



CSU Extension Boulder County Advisory Board Meeting Minutes January 13, 2026

Meeting called to order at 5:30 PM via hybrid (virtual and in-person)

Board Members:

Present: Rob Alexander, Donna Becker, Nick Cappello, Bridget Myers, Mary Mulry, Mary Rochelle, Kirsten Ruiz and Jay Ruggeri

Absent: Hallie Adams and Jenna Keenan-Alspector

Quorum present? Yes

Boulder County Extension Staff: Eric Hammond and Dena H

Approval of Agenda:

Motion: Jay motioned the agenda of the Extension Advisory Board January 13, 2026, be approved as presented, second was motioned; all were in favor.

Director's Update:

County Budget Context

An overview was provided regarding the broader fiscal environment facing Boulder County. The county continues to experience a structural budget deficit in the general fund, with additional reductions expected in future cycles. It was emphasized that while Extension was not significantly impacted with the most recent round of cuts, the risk of future reductions remains.

The recent budget decisions were made quickly and with limited opportunity for advisory board input. Departments were asked to submit proposals for various different staffing cuts with elements of cost benefit analysis that was involved. These were presented to county managers' office, which then presented recommendations to the commissioners.

With the vacant position of Parks and Open Space director and the transition to a new director once hired, impact on Extension could be a large gap in advocacy. That advocacy up to commissioners on the work that is being done is likely going to be less than ideal.

Open Discussion:

A. Establishing Advisory Board Priorities

Discussions were held on defining how the Advisory Board can best support Extension in the coming year. One of the board's key concerns was how it can best provide value to the county commissioners. For this year, the board agreed to make advocacy for Extension its primary focus.

Clarifying the Role of the Advisory Board

The advisory board's roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the bylaws, were discussed. Members expressed a desire for greater clarity and shared understanding of what effective advisory support looks like in practice.

Key points included:

- The board's role is advisory and strategic, not operational.
- The board can serve as a bridge between Extension and county leadership.
- Clear priorities and agreed-upon focus areas would make board efforts more effective and efficient

B. Ways the Advisory Board can support Extension

Boulder County's commitment to public service is clearly reflected in Extension's diverse programs and their broad community impact. Members discussed how to clearly and consistently communicate Extension's value to county commissioners and other decision-makers.

Advocacy and Messaging

Themes included:

- Strengthening connections with county commissioners, county managers, and other key decision-makers by advocating collectively and offering direct presentations on Extension programs (including engagement with groups such as the Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee).
- Emphasizing clear, concise, and accessible messaging for non-Extension audiences, focused on outcomes, benefits, and alignment with county goals.
- Pairing quantitative data (reach, participation, cost savings) with qualitative stories (youth outcomes, community and lifelong impacts) to effectively demonstrate value, measure and mobilize
- Building consistent awareness by regularly sharing impact stories with commissioners—individually and as a group—recognizing that messages are often most powerful when delivered by diverse voices.
- Developing adaptable messaging and simple advocacy tools (e.g., a one-page summary or short toolkit) that stakeholders can customize with their own stories when engaging decision-makers.
- Positioning Extension as a solution that supports county priorities by delivering research-based, practical knowledge to the community.
- Supporting research efforts, including a potential graduate student project through CSU, to document the long-term impacts of Extension.

- Expanding outreach to community members by promoting Extension programs and sharing their impacts more broadly.
- Clarifying short-term versus long-term advocacy goals and identifying existing research or resources that can be leveraged in the near term.
- Learning more about the Family Leadership Teaching Institute offered by CSU as a model for building civic participation skills.
- Coordinating with Extension staff to compile data and program information from initiatives such as 4-H and Master Gardeners, with board support to present this information effectively to stakeholders.
- Using timely opportunities—such as public comment periods at county commissioners’ meetings—to share brief (30–60 second) impact highlights.
- Reviewing the 2025 annual report and related Extension reports as foundational tools for ongoing conversations with county leaders.
- Leveraging smaller, relationship-based settings (meetings with staff, board members, and volunteers) to build personal connections and understanding.
- Exploring a legislative or civic engagement event that brings together commissioners and other local leaders (e.g., mayors and city council members) to learn about Extension’s work and impact.

No formal votes were taken, but there was general consensus around these focus areas as guiding themes for the year. At the next meeting, identify key ideas, narrow them down, and develop actionable steps to work on moving forward.

C. Upcoming Quarterly Board Meetings

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

Adjournment: meeting adjourned at 7:00pm.

Minutes prepared by Dena.

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