

April 3, 2009

Madison Parish Advisory Leadership Council Update Meeting

Ann Keene, facilitator, opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. She welcomed members and guests and introduced the following elected officials and dignitaries: Mr. Jonathon Johnson, representative of Congressman Rodney Alexander, Police Jurors Mrs. Jane Sanders and Mr. Dalton Fortenberry, School Board members Mr. Ed Yerger and Mr. Joseph Candler, School Board Superintendent Mr. Samuel Dixon, School Board Assistant Superintendent Mrs. Patricia Candler and Police Jury Secretary Mrs. Margaret Dew.

Mrs. Keene introduced Dr. David Morrison, Assistant Vice Chancellor and Assistant Director, LSU AgCenter, who gave an update on the latest and proposed budget cuts and how they have/will impact AgCenter programs. He stated that he is one of several AgCenter administrators visiting all parishes state-wide to discuss the budget situation. Dr. Morrison commented that the AgCenter and SU Ag Center have been in a downward pressure for a number of years; we have never experienced this kind of proposed budget cut. Higher education is expected take a drastic cut if the proposed budget is approved. He went on to say that the AgCenter has already suffered a 3.8 million dollar reduction in funds since the mid-year cut. We are looking at a 13.3 million dollar cut for fiscal year 2009-2010. He explained that most campuses can raise tuition to absorb the cut, but the AgCenter cannot. As a non-formula campus within the LSU system, the AgCenter does not receive tuition money; therefore we have no way to offset increased costs. He also explained that we are already sitting on vacant positions which are frozen due to lack of funding. He made it clear that this next year the proposed cut is 14.4% which would be devastating to the AgCenter. He also clarified that this does not include unfunded mandates of \$1.9 million for civil service increases mandated by the state and the reductions in statutory dedication funds of \$684,000. The total amount of budget cuts for fiscal year 2009-2010 could be as high as 20.3% from the previous year, with increased costs as high as 22.75. He commented that if this situation proceeds as projected, we will be looking at a very different AgCenter. A budget reduction of this magnitude would mean a reduction in staff since roughly 80% of the AgCenter's budget is dedicated to salaries. Dr. Morrison stated that we will be moving forward in requesting up to 20% local support in the future, which is along the Southern Region's average. He also explained that if the stimulus package had not been offered, the situation would be far worse than it is right now. While the package has offered some relief, it has basically only prevented our cuts from being double or more what they are now. He indicated that it is now up to the legislature; they have the ability to stop this. He went on to congratulate the State Police Jury Association for recently passing a resolution to support the AgCenter. Copies of the resolution were passed out to the members and guests. Dr. Morrison reviewed a Talking Points flyer which identified specifically the past,

present and projected future budget cuts and their impact(s) on the AgCenter. He also provided another AgCenter publication on Agriculture, a multibillion dollar industry for Louisiana. He responded to a question and answer session and he turned the meeting over to Dr. Gina Eubanks.

Dr. Gina Eubanks, Vice Chancellor Southern University, reinforced what Dr. Morrison said and thanked the citizens of Madison Parish for their support of extension programs. She congratulated the Madison Parish staff for their teamwork in promoting both LSU and SU AgCenter efforts. She explained that the SU AgCenter faces the same situation and potentially plans to put into place a furlough if their budget is drastically cut.

Dr. Robert Hutchinson, Regional Director thanked Ann Keene for serving as the facilitator for this meeting and commented that, without great volunteers such as Mrs. Keene, Extension and Research would not have the outreach it has. He introduced the Madison Parish Staff that was in attendance. Dr. Hutchinson described his budget plan, but unfortunately it will mean that some positions will have to be eliminated. He stated that overall most of the staff was stretched thin and covering many parishes as it is. He also briefly explained the program area responsibilities, identified vacant positions, and stressed the importance of the staff. Without good research and extension staff to gather important information and data, such as varieties, soil, and other research, we could not relay that information on to the farmers and Extension users. He clarified the differences in Research and Extension and then closed.

Terry Crawford, Regional FCS Coordinator, gave a brief overview of Family and Consumer Sciences program area from the regional perspective. She identified the key educational initiatives as Family Resource Management: Literacy from Preschool to Elderly, First Time Home Buyers, Financial Security, Newsletters, News articles, and TV; Nutrition and Health: Smart Choices, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, Southern University Families First, Diabetes Program, Food Safety, Master Nutrition; and Family Development: Child Care Providers, CDA 120 hours; which could transfer to college credits, Head Start, Parenting Preparing for Success Program and Character Education. She also identified current regional/parish position vacancies.

Kelley Hiemstra, Regional 4-H Coordinator, presented a slide show of the 4-H Pledge and related the four H's to the four essential elements: Belonging, Independence, Generosity and Mastery. She invited the participants to think of one word that described 4-H. Several committed on fun, educational, and involvement, but the word she was looking for was opportunity.

Karol Osborne, Madison Parish Chair, addressed the group by thanking everyone for participating in the meeting. She commented that the fact that they are not only aware of our situation, but also feel it is important enough to take time to be present to hear the information presented, meant a great deal with

regard to Madison Extension programs. She went on to explain that the mid-year budget cut has already had an impact on Madison Parish. She clarified that the secretarial position left vacant with the retirement of Kay Collins in late 2008 has been cut as those funds have been absorbed. She also stated that while other parishes share the same fate, Madison has, in addition to the ANR, FCS and 4-H programs, an EFNEP program with four staff members, and manages one large Federal grant and several smaller grants. She commented that we not only generate a lot of paper, but we generate a lot of work.

Mrs. Osborne then briefly reviewed the goals that were set and prioritized at the last Advisory Leadership Council meeting. She stated that these goals have been addressed since the last meeting and many are in the process of building sustainability within the program. She then turned the meeting over to R.L. Frazier, Sarah Sims, and Berteal Rogers who gave a brief update of their program area. Mrs. Osborne followed with a 4-H overview. She also recognized Tallulah Mayor Mr. Eddie Beckwith, Jr. who joined the group after the opening introductions.

Mrs. Keene thanked everyone for taking time out to come to this important meeting. She asked for questions and adjourned at 6:30 p.m.