



DISCUSSION

ITEM NO. 18,

DATE OF MEETING: September 15, 2014

REQUESTED BY: Mark Seitz

SHORT TITLE: Discussion of Cooperative Extension Restructuring and Possible Addition of a Family & Consumer Science Agent Position.

BACKGROUND: NCSU and NC Cooperative Extension announced restructuring plans in August 2014. This creates a few challenges and opportunities for Pender County to consider as it decides what direction the Cooperative Extension program moves. An outline of the changes and opportunities will be presented for future consideration by the Board of County Commissioners.

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Discussion of Cooperative Extension Restructuring and Possible Addition of a Family & Consumer Science Agent Position

Since 2000, NC Cooperative Extension has experienced more than \$20 million in federal and state budget cuts. As a result of those funding cuts, NC Cooperative Extension and NCSU announced plans in August 2014 to strategically re-align Cooperative Extension at the county level, focusing on three major program areas: agriculture, food, and 4-H youth development. This restructuring creates a

base level of funding that NCSU will support a core level of programming in all 100 counties beginning in FY 15/16. The first phase of changes will affect support staff (secretarial) positions beginning July 1, 2015 and will affect Agent positions beginning July 1, 2016. The impact of this restructuring will uniquely affect every county.

In FY 14/15 Pender County's support for Cooperative Extension provides 50/50 funding for the following positions/people (Table 1):

CED/Field Crops Agent – Mark Seitz
Urban Horticulture and Local Foods – Tim Matthews (Oct 1, 2015)
4-H Youth Development – Jessica Hogan
Livestock – Valerie Futrell (Pender/Onslow) (34/33/33 funded)
Admin Secretary – Reatha Hoffman
Family & Consumer Science (FCS) – not funded

Beginning in FY 15/16:

- All counties will be required to provide 50% funding on three core positions and 33% funding on a shared Family & Consumer Science (FCS) agent position. Counties not at this level of funding beginning July 1, 2015 will not have Extension positions filled if they are vacated. This issue was addressed and changes to the MOU were approved by the Pender County Commissioners in January 2014.
- NCSU will only support one administrative secretary position per Extension office. All other support positions will be funded by the county or another source of funding or those positions will be eliminated. Pender County will not have to deal with this as we currently only have one administrative secretary on staff.

Beginning in FY 16/17:

- NCSU will provide 50 percent funding on 1-agriculture, 1-4-H Youth Development, ½-FCS, and 1-administrative secretary position. One (1) additional agriculture agent position will be supported based on a formula that takes into account: # of farms, farm income and county population. Pender County will get funding for one additional agriculture position at a level of 40% funding by NCSU. Under this new structure, because the CED/Field Crops position is the primary position in Pender County, the Urban Horticulture & Local Foods Agent is the formula funded position. Because of this the livestock agent position will lose all NCSU funding. This will require Pender County to provide an additional \$8,000 in support above our current level of county support to retain this shared position with Onslow County. That cost will also cover the change in funding on the formula position (Horticulture & Local Foods) from 50/50 to 60/40. Again that change will not occur until FY 16/17.

- If approved the major change in Pender County's support for the Extension program comes with the move by NCSU to restore funding for a shared FCS Agent position. In trying to strategically realign and get back to a position of having agriculture, food and 4-H programs in available to every county, NCSU is putting cost share funding back on a FCS position in Pender County, which has not been active for a number of years. NCSU will provide 34% funding on an FCS position for Pender County, provided the other 33% is shared with another county. Counties also have the option of supporting a full, single county agent under this scenario. Table 2 outlines what that staff structure would look like in Pender County if Pender County wanted to bring the FCS program back to the county.

Table 2: Pender County Extension Staff FY 16/17:

CED/Field Crops Agent - Mark Seitz
 Urban Horticulture and Local Foods - Tim Matthews
 4-H Youth Development - Jessica Hogan
 Livestock - Valerie Futrell (Pender/Onslow)
 Admin Secretary - Reatha Hoffman
 FCS - 34% NCSU, 33% county, 33% county

The opportunity in place with the FCS position is this. Onslow, Bladen and Columbus County are the only counties in our region with full time FCS agents on staff. Those counties will be required to fully fund those positions if they want them to remain single county positions or they will be required to find partnering counties to share an agent. Onslow County's agent is Robin Seitz, my wife, and per NCSU HR rules I cannot supervise her. I am not sure if she would be allowed to serve in this county and have her supervisor of record be Onslow County's or another county's CED but if that is possible, she may be able to run an FCS program in Pender County.

Bladen County's FCS agent has 20+ years of service and sharing her time with Bladen would be more expensive than hiring a new agent to share with New Hanover or Duplin County, which have no FCS agent on staff.

Pender County's split demographics and geography also bring the option of sharing ½ an agent with New Hanover and Pender and ½ an agent with Bladen and Pender. That gets tricky with funding allocations but the clients in Pender County would be better served if an agent were strictly assigned to the coastal side of the county and New Hanover and one for the north & west side of the county and Bladen County.

There are other combinations of shared agents possible. My goal is to get this discussion started with the Board of County Commissioners and with adjacent counties to maintain the service Extension currently offers Pender County and to provide service in the Family & Consumer Science program area in the most economical and programmatically sound manner possible to benefit the citizens of Pender County. I will be sharing an outline of this at the September 15, 2014 BOCC meeting as a discussion item.

Please call or email me in advance if you have any questions.

Mark Seitz

Pender County Cooperative Extension Director