

Extension Councils: Elected Positions versus Volunteer Service

While the work of the county extension council may at times feel like a volunteer position, it is an elected position as guided by Iowa Code Chapter 176A, County Agricultural Extension Law. See the County Services website for the link to the full law www.extension.iastate.edu/countyservices/iowa-code-extension-council-operations.

The extension council consists of nine members who are elected to “at large” positions in each county in even years, with four seats up for election one year and five seats two years later. The elected council is elected to a four-year term, provides leadership and guidance for the County Agricultural Extension District, and is accountable to the citizens of the county. The extension council abides by the laws of the state of Iowa to meet the County Agricultural Extension District’s legal and financial obligations.

Volunteers, on the other hand, serve at the will of the extension council. Volunteers provide a variety of services for the county extension council and staff. Master Gardeners volunteer their time to help educate and provide other services back to their communities. 4-H volunteers serve as club leaders, workshop presenters, chaperones, and in many other capacities. Partners volunteer to help with registration, serve as meeting facilitators and hosts, and provide financial and subject matter resources.

Both elected council members and volunteers serve important functions in the County Agricultural Extension Districts. While council members can volunteer their time to serve as Master Gardeners, club leaders or meeting hosts, a council member must file a petition and affidavit in the county courthouse and be placed on the ballot in November to run as a candidate for extension council during election years.