



CSU Extension Boulder County Advisory Board Meeting Minutes March 4, 2026

Meeting called to order at 5:30 PM via in-person and Teams.

Board Members:

Present: Hallie Adams, Rob Alexander, Bridget Myers, Mary Rochelle, and Kirsten Ruiz

Absent: Donna Becker, Mary Mulry, and Jay Ruggeri Quorum present? Yes

Boulder County Extension Staff: Eric Hammond, Tommy Roth, Sheila Prentice, and Dena H.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda of the Extension Advisory Board March 4, 2026, was reviewed and approved without modification.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Kirsten motioned the meeting minutes of the Extension Advisory Board December 2, 2025 and January 13, 2026, be approved as presented, Mary R seconded that motion; all were in favor.

Board Member Status:

Nick Cappello's term expired on February 28, 2026. Kirsten Ruiz has been officially reappointed to her position. Jenna Keenan submitted her resignation due to competing commitments.

Conversation with Horticulture team:

Sustainable Landscapes Program – Sheila Prentice

Sheila provided an overview of program accomplishments during her first year. She conducted 22 site visits, serving homeowners associations (HOAs), commercial clients and landscape contractors. She also delivered 20 educational programs, reaching 227 participants on topics including xeriscaping, firewise landscaping, water-plant relationships, tree ID and planting, soil science, pollinators and beneficial insects, and sustainable lawn care.

Program highlights:

Sustainable Landscaping for Community Leaders Workshop series in Longmont, which combined classroom instruction with hands-on "landscape lab" sessions. This program is designed to create a multiplier effect by equipping HOA leaders to implement and promote sustainable practices within their communities.

Co-hosted Designing Fire-Resilient Landscapes Webinar with Wildfire Partners of Boulder County, a statewide wildfire landscaping webinar that reached approximately 150 participants. Survey results indicated that 100% of respondents increased their knowledge of defensible space best practice and ignition resistant plant materials, and 78% indicated intent to adopt ignition-resistant landscaping practices in their professional work.

Ongoing efforts include maintenance and enhancement of Xeriscape Demonstration Gardens, including mulch trials and long-term sown meadow research.

Reported strong partnerships with organizations such as Wildfire Partners of Boulder County, Sustainable Resilient Longmont, and the Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association.

Discussed the launch of the ColoradoScaping Certification Program, designed to support landscape professionals in implementing regionally appropriate practices.

Looking ahead, duplicating programs that worked well and trying new programming, priorities include expanding programming to additional communities, strengthening partnerships, and collaborating with events regarding sustainable landscaping.

Home Horticulture Program – Tommy Roth

Home Horticulture includes Master Garden Program, Ornamental and food plant outreach for homeowners with less than 1 acre, Plant Pest Diagnostics and Native Plant Programming.

Program Highlights:

Tommy reported continued growth and recovery of the Master Gardener program post-pandemic to currently over 100 active members. Volunteers contributed approximately 3,600 hours, and the program reached roughly 4,000 community contacts, reflecting increases of over 25% from the prior year.

The plant diagnostics service assisted approximately 150 clients. Outreach efforts remain robust, including regular presence at farmers markets, garden centers, libraries, and other community venues.

The Food Pantry Garden Program was a key success, producing approximately \$2,000 worth of donated produce to the OUR Center with an investment of \$500. Plans are in place to expand production while reducing input costs through increased volunteer engagement and in-house plant starts.

Tommy presented the Downtown Longmont Native Plant Garden project, funded through a \$5,000 grant in partnership with the City of Longmont, which transformed a highly visible urban site into a model for low-water, native landscaping. Located at the Longmont Public Media building, 4th and Kimbark.

The Plant Mobile Program has distributed approximately 18,000 plants over two years and continues to serve as an important outreach tool, particularly for engaging broader and non-traditional audiences. In May, a native plant sale will raise money for future plant mobile years.

Key challenges identified include budget uncertainty, the need to increase revenue, and continued efforts to engage underserved and non-traditional audiences.

Discussion Highlights

Board members discussed the increasing impact of drought conditions and the resulting demand for water-wise landscaping and lawn replacement. This may present an opportunity for Extension to expand its role in supporting cost-saving and climate-resilient practices.

Board members and staff discussed potential revenue strategies, including adjustments to service fees, tiered pricing models, expanded fee-based programming, and possible sustainability grants while maintaining alignment with Extension's mission.

From the county's good governance perspective, efforts could address food security by expanding support for residents to grow their own food, including those in apartments and shared housing. This work prioritizes marginalized communities, especially as SNAP benefits and other programs decline, while recognizing that growing food is not always cost-effective.

Director's Update:

Budget Environment

CSU, along with Boulder County, is experiencing significant budget deficits, which may result in staffing reductions, primarily through attrition and unfilled vacancies. Emphasis that Extension continues to deliver strong value despite fiscal constraints.

County Leadership and Staffing Transitions

A finalist for the Parks and Open Space Director completed staff meet & greets this week, with a decision expected soon.

Extension Program and Operational Updates

The Extension website is currently undergoing updates, including modernization of the platform and improvements to accessibility.

4-H enrollment is projected to exceed pre-pandemic levels, indicating strong program recovery and continued community interest.

Upcoming programming includes a Nederland-based educational event focused on wildfire mitigation, forest health, and biochar. Additional outreach and engagement efforts are ongoing.

Open Discussion:

A. Board Advocacy for Extension

The Board held discussions regarding strategies to effectively advocate for Extension considering ongoing budget pressures.

Agreed Next Steps for Advocacy

The Board discussed and reached consensus on the following next steps to support advocacy efforts for Extension:

- Advocacy materials should focus on demonstrating community members impacts on quality of life and return on investment. Should emphasize outcomes and align with County Commissioners' strategic priorities.
- Necessary data and information already exist within current reports and materials, task moving forward is to distill and package this information into clear, strategic messaging.
- Develop a set of 3–5 clear and consistent key messaging points that effectively communicate the value and impact of Extension programs.
- Create a concise, one-page advocacy document that summarizes Extension's impact, including both quantitative data (participation, reach) and qualitative outcomes (community and quality-of-life benefits).
- Leverage existing networks, including Parks and Open Space Advisory committee, Master Gardeners, 4-H families, program participants, and community partners, to help amplify Extension's message. Possibly connecting with legislators.
- Board members participate in public comment opportunities at County Commissioners meetings with advocacy materials, also encourage community members to participate in public comments to share testimonials and demonstrate program impact.

Working session will be scheduled for the first part of April to create action plan outline. Dena will create doodle poll.

B. Upcoming Quarterly Board Meetings

- Dena will create a doodle poll for the 2nd Quarter meeting for June.

Old Business: NA

Adjournment: Kirsten motioned to adjourn, second by Bridget. 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.