

Recruiting Candidates for Effective County Councils

Council Member Handout

In accordance with the Revised Statutes of Missouri, county Extension councils are comprised of elected and appointed members, who represent the broad educational needs and backgrounds of people residing in the county. Any citizen who is of voting age may be nominated for the office of county Extension council member. This module will help county Extension councils:

- Comply with state statutes regarding the membership eligibility and the election process.
- Identify potential candidates to be nominated.
- Develop a consistent message when talking with potential candidates.

A companion module, *“Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections,”* provides information on conducting annual council membership elections.

State Statutes Governing Council Membership

The Revised Statutes of Missouri detail council membership requirements, representation, term limits, organization and elections.

Section 262.567 describes the composition of the council and terms of office:

1. The University of Missouri Extension council in each county shall be composed of the following members:

(1) At least one elected member from each district within the county as established under the provisions of sections 262.550 to 262.620; if no districts shall be established then from each township within the county. Such member shall be a resident of the district from which elected.

(2) A member of the county commission to be designated by the commission, or if none be so designated, then the presiding commissioner of the county commission.

(3) One member from each general farm organization having a membership in the county of twenty-five or more persons, such members to be appointed by the farm organization in such manner as it may determine.

(4) One member from each incorporated town or city within the county having a population of ten thousand or more, as shown by the latest federal decennial census, to be appointed by the mayor of the town or city. Such member shall be a resident of such town or city.

(5) In counties having no town or city with a population of ten thousand or more, as shown by the latest federal decennial census, one member to be appointed by the mayor of the town or city designated by the elected council of the

county which may or may not be included in a district. Such member shall be a resident of the designated town or city.

2. Council members, both elected and appointed, shall hold office for a term of two years, and until their successors are elected and qualified, provided that in the first council in a county approximately one-half of the elected and appointed council members shall be elected or appointed for a term of one year, and until their successors are elected and qualified.

3. Men and women shall be eligible for membership on the council.

Section 262.583 describes elective and appointed members and responsibilities for setting elections:

1. The council of the respective counties shall have the following powers and duties:

(1) Determine the number of elective council positions for each district provided that no district shall have less than one council member and there shall not be less than ten or more than twenty members elected to the council;

(2) Nominate at least two citizens residing within the district for each elected council position;

(3) Determine the council positions to be filled for a one-year term and those to be filled for a two-year term when necessary under the provisions of subsection 2 of section 262.567;

(4) Set the date or dates, and places of the elections in the respective districts to be held in January of each year and set the dates and places for the bimonthly meetings of the council and the bimonthly meetings of the officers and may set the date and place of other meetings of the council or officers;

(5) Provide ballots and make all necessary arrangements for the holding of elections within each of the districts within the county;

(6) Give notice to the farm organizations selected to have representation on the council and to the towns and cities entitled to have representation thereon, at least thirty days before each annual election of council members and give notice to any organization, town or city in the event a vacancy occurs in the position on the council for which it shall make appointment;

(7) Give all notices and publications required by sections 262.550 to 262.620 and select the newspaper or newspapers in which publication of the notices shall be made.

Recruiting Candidates for Nomination to the Ballot

Recruiting citizens for the ballot and proposing nominees are responsibilities of the Extension council (Section 262.567, RSMo). Recruitment is the precursor to the election process. (See “Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections”). County Extension councils can ensure that their membership is representative of the people by establishing a recruitment process to reach all segments of the population. A council may wish to appoint a nominating committee to coordinate the recruitment and nomination of candidates.

County Extension councils can broaden their search for nominees by:

1. Seeking diversity in nominees’ background, gender, occupation, age, race, culture, education and socioeconomic status. Information about your county’s population is available from University of Missouri Extension’s Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis.

2. Developing specific messages to describe the responsibilities and activities of the council and the benefits of being a council member.

3. Publicizing the need for Extension council candidates through the local news media and personal contacts.

After identifying potential nominees, approach them with an invitation to run for the council in a clear, concise and positive manner:

- Describe the council's responsibilities and its importance in meeting the community's highest priorities; share examples of programs that are making a difference to community members.
- Be honest about the time commitment as well as the issues.
- Tell potential nominees why you are asking them, i.e., their skill, experience or expertise that will make them a valuable asset to the council and the well-being of the community.
- Discuss the personal benefits of being a council member, i.e., personal enrichment, involvement in issue or program area, opportunity to serve community, leadership development, friendship, etc. Share your own experience.
- Explain the election process.

Once a citizen has accepted the invitation to be nominated, stay in touch and keep the nominee abreast of issues.

2. "Missouri Social and Economic Demographics County Fact Sheets" from the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis provide demographic information about your county's population.

(<http://www.oseda.missouri.edu/countrypage/>)

3. The Council Candidate Worksheet can be used to identify potential candidates by gender, age, race, affiliation and expertise.

4. The "County Extension Council Member Position Description" and "Council Member Responsibilities and Relationships" pieces in New Member Orientation Manual provide a description of council member responsibilities. (<http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/orientation/index.html>)

5. Publication "You Can Influence Community Progress" is available to share with potential candidates.

6. A news release template can be customized using the basic information and format provided. http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/documents/manual/9_sample_news_article_pre-election.doc

Resources

The following resources can assist county Extension councils in recruiting nominees for the extension council:

1. Revised Statutes of Missouri, Chapter 262; see The Extension Council Manual (M-61), p. 3.

(<http://www.moga.state.mo.us/STATUTES/C262.HTM>)