



CSU Extension Boulder County Advisory Board Meeting Minutes December 2, 2025

Meeting called to order at 5:30 PM via Teams.

Board Members:

Present: Hallie Adams, Rob Alexander, Jenna Keenan-Alspector, Bridget Myers, Mary Mulry, Mary Rochelle, Kirsten Ruiz and Jay Ruggeri

Absent: Donna Becker and Nick Cappello Quorum present? Yes

Boulder County Extension Staff: Eric Hammond, Brenda Kwang, Faith Kroschel, and Dena H.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion: Jay motioned the agenda of the Extension Advisory Board December 2, 2025, be approved as presented, Hallie seconded that motion; all were in favor.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Jay motioned the meeting minutes of the Extension Advisory Board September 9, 2025, be approved as presented, Kirsten seconded that motion; all were in favor.

Introductions:

Each board member introduced themselves with a brief background, including professional experience, community interests, and previous involvement with Extension. Staff introduced their roles.

What is Extension?

Eric provided a detailed overview of Extension's historic and contemporary mission. The explanation included:

- Extension is an outreach arm of Colorado State University, connecting the university to the people and helping people find solutions to their problems
- CSU is a land-grant university and the model of extending trusted science-based research into local communities
- Historical roots in agriculture and evolution into a diverse modern portfolio including horticulture, youth development, community health, small acreage and natural resources
- A unique partnership model involving CSU, Parks and Open Space and Boulder County

Board members expressed interest in learning more about long-term strategy and how Extension evaluates community needs across the county.

Conversation with 4-H team:

Program Overview

The 4-H team gave an extensive, year-in-review presentation. They described the program's structure, annual cycle, volunteer system, and how youth move through progressive learning experiences. The team emphasized that 4-H programming extends beyond animal projects; it includes leadership development, public speaking, STEM, robotics, expressive arts, and healthy living projects. Snapshot for 2025: 369 youth members, 170 adult volunteers, 854 4-H projects and 17 4-H clubs.

The presentation highlighted the intergenerational model of 4-H, where youth, families, and volunteers collaborate to create a supportive learning environment.

Community Engagement and 4-H Outreach

Several events included: From Our Lands to Your Hands – A partnership with Longmont and Boulder Valley Conservation Districts; Cinco de Mayo; Youth Life Skills Day; Embryology in the Boulder Valley School District - 8 schools, 9 different classroom and over 200 kids; Summer Outreach – Kestrel, SunnySide and Casa de la Esperanza housing communities; and CSU Ag Day.

Program Activity Highlights

The team walked through major components of the year:

- **County Fair & Summer Programming:**

The fair was busy but successful, with strong participation and minimal conflict. Staff noted the increasing workload for processing entries, supporting youth questions, and addressing parent concerns. They emphasized that the county fair continues to be one of the most visible ways the public encounters 4-H.

- **Building Community Connections:**

Several events include: 4-H Open House, 4-H Cloverbud Club, 4-H Achievement Night, and 4-H Family Bonfire.

- **Youth Leadership & Council Work:**

Youth governing bodies—such as Youth Council—demonstrated strong attendance this year. Staff shared examples of leadership growth, including youth stepping into officer roles, mentoring younger members, and leading community service projects. 4-H Leadership Activities include: Leadership Development Conference, Colorado 4-H Leadership Camp & Youth Fest, District 2 & Junior Jam, and State 4-H Conference.

- **Program Outcomes:**

Boulder County 4-H Belonging Survey data and informal feedback show that youth feel a growing sense of confidence, belonging, and identity through 4-H. Youth felt welcome in 4-H, safe, supported by peers, and that they mattered. Youth reported high passion for their activities, strong interest in learning more, and a sense of identity with 4-H. Adults were seen as respectful, attentive, and invested. Youth felt taken seriously, fairly treated, and listened to. Staff discussed specific examples of youth who arrived withdrawn or anxious and, over time, grew into leadership roles or discovered new interests.

- **4-H Volunteer and Community Support:**

Staff described efforts to strengthen volunteer onboarding, training consistency, background checks, and ongoing support. They also addressed challenges in maintaining volunteer energy throughout the

year. Snapshot for 2025: 170 adult volunteers, 160 average volunteer hours donated (total 27,270 hours), \$948,706 value of our 4-H volunteers' time.

Goals and Innovations

The team emphasized that the program is reaching new families and responding to the needs of youth across varied communities.

Looking forward to 2026, the team discussed goals and innovated way to connect: 4-H Animal Science Discovery Project – Barn Buddies Mentorship Program, 4-H Spark Club – driving new program leadership growth, 4-H Volunteer Engagement Day Retreat, Tell Our Story, and Volunteer hours – complete and accurate

Program Challenges

The team described recurring challenges such as sustainability, proving our worth, telling our story, securing our future, 4-H endowed position, 4-H storage facilities, and increased county expenses for facilities.

What we need from the Advisory Board

- Advocacy in the community for the 4-H program
- Support for resources needs (space, funding, visibility)
- Guidance on strategic growth or community partnerships
- Guidance on what story to tell

Board Discussion

Board members expressed appreciation for the depth and breadth of the program. The discussion included:

- Members shared that the presentation clearly conveyed the depth, complexity, and community responsiveness of the 4-H program, particularly the strength of building programming around participant and volunteer input to support engagement and retention.
- The group emphasized the value of pairing quantitative outcomes (e.g., survey data, volunteer hours) with qualitative storytelling, noting that combining data with youth and volunteer success stories makes impact more compelling for different audiences.
- Several members suggested collecting participant quotes alongside existing survey data to strengthen advocacy efforts and appeal to both data-driven and narrative-focused stakeholders.
- Members noted the importance of aligning program successes with strategic priorities from Boulder County, CSU, USDA, and 4-H when communicating with funders and decision-makers.
- Suggestions included creating a concise one-page narrative and data snapshot for county officials and identifying 3–4 consistent “anchor messages” that clearly communicate 4-H’s value to Boulder County residents.
- The group also discussed potential engagement strategies, such as hosting a legislative breakfast or similar events, to provide commissioners and community leaders with an opportunity to hear directly from youth.

Director’s Update:

Extension Program and Operational Updates

- Programs are wrapping up the year with reporting and evaluations of how the year went

- Programming is on-going
- Ongoing website migration to the new CSU platform
- Facility limitations and space constraints that impact Extension events and workshops

Several board members asked clarifying questions about budget risk, county expectations, and how Extension's role is perceived by county leadership.

County Leadership and Staffing Transitions:

Eric reported that several county departments, including Parks & Open Space, are experiencing staffing layoffs. Eric explained that these transitions affect Extension because many programs operate jointly with county departments or rely on county systems.

Eric described the recent submission process for county budget and staffing requests, noting:

- The county provided very short turnaround times limiting the level of advisory board engagement.
- Extension staff submitted materials related to budget, staffing, and the operational impact of staff turnover.
- Advisory committees, including this board, were not consulted before decisions were made

Board members expressed concern about the board's exclusion from providing timely input and the need for stronger internal communication systems to keep the board informed

Budget Environment

- Eric explained that the county continues to face a multi-million-dollar structural deficit, resulting in rapid cost-cutting cycles across departments. Although Extension was largely spared in the most recent round, he stressed that this may not be the case in future fiscal years.
- Members noted that the board needs to understand the county budget cycle better in order to be more strategic and proactive.
- Staff emphasized the importance of advocacy and clear communication to safeguard program capacity.

Open Discussion:

A. Current board recruitment

- Recruitment for open board positions is active, with an application window closing in January.
- Board members were encouraged to distribute the announcement and suggest potential applicants.
- Reappointment timelines for current members were clarified.

B. Board purpose, effectiveness and strategic role

Discussion focused on how the board can strengthen its function as an advisory and advocacy body. Themes included:

What Works Well:

- Enthusiasm, talent on board. Meetings are well attended by members.
- Deeper dives from staff = increased engagement will lead to identifying questions/issues; however, looking at larger program goals fall to wayside.

What Doesn't Work Well:

- Not delivering on role. Rarely advise Extension staff / Commissioners.
- Commissioners have not asked for our input. Also very rarely advise staff.
- Very little impact of consequence. Is this advisory board needed? Why has the board's impact been so limited?
- Extension's annual commissioners meeting seemed to be not an effective means of communication for the commissioners

Advocacy Strategies:

The group discussed advocacy strategies extensively on how the board can make contributions moving forward:

- Explore best practices, effectiveness and functions of other advisory boards.
- The desire for more clarity on expectations and responsibilities.
- The need to understand county processes so advice can be timely.
- The importance of being able to clearly articulate Extension as a high-value, community-serving entity to county leadership/commissioners
- Members recommended creating a concise advocacy packet with cost-benefit information
- Several emphasized the power of youth and community testimonials
- Consideration of holding a legislative breakfast or lunch to highlight Extension programs directly to county commissioners and key partners.

Staff agreed to assist with drafting materials for the board to review.

C. Scheduling a January Strategic Meeting

Motion: Jay motion to convene a CSU Extension Advisory Board meeting in January to re-establish priorities and focus on board advocacy strategies. The group agreed and acted on the motion. Motion carried.

Staff will send scheduling options for early January, noting any recurring conflicts mentioned by board members.

D. Upcoming Quarterly Board Meetings

- Dena will create a doodle poll for the 1st Quarter meeting for March.

Old Business:

The bylaws review was tabled due to time constraints. Several members recommended addressing it at the January strategic meeting when the board can dedicate focused time.

Adjournment: Jay motioned to adjourn, second by Jenna. Motion passed; the meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Minutes prepared by Dena.

[2024-2026 Boulder County Commissioners' Strategic Priorities:](#) Economic Security and Social Stability, Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship, and Good Governance.