

4/26/11

Minutes, County Farm Advisory Council Meeting

Attendees: Donnie Kimball, Denis Ward, Michal Lunak, Paul Collins, Jim Oakes, Glenn Libby, David Falkenham, Heather Bryant, Gary Peters

Donnie's Report

- 2011-12 budget request presented to Commissioners, they had some questions and suggestions but are supportive
- The Delegation still needs to approve it, next meeting is May 13th
- Budget request is up a little from last year but so are revenues. Current year request was \$501,000, Current expenditures are \$ 526,000 so current projected deficit is \$24,700.
- Last year's projected deficit was \$84,000.
- Hard to predict the 2011-12 budget as we don't know what will happen with fuel and grain prices.
- There was a suggestion from Commissioner Ahern to use paper bedding – Donnie researched the option and reported back to the Commissioners. The idea was rejected it as it presented sanitary and disease risks to the herd. Council members were in agreement with this assessment.
- Progress on Business Plan
 - Currently working on a template for a 5 yr plan
 - Numbers are still being worked on
 - Due to recent decisions in Coos and Cheshire , Grafton County Farm will be the only County farm left in the state.
 - Question from the Group: What kinds of changes are being considered?
 - A: Downsize the herd and free up land [from corn production into other cash crop production such as hay]
- 900 plants have been started in the greenhouse.
- Consulted with Dave Falkenham about the trees near the road blocking the view: Dave's suggestion, cut them and leave them in place.

Discussion:

Question to Dave: Do any of the area mills sell sawdust? A: No and the price is high because of the trucking involved.

Suggestion: Use mats so you need less sawdust. Response: Donnie already has mats that seem to be working.

Question: When would the potential downsizing happen? A: July 2012

Question: How much is the budget for maintaining the buildings? A: ~\$76,000 which pays for electricity, water, fuel, and maintenance.

Suggestion: Put something (ex calf manure or hay) into the gutters in the cow barn to keep the cows from splashing manure onto the walls with their tails and simultaneously decreasing bedding costs. Or use gutter covers whichever is cheaper.

Suggestion: Can you save money by decreasing the amount of sawdust behind the cows in the alley, and replace that with lime or sand from the town to combat the slipperiness.

Suggestion: Check with Sunny Miller who from Paul Collins' experience pays higher prices for beef cattle. Note: Commissioners prefer 3 quotes for transactions of this kind, but the council agrees that can be difficult as there are not always 3 service providers to choose from.

Question: What was the estimated milk price used in the budget? A: \$19

Biodiesel project update

- Is it finished? – yes at the moment.
- Why? It was determined that the initial cost estimate didn't include personnel costs that made the idea less currently feasible.

Biomass project update

- \$378,000 grant still available if the Commissioners decide to go ahead
- The plant if it were built would burn bowl chips – chipped logs

General Suggestion: Find another use for the turkey corn after the turkeys are done with it, ex. Pig bedding.

Update from David

- Marking is finished
- Rough estimate of revenue from proposed timber sale
 - 70,000 ft oak
 - 30,000 ft pine
 - 16,000 ft other
 - 1600 tons of ????
 - Total value \$31,000 at current market prices which are changing a lot at the moment.
- If oak prices drop, Dave will recommend against the sale at this time because it would not be economically advantageous.

Update from Heather

- This year's trial will be winter squash, possibly garlic as well, but a plant disease is making the planting materials hard to find so that plan may change
- Greenhouse plastic is due to be changed this summer (plastic has a 4-6yr life span as sunlight degrades the plastic and diminishes light quality overtime), she is trying to set it up as a workshop.
- Greenhouse plastic will be reused for a low tunnel experiment this winter.

Chicken enterprise update

- Whether or not to end enterprise not yet decided
- May end it as the profit has not been there. There is a time of year after the stand closes when it is difficult to find customers. Suggested Donnie have enough chickens to take care of the correctional facility needs- approx. 30 dozen a week.

Note from Paul Collins: April 25th edition of County Folks (regional newspaper) had a front page article on a joint 4-H and County Farm event for children that was wonderful to see.

Next meeting set for August 2nd.