



Kane County

KC Agriculture Committee

Meeting Minutes

Government Center
719 S. Batavia Ave., Bldg. A
Geneva, IL 60134

JUBY, Roth, Allan, Lenert, Penesis, Sanchez, Williams and ex-officio Pierog (County Chair)

Thursday, April 17, 2025

10:30 AM

County Board Room

2025 Committee Goals

Goals from the July Agriculture Committee meeting

- Revise County Code Definition of the Agriculture Committee
- Awareness & Support of Agriculture - Raise public awareness and support for agriculture in Kane County as an industry sector and community resource
- Farmland Protection - Work in concert with the Farmland Protection Commission and County Board to oversee the successful implementation of Kane County's Farmland Protection Ordinance and related conservation efforts, and pursue funding
- Continue Growing for Kane Program - Direct the implementation of programs and policies that expand the production of locally grown foods and improve community access to fresh and healthy food choices, and pursue funding
 - Continue partnerships with Kane County Farm Bureau and Northern Illinois Food Bank
 - Implement current grant funded projects
 - Continue to apply for additional outside grants
 - Implement economic development projects for Agriculture
 - ARPA Small grants for farmers
 - Other projects identified by the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Kane County

1. Call To Order

Chairman Juby called today's meeting to order at 10:32 AM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT	Board Member Leslie Juby Board Member Bill Roth Board Member Deborah Allan Board Member Rick Williams
REMOTE	Board Member Ted Penesis
ABSENT	Board Member Bill Lenert Board Member Jarett Sanchez Ex-Officio County Board Chair Corinne M. Pierog

Also present: Co. Bd. members Gumz, Kious*, Lewis, Molina*, Strathmann*; Dev. Dir. VanKerkhoff and staff Tansley; Sustainability Coordinator Powell; Environ. & Water Res. Dir. Wollnik; ASA Frank*; ITD staff Peters; and members of the press and public including U of I Educator Alexis Barnes, Northern Illinois Food Bank Dev. Officer Hester Bury, and Former Kane County Board Member Mike Kenyon.

3. Remote Attendance Requests

Chairman Juby announced the remote attendance requests for today's meeting. She asked the Committee if there were any objections to Committee Member Penesis attending remotely. There were no objections.

4. Approval of Minutes: March 20, 2025

RESULT:	APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT
MOVER:	Rick Williams

5. Public Comment

None.

6. Partners

A. Kane County Farm Bureau Updates (Steve Arnold, Manager)

No report was made for today's meeting.

B. Meet Your Farmer Series (Alexis Barnes, Educator, University of Illinois Extension)

U of I Local Food Systems and Small Farms Educator Alexis Barnes presented the Meet Your Farmer Series. She stated that from 2019, there has been an interest in a Farm Stroll Series. This is a self-guided, one-day tour of family-owned farms, offering visitors a chance to explore local agriculture, and connect with the farming community. It is a free event where people can choose farms to visit, learn about their practices, and potentially purchase farm-fresh products. The Meet Your Farmer Series will be held in May, June, July, and August throughout the growing season in Kane County. There will be a Farm Stroll event on Sunday, May 18, 2025 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Barbic Farms in Wayne, Illinois. Barnes is currently seeking growers for the months of June, July, and August.

Northern Illinois Food Bank (NIFB) Dir. Hester Bury stated that 70K individuals are served monthly in Kane County. There were a total of 12M meals distributed last year. Bury indicated that there has been an increase in meals distributed, however, she anticipates a possible inflation impact, and a reduction in SNAP benefits.

7. Presentations/Announcements**A. Farmer Weatherization Rebate Program (Austin Powell, Sustainability Coordinator)**

Sustainability Coordinator Powell presented information on the Farmer Weatherization Rebate Program. He stated that Kane County will offer a rebate program to farmers who weatherize their home through air sealing and/or attic insulation. The total fund for the rebate program is \$20K, originating through the Electric Aggregation Program. Farmers who are living in unincorporated Kane County can receive \$200. Farmers will receive an extra \$200, if they do not use Nicor Gas for residential heating. This program would benefit between 50 to 100 farmers. Powell reviewed the benefits of air sealing and attic insulation. He stated that a 2023 study by the American Council for Energy-Efficient Economy found that weatherization such as air sealing and attic insulation can reduce a home's energy usage by 12 to 18 percent. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that homeowners can save an average of 15% on heating and cooling costs by air sealing their homes, and adding insulation in attics, floors over crawl spaces and basements. Powell explained the cost breakdown and available rebates for the program. The Minnesota Center for Energy and Environment estimates that air sealing and attic insulation costs between \$2K to \$6,500. Qualified Contractors in the Chicago Area estimated the cost to be between \$3,400 to \$6K for an average size home of 1,700 square feet. Nicor offers two specific rebates including \$250 per home for air sealing, and \$400 per home for attic insulation. He reviewed the cost breakdown for Kane County farmers. Farmers who received a Kane County rebate, but do not use Nicor Gas, they can receive between a 6% to 13% reduction of their overall costs. For farmers who do have access Nicor Gas, they can receive a 14% to 28% reduction in overall costs, including the \$200 rebate from Kane County. Further discussion took place.

B. IL-EATS Program and Workshop Recap (Matt Tansley, Planner)

Dev. Planner Tansley presented the IL-EATS Program and Workshop Recap. He stated that the event took place in February 2025, hosted by U of I Extension and partners. This is a statewide program run through the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Department of Human Services to source fresh, local food from Illinois farmers for delivery to underserved communities across the state. Farmers are paid fair market value for their products including high-quality produce, proteins, dairy, and grains, provided at no cost through food pantries, mobile markets, and food box programs. There were fifteen lead agencies recruited for the program. The lead agencies, located throughout the state of Illinois, are responsible for applying for funding, and purchase product from farmers, and distribute to pantries and service organizations. Tansley stated that the IL-EATS program was funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Local Food Purchase Assistance program (LFPA). He noted that the program prioritizes purchases from veterans, women, disabled, and other under served farmers. In Kane County, all farmers are eligible as it is identified as a high vulnerability county. There were 176 farms across the state that participated, and 883 community sites that received product in 85 counties throughout the state. Tansley highlighted the impacts on Kane County from the program. There were 31 sites that received food purchases with IL-EATS Program funding. There were \$550K in product distributed to sites in the county. The value of food purchased from Kane County farmers was \$364,105. There were four Kane County farms that were able to sell their product including Mighty Greens in Elburn, Klein's Quality Product in Burlington, Baeders Acres in Hampshire, and Sunny Oaks Farm in Burlington Township. Tansley highlighted the lead agencies for the IL-EATS program. One of them was a nonprofit organization based in DeKalb, Illinois, Rooted for Good, provided food access and education services, and sourced local farm products for distribution through pantry networks. Tansley also shared information about the Salem Food Pantry, located in DeKalb at Salem Lutheran Church, and Sunny Oaks Farm in Burlington. Lastly, Tansley provided updates on the IL-EATS program. The program agreement for FY24 and FY25 was authorized \$28.8M for the purchase of local foods and administration by 15 agencies. There is a total of \$12M remaining in program funds to be spent by the end of June 2025. Tansley addressed questions and comments from the Committee. Much discussion ensued.

8. New Business**A. 2025 Proclamation Recognizing Steve Pitstick as a Master Farmer Award Recipient**

KC Executive Committee

RESULT:	MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE
TO:	KC Executive Committee
MOVER:	Bill Roth
SECONDER:	Deborah Allan
AYE:	Leslie Juby, Bill Roth, Deborah Allan, Ted Penesis, and Rick Williams
ABSENT:	Bill Lenert, Jarett Sanchez, and Corinne M. Pierog

9. Reports Placed On File

RESULT:	APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT
MOVER:	Bill Roth

10. Executive Session (if needed)

None.

11. Adjournment

RESULT:	APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE
MOVER:	Bill Roth
SECONDER:	Rick Williams

This meeting was adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Rachel Santora
Recording Secretary