

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

Members Present: Kenneth Curry, Robert Ashbeck, Jake Hahn, Dave LaFontaine and Bill Leichtnam.

Members Excused: Carmen Good.

Staff Present:

Planning & Zoning Staff: Jason Grueneberg, Adam DeKleyn and Kim Keech.  
Land & Water Conservation Staff: Shane Wucherpfennig, Klayton Kree and Lori Ruess.  
UW Extension Staff: Jason Hausler and Matt Lippert.

Others Present (for part or all of the meeting): Dist. #14 Supervisor Dennis Polach, Dist. #15 Supervisor Bill Clendening, Dist. #16 Supervisor Lance Plimi, Sue Kunferman (Wood County Health Department), Ben Jeffrey (Wood County Health Department), Ray Bossert (Village of Port Edwards Administrator), Kyle Kearns (City of Wisconsin Rapids), Josh Miller (City of Marshfield) and Steve Schneider (Bug Tussel Wireless).

1. **Call to Order.** Chairperson Curry called the CEED Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. **Declaration of Quorum.** Chairperson Curry declared a quorum.
3. **Public Comment.** None.
4. **Review Correspondence.** None.
5. **Consent Agenda.** The Consent Agenda included the following Items: 1) minutes of the June 2, 2021 CEED meetings, 2) bills from Planning & Zoning, Land & Water Conservation and UW Extension and 3) staff activity reports from Jason Grueneberg, Adam DeKleyn, Paul Bernard, Jeff Brewbaker, Scott Custer, Kim Keech, Victoria Wilson, Shane Wucherpfennig, Adam Groshek, Caleb Armstrong, Emily Salvinski, Rod Mayer, Klayton Kree, Julianna Kollross, Lori Ruess, Matt Lippert, Allison Jonjak, Janell Wehr, Jackie Carattini, Hannah Wendels, Nancy Turyk, Rachael Whitehair and Laura Huber.
  - A. Minutes of June 2, 2021. No additions or corrections needed.
  - B. Department Bills. No additions or corrections needed.
  - C. Staff Activity Reports. No additions or corrections needed

*Motion by Dave LaFontaine to approve and accept the June 2, 2021 CEED minutes, bills from Planning & Zoning, Land & Water Conservation and UW Extension, and staff activity reports as presented. Second by Kenneth Curry. Motion carried unanimously.*

6. **Review items, if any, pulled from Consent Agenda.** None..
7. **Risk and Injury Report.** None.
8. **Land & Water Conservation Department.**
  - A. Open/approve low bid for Paul Schreiner's rock stream crossing project. Klayton Kree shared that no bids were received for the rock stream crossing project. Land & Water Conservation staff estimated the project a little on the higher side due to the pandemic and cost of materials. Shane Wucherpfennig commented that there was an initial complaint from a neighbor. Staff reached out to Paul Schreiner who is the land owner after the complaint was made. The renter was interested

in the rock stream crossing cost share project. Rocks for the stream crossing would make it more stable to cross. There is no erosion issues.

- B. Update on North Central Land & Water Conservation Summer Tour/Meeting. Shane Wucherpennig shared that Wood County was to host the summer tour in 2020 but the tour was cancelled due to the pandemic. Wood County will host the tour this year on Friday, August 20<sup>th</sup>. Tour stops: Cold Snap Aquaponics, Mead Wildlife Area, Heiman Holsteins and drive by Twin Lakes Cranberry fence. CEED members wishing to attend the tour should contact the LWCD. Robert Ashbeck is the Wood County representative for North Central Land & Water Conservation.

Bill Leichtnam encouraged short presentations from the department staff on any conferences or meetings attended.

C. Committee Reports:

i. Citizens Groundwater Group

Bill Leichtnam mentioned that Scott Provost, Water Resource Specialist with the Wisconsin DNR was the guest speaker. Highlights of "Neonicotinoids" (aka neonics) presentation:

- Neonicotinoids is an insecticide applied to field seed.
- Distribution? USGS detected year-round on 74% of all water. UW: 78% of 91 irrigation wells tested positive.
- Bees (pollinators) are very susceptible:  
LD50 of 2 neonics are 5-4 nanogram.  
1 ng = 1 billionth of a gram (example - 1 grain of sugar weights 635,000 ng).  
Volume of a grain of sugar can kill 600 million bees.
- What can be done? Development of safer products with the same efficiency.  
Employ Conservation practices to use less. Product is banned in Europe.

Citizens (Wood County) Groundwater Group next meeting is on Monday, July 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at the Wood County Courthouse in Conference Room #114 with a WebEx virtual option. Guest Speaker: Colleene Thomas, Chief Environmental Aide with US Senator Tammy Baldwin's Office.

- ii. Health Committee report A meeting with the Armenia Growers Coalition was held on June 9<sup>th</sup>. A study on nitrates is being conducted. Additional residential nitrate testing is planned for August 4<sup>th</sup> & August 5<sup>th</sup>. The next Armenia Growers coalition conference call will be held on Wednesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> @ 2:00 p.m. Farmer-led initiatives remains a concern.

There is a COVID-19 vaccine clinic on Wednesday, July 7<sup>th</sup> at East Jr. High School Fieldhouse in Wisconsin Rapids from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

- iii. Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative (CSGWCC) committee report. Bill Leichtnam reported that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 26<sup>th</sup> to be held virtual. There has been 25 applicants with the field narrowed down to 9 candidates. The Research Associate will analyze the data for the counties that make up the Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative with project completion in approximately 12 months.
- iv. Golden Sands RC&D report. Bill Leichtnam and Bill Clendening are Wood County Board representatives. Robert Ashbeck will attend the July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting in Bill Clendening absence. Council meetings meet the third Thursday every month. The next meeting is Thursday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Bill Leichtnam shared a summary of the presentations from the Portage County Groundwater Citizens Advisory Committee meeting on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Speakers were:

- i. John Exo, UW-Extension and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Water Quality Programs Coordinator presentation:
    - Nitrate issues - 10% of all private Wisconsin wells are over 10 ppm safe limit. That is 20% in Portage County and 20-30% in agriculture areas in Portage County.
    - Cooperating agencies on the nitrate issue are DATCP, NRCS Wisconsin DNR, UW-Madison and UWSP.
    - Problem is lack of funding.
    - What have they done so far (i.e. UW-Extension/UW-Madison)? Created a Nitrate Workgroup. Hired more Educators. Created a website on groundwater and nitrates. Developing tools to determine the amount of nitrates that are leaching into groundwater. On-farm research. UW Extensions examining a large study in Europe.
    - What is the problem? The problem is the decision today is at the individual level of what a farmer or farm cooperative would choose to do. The state legislature has not acted. The problem has only been addressed on the research and Individual level.
  - ii. Chris Clayton, Wisconsin DNR, NR Program Manager “NR151 Nitrate Targeted Performance Standard” presentation:
    - WT-19-19 Draft Rule updating the Wisconsin Administrative Code with NR151 called “Nitrate Targeted Performance Standards”. Work was done back in 2018-2019 by 17 counties in northeastern Wisconsin. Extended to Wisconsin Administrative Code rule.
    - The rule will target 43% of agricultural land in sensitive areas in Wisconsin (i.e. Central Sands, southern Wisconsin and Chippewa Valley).
    - The rule will prohibit fall application of nitrogen except on fall seeded crops after September 1<sup>st</sup>. Will try to ensure that nitrogen is only applied when needed.
    - NMP will try to ensure that less than 2.2 pounds per acre of nitrogen is leached into the groundwater and hopefully keep the groundwater under the 10 ppm safe limit.
    - Lower the nitrates safe limit to 5 ppm in well-head protection areas.
    - What is the process to adopt the rule? Adoption of a rule takes 2-1/2 years. The rule process was started in late 2019 and may be adopted in mid-2022. Economic Income Assessment (EIA) is being prepared. Public Comment was accepted until April 10, 2021. Wisconsin Natural Resources Board will be requesting a Public Hearing. The rule goes to the Governor for approval and then to the Wisconsin State Legislature.
9. **Private Sewage.** Jason Grueneberg commented that there were 63 sanitary permits issued through the end of May 2021. For comparison purposes, 2020 had 58 sanitary permits issued through the same time period. New and replacement sanitary permits remain strong in 2021.
10. **Land Records.** Jason Grueneberg shared that the server migration occurred 3 – 4 weeks ago with a slow return on the Wood County website. The issue is expected to be solved within a week. The problem is that there is no test environment.
11. **County Surveyor.** Nothing to report.
12. **Planning.** Adam DeKleyn clarified that there were (12) CSM's submitted for review/approval. (8) CSM's approved and recorded. (10) CSM's are pending approval.
13. **Economic Development.**
- A. Update from Bug Tussel Wireless on Broadband expansion efforts in Wood County. Steve Schneider of Bug Tussel Wireless shared that the Public Service Commission grant deadline is July 27<sup>th</sup>. The broadband grants were authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This legislation allocated funds to aid the state in its response to the COVID-19 emergency. Broadband expansion will fill in the gaps in rural areas in Wood County. Apply for additional grant

funding for installing fiber between towers. There are 9,405 households in Wood County that currently do not have broadband.

Existing and future towers in Wood County:

- 20 national carrier existing towers
- 10 national carrier future towers
- 16 broadband towers

Project completion is to have a total of 46 towers in Wood County.

Bug Tussel Wireless goals:

- Bug Tussel Wireless Education – Educate the community on broadband.
- 25 megabytes per second for 98% of Wood County residents.

Broadband financially phases:

- Phase #1 – Bug Tussel Wireless was awarded a \$1 million broadband grant by the Public Service Commission to implement broadband in Wood County. The initial grant award is to construct 9-10 towers with construction in progress. Bug Tussel Wireless to contribute \$3 million and Wood County will contribute \$1 million which won't be borrowed.
- Phase #2 – Public Service Commission grant deadline is July 27<sup>th</sup>. Property and Information Technology Committee approved at their July committee meeting that Bug Tussel Wireless should apply for the Broadband Grant then get conduit bond funding from Wood county, or not accept the grant award. If the grant is not approved by the Public Service Commission, there will be another opportunity to apply for the broadband grant in December.

*Motion by Dave LaFontaine to support Phase 2 of the Broadband expansion grant application which is part of the REDI Plan in Wood County. Second by Jake Hahn. Motion carried unanimously.*

- B. Presentation of the City of Marshfield Economic Development Strategy – Josh Miller, Development Services Director. Josh Miller presented the draft of the Strategic Plan. The City of Marshfield Strategic Plan is similar to the REDI Plan.

Three components of the Strategic Plan:

- i. Housing
  - Identify priorities and opportunities for quality, attractive housing.
- ii. Quality of Place
  - Identify desirable amenities and business mix for the community.
  - Support efforts to enhance the Downtown to make it for attractive for businesses, consumers, and residents.
- iii. Attract and grow business and workforce
  - Develop robust entrepreneurial ecosystem in the area.
  - Attract people and new, desirable businesses to the area.
  - Retain existing businesses and support expansion efforts.
  - Identify and support economic development and redevelopment opportunities.

Josh Miller shared that the City of Marshfield is creating a city subdivision in Wood County on the city west side on a 10 acre farm field. It is expected to take 5 years to build the subdivision and sell all 23 of the lots. There is a presale option with 13 lots already sold. The tax base is expected to be \$7 million generating \$185,000 per year.

- C. North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission update. Jason Grueneberg updated the committee on current projects in Wood County:
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan
  - ATV/UTV Project Survey
  - City of Wisconsin Rapids Verso Mill closure redevelopment project.
  - Town of Grand Rapids Bicycle & Pedestrian Trail

- D. Update on the City of Wisconsin Rapids trail/signage project, and consider release of 2021 Economic Development Grant Funds. Kyle Kearns gave an update on the trail/signage project. There are two types of signs which will be a Pedestrian Kiosk and Trailhead Kiosk-Roof for a total of 24 signs. City Council approved Graphic House as the project contractor. Graphic House will begin sign fabrication soon and plans to install the signs with completion by the end of the year. The City of Wisconsin Rapids Community Development Department and GIS Department will finalize the map components for the trailhead signs.

*Motion by Dave LaFontaine to release the \$15,000 in grant funds to the City of Wisconsin Rapids for the trail/signage project. Second by Jake Hahn. Motion carried unanimously.*

**14. Extension.**

A. General Office Update

Jason Hausler shared the following office updates:

- COVID-19: No capacity limit for in-house programming.
- Laura Huber, 4-H Program Educator will be receiving national recognition for her “4-H Camp in A Box” at the National 4-H Conference this fall.
- Budget: 4-H Program Educator position is currently 100% funded by Wood County with no state cost share. Preliminary state budget will be that the 4-H Program Educator position will be state co-funded. What does this mean for Wood County? Wood County can add an additional 4-H staff member for Wood County in the 2022 budget.

- B. County Board Presentation Focus/Emphasis UW Extension will present the Annual Report to the Wood County Board of Supervisors meeting in September.

Presentation highlight suggestions: educator accomplishments, virtual 4-H camp, cranberry growers update, farmer educational opportunities, water quality, and broadband expansion. Share how virtual programming was adapted during the pandemic for the community to connect.

- C. Educator Presentation – Matt Lippert, Agriculture Educator. Matt Lippert gave a presentation on the SARE Alternative Dairy and Beef Forage Grant:

- Fosters cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities related to sustainable agriculture.
- The grant was extended to 2023 due to COVID-19.
- Protects water quality.
- Focus: Feeding and Profitability
- Types:
  - Ryelage – Winter hardy rye wheat hybrid,
  - Winter Triticale –Hybrid of wheat and rye.
  - Italian-Ryegrass – Short-lived annual grass which does not survive the winter. Digestible feed.
- Advantages:
  - Nutrient Recycle (protects groundwater)
  - Manure versatility (spread in summer)
  - Summer warm season grasses.
  - Yields heavy right away,
  - Less herbicide and insecticide use.
- US criticized for being a modern agriculture and not monocultures.
- The mindset has always been to plant perennial plants such as alfalfa.

**15. Requests for per diem for meeting attendants.** None.

- 16. Schedule Next Regular Committee Meeting.** The next regular CEED meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 4, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at Wood County Courthouse in Conference Room #114.

17. **Agenda items for next meeting.** Agenda items are due by Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.
18. **Schedule any additional meetings if necessary.** A special CEED meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 20<sup>th</sup> immediately following County Board at Wood County Courthouse in Conference Room #114.
19. **Adjourn.** Chairman Curry declared the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Minutes by Kim Keech, Planning & Zoning Office