

# **RAPIDES PARISH OVERALL PARISH ADVISORY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

**Thursday, March 5, 2009**

**DeWitt Livestock Complex**

The meeting was called to order and Dr. John Barnett welcomed the group and invited them to join us in refreshments.

Rev. Lee Weems opened the meeting with prayer. After the meal Dr. Barnett gave a brief introduction of the purpose of the meeting and the situation in the Central Region, focusing on the budget, and its affect on programs and personnel.

Matt Martin discussed the Rapides Parish Extension programs, giving a brief overview of the parish situation and agriculture, 4-H and FCS programs being conducted in the parish.

Danny Coombs discussed the situation with personnel at Dean Lee Research Station and the effect of the budget cuts.

Director Paul Coreil addressed the group with the concerns of the budget reduction and how this will affect the AgCenter and the clientele we serve.

Discussion by the group focused on the need to reduce cuts to the budget and try to restore some of the funding. Much discussion centered around the value of the AgCenter programs currently being conducted and the need to continue or expand them.

Jim Harper led discussion on importance of LSU AgCenter to farming in the community. The group discussed the need for stable funding for the AgCenter so we did not have to deal with budget crises every few years. The AgCenter needs to be free to devote its time to extension and research programs.

Alice LeJeune stated the need for 4-H programs to continue to address youth development in the parish. 4-H has been successful in helping to develop young people into productive adults. The various 4-H projects and program participation are building blocks that encourage self-esteem and strengthen character. 4-H is a program that is successful and needs to continue. 4-H'ers paying for project books was also discussed.

Representative Chris Roy complemented the AgCenter on work they are doing and pledged his support in the legislation. Representative Roy suggested the AgCenter work with the rural caucus to gather support.

Health and diet were also recognized as major concerns in the parish. Obesity and special diets were discussed. The FCS program was complimented for nutrition programs that are being conducted and the group expressed a need for them to be continued.

The possibility of obtaining more money from grants was also discussed. The need for grant writing skills is important.

Issues identified:

1. Budget reduction
2. Ag producers need the expertise of the AgCenter for reliable, unbiased information.
3. 4-H continue to implement programs that focus on development of life skills.
4. Health and diet are major concerns. Obesity in adults and youth of Rapides Parish should be addressed.
5. Subject matter is important for 4-H project completion.