

Tangipahoa Parish Joint Advisory Leadership Council
Minutes
Tuesday, August 10, 2010

Sandra Benjamin, Parish Chairman, opened the meeting at 10:15 a.m. She welcomed and thanked everyone for coming out and informing all in attendance that this was her first official council meeting since she took over as Parish Chair in July.

Those in attendance were: Sandra Benjamin, Parish Chair; Mr. Hampton Grunewald, LSU AgCenter Administration.

Tangipahoa Parish Agents: JoAnna Pesson. Angela Myles, Parish Chair from St. Helena.

Committee members included: Wesley Ridgedell, Parish Health Unit; Bob Basford, Tangipahoa Parish Economic Development Foundation; Sandra Bailey-Simmons, Tangipahoa Parish School Board and Frank Taulli, President Tangipahoa Master Gardeners.

Sandra informed those in attendance that in their packet in front of them was: Tangipahoa Parish Profile; list of Board of Regents and LSU Board of Supervisor, minutes of the last meeting and a Commitment form for serving as member of the Advisory Leadership Council for 3 years. She asked them to please sign the forms and leave them with her after the meeting.

Review Purpose of Meeting - to give an overall outlook on the happening in Tangipahoa Parish and what more can the Extension Service can do to continue getting information out to the public. What if anything they can add to the already existing programs that are available thru extension. Also, Mr. Grunewald will give a budget outlook for the AgCenter.

Obtain stakeholder input, leadership development and create public awareness of the value of extension & its programs.

Mission of the LSU AgCenter - Sandra pointed that the mission is to provide effective & efficient programs that result in improved quality of life for the people of LA though research & education.

Why You Were Chosen As Council Members - Sandra informed the members they were chosen because of their leadership, being respected in the community, their expertise in their field of work and connectedness in the community as well.

Members Roles & Responsibilities – is to take an active role in providing program direction for the Extension Program in this Parish by identifying & prioritizing the needs of the people you represent and assist us in implementing and evaluating educational programs designed to meet those needs. To go and tell their story to local, state officials how important the LSU AgCenter is to them and to the community.

Summary of Tangipahoa Parish Agents/what percentages of work they do in various programs

JoAnna Pesson, Extension Agent, 80% 4-H Agent along with 10% services with FNP. Works closely with the school board, 30 clubs, 4 new schools wanting clubs this year. Overview of programs: Tangipahoa Parish Fair 4-H exhibits, good kid involvement; livestock show, pumpkin carving contest, Officer/Leader training; sewing workshops; Food/Fitness Camp; 4 cookeries a year; Outdoor Skills program; Wetlands program; Fashion Camp; Challenge Camp; 4-H Camp (4th – 6th); 4-H U (8th – 12th); Lost Camp (7th). A new program Smart Bodies will be introduced into 4 schools this year.

Sandra Benjamin, Horticulture agent, fruit and vegetables producers for Tangipahoa and St. Helena Parishes and 10% FNP and works with the Tangipahoa Master Gardeners Association. Strawberry growers are using new techniques now with production and is working they can cut back on acreage and produce more berries. Blueberry production has grown. Farmers Markets help a lot for the growers but with so many home gardens it doesn't bring in as many buyers for their fruits and vegetables.

There will be no Master Gardener program this year due to lack of interest but will set up workshops throughout the year to help fill in for the MG program.

Master Gardeners – Frank Taulli, president MG, the organization has around 90 members; raise their own money thru Camellia Stroll and the Spring Garden Day. Work with the Research Station with the Camellia Gardens. Try to help financially at Extension / Research Station. They have information booths at Feed Stores/Plant Clinics. One educational trip a year, this year they went to Crystal Springs in Mississippi. They helped at the Back to School Bash held recently in Zemurray Park in Hammond. They speak at Garden Clubs meetings. Help with community gardens, school gardens and tree plantings at schools. In the month of February the MG's present a program to all 4-H clubs.

Budget Update – Mr. Hampton Grunewald

With the adjournment of the 2010 legislative session, the budget for higher education continues to be impacted, requiring additional reductions in operational funding. Since 2008, the Louisiana budget has continued to see shortfalls in revenue, making a significant impact on higher education with the AgCenter experiencing reductions in yearly state appropriated budgets, consistent mid-year reductions, and a year-end cut. To date, the LSU AgCenter's state appropriation has reduced more than \$19 million. This equates to nearly 22% of our state funded operating budget, since the beginning of 2008.

In addition to the above mentioned cuts to operational funding we have also experienced increases in mandated costs, without support funding, exceeding \$8 million in the same time period. These include increases in health premiums, retirement system premiums and Office of Risk Management premiums. These increased costs compounded with a reduced budget have required consistent reductions to balance our budget, bringing additional threats to the AgCenter to eliminate long-standing research and extension programs in Louisiana.

While the reductions over the past three years have made it difficult to implement and maintain efficient statewide operations in both research initiatives and extension to our residents, the fiscal year 2011-2012 is looking more dismal. We have been informed by the LSU System President, Dr. Lombardi that each campus should be prepared to make significant reduction to their operating budget for next year. In preparation for the reduction of federal stimulus funds, also known as ARRA Funds, totaling more than \$1.5 billion, and declines in state revenue collections, the AgCenter has been asked to prepare a budget model with an anticipated funding reduction of 23%. This will be a single year reduction of funding which will exceed \$16 million.

When the unfunded mandates are included, the total reduction to the AgCenter will surpass \$19 million. These additional cuts will bring the total reduction since 2008 to 40%. Budget reductions of this magnitude will require drastic action, and surely have an impact on our ability to deliver vital research and extension programs to the state.

The AgCenter's budget is comprised of 68% State General Fund, with the remaining revenue coming from self-generated funds, statutory dedications, grants and contracts, and federal funds. This high dependence on state funding magnifies the impact of cuts to the AgCenter.

Unlike most institutions in higher education, the AgCenter receives no tuition from students. Without additional revenue to offset the lack of tuition (other campuses often use increased tuition and fees) and budget cuts, a reduction in the AgCenter's state operating budget has a more severe effect on the programs and initiatives provided for Louisiana.

Questions from council members

Wesley Ridgedell asked about working with the LA Dept. of Agriculture and Mr. Grunewald replied that the LSU AgCenter is already working with them. Mr. Grunewald asked to contact legislators and board of regents/supervisors and let them know how important the LSU AgCenter is to them and the community.

Bob Basford asked about grant writers within the AgCenter. Mr. Grunewald replied, that each area writes their own grants and this has worked out really good for the system. Not enough grants to satisfy a position for a grant writer. Mr. Basford also asked for a printout of our numbers in reference to, total number of acres, production for crops, livestock, nursery products. Mr. Grunewald asked if we had an AgSummary for 2009 available for him and one was given to him. He really appreciated the book and thanked Sandra and Mr. Grunewald for giving him one.

Sandra Bailey-Simmons asked about the possibility of getting 4-H members or Master Gardeners involved in helping with Nursing Homes with landscaping and vegetable gardens. She knows there are people in these places that want something to do but don't know how to start.

Identify Problems – Council Members

1. Entrepreneur workshops to help people without jobs, who can do something but just doesn't know how to get started
2. Nursing Home vegetable gardens
3. Dairy Farmers – what to do with oxidation ponds

Closing Comments - Sandra Benjamin

Thanked the committee members, Mr. Hampton Grunewald from LSU AgCenter, and Angela Myles, St. Helena Parish chairmen for attending and giving their input and help into these projected budget cuts and impacts.

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Lunch was served and provided by First Bank and Trust in Amite.