

Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council

Quarter 1 Full Council Meeting

Hybrid Meeting: Food + Farm Exploration Center and Microsoft Teams

Location: 3400 Innovation Drive, Plover WI 54467

**Note: The facility address is 3400 Innovation Drive, Plover WI 54467, but you first must turn onto Exploration Way, which is a very long road/driveway, that abruptly turns into Innovation Drive as you reach the Food + Farm parking lot.*

Date: Friday, Feb. 23, 2024

Time: 1 – 5 p.m.

Attendance:

Sec. Randy Romanski, Sec. Amy Pechacek, Dr. Underly, Sally Ladsten, Greg Cisewski, Jason Wood, Betsy Leonard, Scott Loomans, Sen. Ballweg, Sen. Jagler, Jeff Edgar, Monica Gahan, Erik Huschitt, Michelle Steen, Larry Lee, Paul Palmby, Nick Stadnyk, Bob Hagenow, Jeff Wright, Kevin Bernhardt, Karl Martin, Jennifer Sereno, Arielle Exner, Katie Jaeger, Alaina Knief, Ashley Andre.

AGENDA

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Greg Cisewski, Chair, called the meeting to order.

II. Roll Call

Staff completed roll call and recorded attendance.

III. Review Meeting Agenda

Council members reviewed the meeting agenda and made no changes.

IV. Review and Approve Nov. 13, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Paul Palmby made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Jeff Wright seconded the motion, the motion passed.

V. Brief Overview Presentation

Brittany from the Food + Farm Exploration Center provided a presentation for the council members. She was previously an agriculture teacher at Mosinee School and has been on staff at Food + Farm Exploration Center since 2022.

During the presentation, the council learned that Food + Farm Exploration Center opened in December 2023 and the center has school field trips booked through the end of the school year.

Food + Farm Exploration Center also provides summer camps for all ages, in addition to spring break programming. Food + Farm Exploration Center also had successful drop-in programming throughout the winter.

Food + Farm Exploration Center had stakeholders reach out directly to see how they can support the mission and some stakeholders were specifically interested in helping Food + Farm Exploration Center focus on nontraditional agriculture career paths.

One path Food + Farm Exploration Center focuses on is coding and robotics. Food + Farm Exploration Center shows how coding and robotics can be geared toward agriculture and can generate interest from individuals who may not know their skills can apply to agriculture. Food + Farm Exploration Center works with adults who want a career change and are interested in agriculture. Food + Farm Exploration Center also works with children by introducing them to the ag industry early.

Erik H. asked about relationship with FFA and Food + Farm Exploration Center. Brittany said FFA members were supposed to come visit recently but a snowstorm prevented that visit. Brittany works to continue those relationships by making tours available, developing an internship program, and will eventually have booths at conventions.

Erik H. also mentioned talking to stakeholders about funding scholarship program to help schools that are further away afford to travel to the Food + Farm Exploration Center. Brittany said that they have a set aside amount as a transportation grant to support schools that may not have the resources. Schools can apply and requirements are achievable.

VI. Staff-Guided Tour

In-person attendees toured the Center.

VII. Secretary Updates

Sec. Pechacek, DWD, discussed the DWD Annual Report and the record-breaking year. Sec. Pechacek, DWD, also discussed causes and impacts of worker quantity challenges. She said that the United States Department of Labor has continued to be impressed with Wisconsin's Workforce Solutions Programs and would like to highlight Wisconsin as the national model for AI implementation, UI modernization, and policy research.

Assistant Deputy Secretary Jennifer Sereno provided updates on the Governor's Task Force on Workforce and Artificial Intelligence. Assistant Deputy Secretary Sereno also provided an update about FFA Day, and noted that many of the students who attended were involved in Youth Apprenticeship and came from urban and rural areas alike. She said that the range of interest among the students was broad, but many of them want to be entrepreneurs.

Sec. Romanski, DATCP, thanked the facility for the tour and commended Paul Palmby, who is on the Board, for his important work contributing to the success of Food + Farm Exploration Center.

Sec. Romanski recently attended the PAS competitive meeting, where students met and learned about interviewing skills, etc. <https://www.fvtc.edu/news/story/a-strong-showing-in-ag-competition-2>.

Sec. Romanski also attended FFA Day at the Capitol, and said that it was a great energetic snapshot of a bright future. He reported that there were twice the number of students in attendance this year compared to last year. DATCP also recruited new members for the fifth year of Youth Ag Council.

Sec. Romanski said that the DATCP's agriculture magazine, "Growing Agriculture" is looking to focus on Ag workforce, and asked group to share stories about innovative workforce ideas and creative ways for integrating careers.

Finally, Sec. Romanski noted that DATCP provided 100 school laboratory kits for UW River Falls students.

VIII. Executive Officers Elections

a. Chair

Sec. Romanski nominated Shelly Mayer for Chair.

Paul Palmby asked if Greg Cisewski would be interested in continuing as chair. Greg said he believes that the chair should be geared more toward workforce-related sectors.

No other nominations were made, Sen. Ballweg moved to close nominations, Jeff Wright seconded the motion, the motion passed.

b. Vice Chair

Sec. Romanski nominated Greg Cisewski. No other nominations were made, Larry Lee moved to close nominations, Sally Ladsten seconded the motion, the motion passed.

c. Secretary

Paul Palmby nominated Larry Lee. No other nominations were made, Paul Palmby moved to close nominations, Sally Ladsten seconded the motion, the motion passed.

IX. Student Ex-Officio Members Discussion

a. Students who have been selected

X. Subcommittee Updates

a. Goal 1 Subcommittee

i. "Professor Elwood Pricklethorn" Activity Books

Jeff Edgar mailed activity booklets so that in-person members could have copies. The group discussed how this could be a tool to bridge the educational gap in when schools provide ag learning to more age ranges. DWD has an arborist apprenticeship program and was the first state in the entire country to have an arborist apprenticeship program.

Greg said that NTC has started a diesel apprenticeship program and tracker manufacturers have been sending their workers to the apprenticeship program because the skills are applicable.

Sen. Ballweg discussed the Wisconsin "ag in the classroom" program that is state and federally funded for FFA chapters.

Greg said the council will continue to look at how it can promote/endorse booklets.

b. Goal 2 Subcommittee

Sally said that Subcommittee 2 is working on developing agricultural ed pathway. That pathway got the approval from the council and other employers.

Subcommittee 2 came up with the concept of the "ag for all" project to promote the pathway for broader audiences. The group is meeting in the coming weeks to complete a scoping exercise for the project.

c. Goal 3 Subcommittee

Paul proposed dedicating an entire meeting to working on the strategic plan, asking DWD to provide an objective facilitator to assist with the meeting and development during that meeting.

Paul also requested that the full council attends the meeting fully prepared to discuss the strategic plan.

The group discussed the possibility of scheduling an extra council meeting to dedicate specifically for the development of the strategic plan.

Erik H. made a motion to explore dedicating an entire meeting to develop the strategic plan at the state fair in addition to regular meetings or in replacement of Q3 meeting, Larry Lee seconded the motion, the motion passed.

XI. Upcoming Meetings
a. Q2 Sauk Prairie

XII. Other Business

Karl Martin said that he met with Dean Glenda Gillespie, who wants to restart the ag ed major, and would like council feedback.

Greg said that March 19, 2024, is National Ag Day and that NCTC will be hosting an event to celebrate, invitation forthcoming.

Erik H. said that he wanted to explore issuing a commendation on the passage of legislation/policies. Karl mentioned how can the council promote and educate the communities about this opportunity. Karl said Extension is working hard to do outreach and educate on these opportunities.

XIII. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Sec. Pechacek, motion seconded by Paul Palmby, the motion passed.