

Advisory Council Meeting

February 17, 2009

Minutes

Sumter County Extension Advisory Council meeting was held 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2009 at the Swan Lake Visitors Center

A spaghetti dinner was prepared by Frank Brown.

The meal was blessed by Jeff Davis.

Harrison Brown extended a warm welcome to everyone in attendance and thanked Frank Brown for preparing the meal. He informed the members that the purpose of this meeting would be to discuss the state and county budgets and how they will impact Clemson University and the Sumter County Extension office.

Mr. Harvey thanked Harrison Brown for his active participation as the Extension Advisory's Chairperson. The meeting was scheduled at this time to have an opportunity to discuss the issues before the S.C. House, Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee finalize their budgets.

Clemson University is not requesting a budget increase for FY2009-2010

The Sumter Extension office has recently responded to a request from the City of Sumter to submit our 2009-2010 request for appropriations. A portion of the appropriations which we receive has previously funded 0.5 FTE's (full time equivalences). The funds support half of Amanda McNulty's salary.

The County funds another 1.5 positions.

As a part of Clemson's effort to reduce budget expenditures the following has been implemented:

- *Clemson University has a 5 day mandatory furlough (which equates to a salary reduction of 3.5% for all employees).
- *Implemented a hiring freeze.
- *The Extension Annual Conference was cancelled and reductions of in-service trainings.
- *Local operating monies were reduced by 20% and local travel by reduced by 50%.
- *Clemson has announced a Voluntary Retirement Incentive program for employees with at least 26 years of service established with the South Carolina Retirement System. Employees may also purchase time to qualify. Employees must meet the qualifications stated above on or before June 3, 2009 in order to participate in this Retirement Incentive Plan.

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Greg Discussed provisos to the proposed House Ways and Means budget regarding fee increases for fertilizer and lime to support the fertilizer inspection program and the Ag Service Lab.

Who Represents You was passed out to council members.

Clemson University would like extension agents to distribute the *Clemson Constituency Development Program Registration forms* to those individuals attending County Extensions meeting, trainings, etc. The university wishes to identify grass top supporters – persons who have close relationships with legislators and are willing to advocate for Clemson Extension. Those legislators in our area are: Murrell Smith-Sumter, Phil Lowe-Florence/Sumter, Joseph Neal-Richland/Sumter. In the past the support from these individuals/groups positively impacted on decisions regarding budget reductions.

The *Clemson Constituency Development Program Registration forms* were distributed to council members.

Mr. Harvey expressed that his primary concern was the possible reduction in appropriations from the City of Sumter and Sumter County.

It is expected that twenty (20) plus agents in the state are eligible to retire this year. Concerns were expressed regarding the future of extension and the lack of agents in the area. The function of agents is to provide assistance to farmers and home gardeners with unbiased research-based information. Without Ag Agents – Farmers can't get the latest information.

Frank Brown stated there is a proposal on the floor to cut 4-H funds by \$4 million dollars. He also stated that North Carolina and Georgia are not taking the budget cuts which South Carolina felt.

Debheror Walker, EFNEP Coordinator said their budget is stable. EFNEP is funded through the US Department of Agriculture and provide instruction on prevention.

The Advisory Council members requested that all program areas (AG, Horticulture, 4-H, EFNEP, Grants) of Sumter Co. Extension provide information on local programs/training, newsletters, association meetings, etc. via email to all of its members.

Meeting was adjourned.