

MINUTES
CONSERVATION, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021
WOOD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, ROOM #114, WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WI

Members Present: Ken Curry, Robert Ashbeck, Jake Hahn (via WebEx), Dave LaFontaine, Bill Leichtnam, Carmen Good

Staff Present:

Land & Water Conservation Staff:

Planning & Zoning Staff: Jason Grueneberg (via WebEx), Adam DeKleyn (via WebEx),

Extension Staff: Jason Hausler, Allison Jonjak (via WebEx), Karli Tomsyck (via WebEx), Nancy Turyk (via WebEx)

Others Present: Dist. #14 Supervisor Dennis Polach, Dist. #15 Supervisor Bill Clendenning, Dist. # 16 Supervisor Lance Pliml (via WebEx), Corporate Counsel Peter Kastenholz, Ben Jeffrey (Wood County Health Department), Jon Evenson, Mike Schoenholz, Ray Bossert (via WebEx), Angel Whitehead (via WebEx)

1. **Call meeting to order.** Chairperson Curry called the CEED meeting to order at 9:00am.
2. **Declaration of Quorum.** Chairperson Curry declared a quorum.
3. **Public Comments (*brief comments/statement regarding committee business*)** None.
4. **Review Correspondence.** None.
5. **Consent Agenda.** The Consent Agenda included the following items: 1) minutes of the March 3rd, 2020 CEED meeting, 2) bills from Land & Water Conservation, Planning & Zoning and Extension and 3) staff activity reports from Laura Huber, Matt Lippert, Nancy Turyk, Allison Jonjak, Jackie Carattini, Hannah Wendels, Kelly Hammond, Rachael Whitehair, Janell Wehr, Caleb Armstrong, Emily Salvinski, Klayton Kree, Lori Ruess, Rod Mayer, Shane Wucherpennig, Jason Grueneberg, Adam DeKleyn, Paul Bernard, Jeff Brewbaker, Scott Custer, Kim Keech and Victoria Wilson.
 - a. **Approve minutes of previous meeting.** No additions or corrections needed.
 - b. **Approve bills.** No additions or corrections needed.
 - c. **Receive staff activity reports.** No additions or corrections needed.

Motion by Dave LaFontaine to approve and accept the March 3rd, 2021 CEED minutes, bills from Planning & Zoning, Land & Water Conservation and Extension, and staff activity reports as presented. Second by Bill Leichtnam. Motion carried unanimously.

6. **Risk and Injury Report.** None.
7. **Land & Water Conservation Department**

- a. Review/action on resolution to extend free countywide well testing for nitrates until funding is used. Supervisor Bill Leichtnam commented much of what's been done over the past 6-7 years has been centered in southern Wood County in Port Edwards. We may want to concentrate some of the nitrate testing in other parts of the county. Bill recently received a call from a resident on Kellner Road with a potential problem there.

Chair Curry noted this type of testing is important to raise awareness to have your water tested. Rural areas and 85% of Wisconsin water is provided through wells. It's about protecting yourself, your neighbors and the public in general.

Motion by Dave LaFontaine to approve resolution to extend free countywide well testing until remaining funding is used. Second by Bill Leichtnam. Motion carried unanimously.

- b. Discuss letter from Sheboygan County Planning, Resources, Agriculture & Extension Committee to Governor Tony Evers reinforcing the Wood County resolution which recognizes the announcement of a

partnership amongst four long-established statewide groups concentrating on the main goal of enhancing water quality improvements throughout the State of Wisconsin.

Brief discussion ensued. Chair Curry noted everyone can appreciate there is more than one cause to water quality issues in Wisconsin.

c. Committee Reports

i. **Citizen's Groundwater Committee meeting.**

Supervisor Leichtnam shared a recap of the Monday, March 15th meeting. The primary speaker was Matt Krueger, head of Wisconsin Land + Water Conservation. Matt spoke on the topic of "Coming together in support of clean water and resilient farms".

The next meeting speaker is George Kraft, UW-Stevens Point Professor Emeritus. The next meeting will be held virtually on Monday, April 19th. Discussion followed.

ii. **Health Committee report.**

Ben Jeffrey provided an update. An intern will be starting in April. The Health Department now has most of the contact information for those who haven't sampled for nitrates yet and is working on getting in touch with them through outreach and the sampling program. The goal is to locate the high nitrates and focus on installation of RO systems.

Ben noted there was a recent meeting with AGC. They are going to be continuing the program with picking up the cost of nitrate sampling. Discussion followed.

i. **Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative (CSGWCC) committee report.**

Supervisor Leichtnam shared the nearly \$60,000 grant was received.

Next meeting is Monday, April 26th at 10am and will be virtual.

ii. **Golden Sands RC&D report.**

Supervisor Leichtnam reported the last meeting was held on Thursday, March 18th. He mentioned 2-3 years ago, there was an NR151 update tried in 17 counties of Northeastern Wisconsin and was found to be quite successful to reducing pollutants in groundwater. This is set to go statewide now; should be hearing from DATCP in the near future about it.

8. Private Sewage. Jason Grueneberg shared a staff person passed certification – Scott Custer is now able to do inspections.

9. Land Records. Paul Bernard has meeting with Land Information Council at the end of April.

10. County Surveyor.

- a. Select a licensed professional Land Surveyor to complete maintenance of 206 Public Land Survey System section corners.

Jason Grueneberg noted the contract is signed and moving forward.

11. Planning

- a. Discuss the Cranberry Creek Landfill, LLC proposed expansion, and determine if Wood County will have a representative serve on the Waste Facility Siting Board.

Jason Grueneberg noted a map of Cranberry Creek is included on page 39 of the packet. The map shows ownership, beyond the proposed expansion area. Cranberry Creek owns quite a bit of land.

There is some financial benefit to having the landfill close by. When the garbage truck picks up garbage and doesn't have to drive far, taxpayers save money. There are also not a lot of residences nearby the site, which is also a benefit. Jason shared if we were looking at a new location, the county would want a seat on landfill siting committee. Since it is an expansion, Jason doesn't see the benefit of expending county resources to have a seat on the review board. Discussion followed.

Motion by Ken Curry to accept staff recommendation that the CEED committee doesn't see a need for representation on this board. Second by Dave LaFontaine. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Discuss ownership transfer of property to the Biron Licensee Group.

Jon Evenson (Village of Biron) and Mike Schoenholz (Biron Licensee Group) presented information and historical background for the committee. Jon shared Biron is requesting the support of Wood County relative to correcting a land exchange that recently occurred, primarily in the Village of Biron. There is a map in the packet showing the project area. The burgundy areas represent just over 3 acres of property; 26 lots owned by Consolidated Water Power Company. The lots were leased year to year. Leaseholders constructed homes, cottages, piers and made improvements on the properties. Consolidated desired to have the properties vacated to be utilized for public recreation purposes. The Biron Licensee Group approached Biron to improve the public access in the area so the properties could gain ownership and replace the public access.

Jon noted the concern derives from the very last step – the final conveyance of property when Consolidated gave ownership of the property to the licensee group. When Consolidated conveyed the 26 properties, just weeks ago, they didn't convey the properties to the shoreline. They conveyed the properties to a 1036' elevation mark and maintain a sliver of ownership, disallowing the licensed properties to gain ownership of the shoreline. Biron intends to go to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to ask them to review this and enforce the FERC order to correct the conveyance and convey to the high water mark shoreline. Biron would appreciate having the support in Wood County. Lengthy discussion followed.

Chair Curry noted a resolution to County Board or a letter from the County Board Chair are two options. County Board Chair, Lance Pliml, commented he wouldn't do anything contrary to wishes of the board but is willing to move forward in that direction.

Motion by Dave LaFontaine for CEED Committee to request the Wood County Board Chairman write a letter in support of Biron Licensee Group getting the change from the 1036' land level to their rights to water level. Second by Jake Hahn. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion followed. County Board Chair Pliml will write the letter with Corporate Counsel's review. Chair Curry offered to have a special meeting to review the letter before April County Board.

12. Economic Development

a. Review correspondence from the Wisconsin County Forests Association regarding Investment Opportunity in the Consolidated Cooperative

Page 53 of the CEED packet is a letter from Wisconsin County Forests Association looking to support the Consolidated Cooperative. Jason Grueneberg explained this group is looking at purchasing the Verso mill that was shut down last summer. The cooperative has officially formed. One of the reasons the group has formed is they need to see the Wisconsin Rapids mill up and running again. Forestry operations shut down as well in the state because of the mill shut down. Consolidated Cooperative is moving forward right now with the purchase of the Verso mill and the Park Falls mill. Not sure yet what the cost looks like. The group and County Foresters understand if those mills aren't up and running, the forest industry is really going to suffer.

This letter was sent to Wood County and 29 other counties looking for some kind of idea of willingness of counties to participate in borrowing for the purchase of those mills. Jason talked to Chad Schooley (Parks and Forestry) to take it to their oversight committee as well. Discussion followed.

b. Update on the rural broadband grant application that was submitted to the Public Service Commission in December of 2020 in cooperation with Hilbert Communications.

Jason Grueneberg shared both grant applications were successful. He commended everyone that was involved in pulling them together in such a short amount of time.

124 grants were submitted. Just over 1 million dollars in grant funding was received from PSC. Jason was proud to see we got the grants and ranked so high in grant applications. The county is going to have to consider their commitment to the project; financial obligations will need to be discussed in coming months. Discussion followed.

c. Consider release of 2021 grant request for the town of Grand Rapids Connecting Trails Systems & Signage

Jason gave a brief update. Grand Rapids isn't present at the meeting because they are not quite ready to request funds. They're working with the city of Wisconsin Rapids on an agreement that would allow them to use a piece of right-of-way. They will be back at a later date to request release of funds.

d. Review 2021 funding application for Central Wisconsin State Fair.

Jason Grueneberg provided background; there was desire to get more formality in place for junior fair funding. The CEED committee moved it to look like an economic development grant application. The application comes in after the fact, as their funding was approved last year in the budget. Jason thought to have the committee review the application and if the committee does approve, that we release funds at a later date, prior to the Central Wisconsin State Fair so they have funds prior to the event. Following discussion, committee deferred agenda item until Dale Christiansen was present for a report.

Dale Christiansen arrived at 10:40am. Jason Grueneberg invited Dale to provide a summary and open up to questions for the committee.

Dale shared as they're planning for the 2021 fair, the majority will stay the same. The cost of labor jumped from \$3775 to \$11000. Dale noted this was just his estimation. Part of the reason for this is some for the changes that are taking place with Extension's help at the fair. If Dale has to take personnel to be there, that will be an additional cost. This is a work in progress but is something moving forward that will have to be figured into junior fair expense. Discussion followed. Dale provided information on the cost of the fair and noted after the 2019 event, they were able to clear all debt.

Jason Hausler clarified Extension is not pulling out of the fair. Previously, there were 3 support staff; now there are less than 2.0 FTE support staff. Extension also used to have two 4-H educators and now have 1. They are working through the transition of the fair entry system, as the program is owned by the fair.

Carmen Good excused at 10:52am.

Jason Grueneberg commented it makes most sense to release all the funds prior to the fair, in light of Covid and lack of funding. He recommends to approve release of funds for 2021 junior fair.

Motion by Bob Ashbeck to approve release of funds for Central Wisconsin State Fair. Second by Dave LaFontaine. Motion carried unanimously.

e. North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Update

Jason Grueneberg gave an update – the group is going to help with a return on investment study for ATV & UTV recreation in the county. The study will be done this summer and should have an idea by the end of the year what the ROI is.

Jason shared they are also working on a bike and pedestrian plan update for Wood County. The current plan is 20 years old and needs to be updated. Jason asked if the committee knows anyone interested in participating in the work group to let him know or reach out to the Planning & Zoning office.

The group is actively moving forward with the regional recovery plan which is federally funded. Jason serves on that committee. Discussion followed.

- f. Consider a resolution to adopt the Rural Economic Development Plan for Wood County, Wisconsin.
Chair Curry noted a special meeting is scheduled before County Board; Jason will have the resolution ready for that meeting. Chair Curry complimented Jason Gruenberg and Nancy Turyk on all of their work. Nancy suggested having an economic development meeting in the near future to prioritize roll out. Supervisor LaFontaine asked if the REDI presentation will take place at the April 20th County Board meeting. It was confirmed someone will be presenting; either Jason or Nancy, or both.

13. Extension

a. General Office Update

Jason Hausler provided the following updates:

- Effective April 1st, programming numbers in light of covid protocols have been adjusted. Staff can have in-person programming of 50 indoors and 150 outdoors. These guidelines are effective April 1st through the end of May. If things continue as they are now, numbers will be expanded for summer. A lot of positivity is happening with programming numbers and in-person capacities. The Dean, along with leadership, has said by July 1, 2021 staff telecommuting will end. All staff will be back in the office as their primary office location and organization-wide telecommuting will cease at that time.
- Extension has been working with Dale Christiansen and the Fair office on the transition of the fair entry system. Extension has been a primary driver of that – it is a time intensive software Extension has been managing on behalf of the fair. The fair signed the contract and handed the software over to Extension. Now, Extension is training them to manage their own process and systems.
- Long-time profound 4-H volunteer, Jerry Lang, passed away. Please keep his family in your thoughts.
- Jason has pushed forward Wood County as a pilot site for a new monthly staff reporting process. There are currently 72 different ways County Board oversight committees get information from Extension across the state. There is a centralized system for staff to put in programming, results, narratives, etc. It was decided to use that data for the betterment of everyone, instead of having to do the work multiple times. Jason projects at the May or June meeting, there will be a different layout of the staff activity report in the packet.

b. 2020 Fee Structure Update

Jason Hausler alerted committee members that the contractual fees for cofounded Extension positions will be going up for 2022. The adjusted rate per FTE will go up from \$42,330 to \$43,600. While the FTE rate will be going up slightly, the professional development allocation of \$2,500 will be going away. Updated documents and information will continued to be shared in the coming months as budget discussions are ongoing.

c. Educational Presentation – Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist

Allison Jonjak, shared a PowerPoint presentation to provide an update on her work.

- **Virtual Outreach**

- “Brown Bag” lunch meetings (held every month out of harvest)
 - Topics include: winter hardiness, national research round up, Cranberry School, SWOT analysis and strategic planning for Extension and the industry, acing a worker protection safety inspection and respirator fit tests, Spring Mini-Clinic
- Video interviews (YouTube)
 - 160-310 views on each
 - When Allison receives multiple questions on the same topic, she schedules a video interview with UW-Madison specialists.
 - Gets timely information out to growers and is reusable from year to year

- **Traditional Outreach**

- Marsh visits for troubleshooting

- Cranberry Crop Management Journal – 372 recipients
- Pesticide Applicator Testing – exams are resuming
 - DATCP extended certifications due to difficulties of covid. Tests are being administered for new employees or those who hadn't taken the test before.
- **Upcoming Projects**
 - Outreach Continuation
 - Cranberry Short Course – 10 video course about cranberry basics
 - Research Begins
 - Specialist Guided (Weed management, insect management, disease management)
 - Soil Health
 - Received mini-grant funding – joint project with Extension, USDA and CALS
 - Five upland marshes for 2021
 - Cores to be collected in “strong” and “weak” beds of similar age/drainage and same variety
 - Comprehensive lab analyses to be run (using grant funds)
 - Foundational analysis

Chair Curry asked how growers are accepting the virtual options. Allison noted the growers have requested virtual “Brown Bags” after covid restrictions are over. They will return back to the in-person summer meeting and Cranberry School but want the Spring Mini-Clinic and monthly brown bag meetings to remain virtual. Discussion followed.

Supervisor LaFontaine gave kudos to Allison for her WDLB radio presentation. He said it was an excellent job, enthusiastic presentation.

Jason shared the response from the growers, growers association and other individuals that have seen Allison’s work in her capacity, really drilling into one subject and being a specialist, has led to numerous other conversations – such as the Governor’s budget adding 15 positions like Allison’s. Jason also noted the Ag Institute is going through a dilation of staffing to make sure the diverse needs of the state are being met with staffing structure.

14. Schedule next regular committee meeting.

The next regular CEED meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 5, 2020 at 9:00am at Wood County Courthouse in Conference Room #114.

15. Requests for per diem for meeting attendants.

Motion by Bill Leichtnam to approve per diem for Supervisor Curry for Biron Licensee group meeting. Second by Dave LaFontaine. Motion carried unanimously.

16. Agenda items for next meeting

Agenda items are due by Wednesday, April 28th.

- *Discuss UWSP water database utilization vs. water sampling*
- *Template Resolution*

17. Schedule any additional meetings if necessary. Special meeting prior to April 20th County Board (Planning & Zoning will schedule).

18. Adjourn. Chair Curry declared the meeting adjourned at 11:57am.