Commissioner Gordon thanked both of them and also commended them for their incredible work and said that the outreach that they are working towards is really impressive. Commissioner Mordhorst brought up saving the 4-H Center and if the Board can do anything to help to let them know. Commissioner Mordhorst thanked them for their hard work and for focusing on the youth and wanted to commend them all on everything that they do.
* Richard Riggs wanted to follow up on Commissioner Mordhorst’s comments about saving the 4-H Center from being sold. Mr. Riggs stated that he would strongly suggest reaching out and writing letters to the 4-H Foundation and that he believed that Commissioner Pope had already reached out to them as well. Commissioner Gordon stated that he has and that they would follow up with him. Mr. Riggs is also recommending that the Commissioner’s either have a public hearing on the matter or invite the 4-H Foundation to come discuss this topic publicly and to be able to hear from the community what kind of impact this would have. Mr. Riggs wanted to reiterate the high level of work that has been done in the 4-H program, and stated that they have done a total 180 in the last several months with their 4-H Programs. He also wanted to thank and give a shout-out to their volunteers who work so hard and just do an incredible job.
* Next Mr. Riggs gave a brief extension admin update. Regarding the 4-H Center, there have been discussions surrounding the sale of the property by the 4-H Foundation, who owns the property. From the legislative funding received by OSU Extension, Director Lyles will be filling a number of positions, including a Christmas Tree Specialist to replace the retired Chal Langren; a North Valley Field Crops specialist that will serve Polk, Yamhill and Washington counties; three Master Gardener Coordinators to serve Linn/Benton, Tillamook and Clackamas; an Urban Forester; Agritourism and Natural Resources Professor of Practice on campus; a Gerontology Program Coordinator. He has elected not to refill the Livestock & Pasture specialist position that was previously held by Gene Pirelli.
1. Public Comment, Discussion, Announcements –
* None

Adjourned at 10:42 AM.