

Agriculture & Extension Education Committee
May 12, 2009
Minutes

Committee members present: Chair Paul Dean, Wilbur Petroskey, Tom Rudolph, Denny Thompson, and Romelle Vandervest. TAG member: Mary Benbenek.

Others present: Dan Kuzlik, Jim Winkler, Jim Kumbera and Kerri Ison.

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chairman Dean.

Approval of agenda: Motion by Rudolph/Petroskey to approve the amended agenda as posted. All ayes; motion carried.

Approval of minutes: Motion by Thompson/Vandervest to approve the minutes of April 14, 2009. Rudolph suggested the TAG member be listed as such, instead of a "committee member". All ayes; motion approved with changes.

Date(s) of future meetings:

June 9, 2009	1:30 p.m.	Extension meeting room
July 14, 2009	1:30 p.m.	Extension meeting room

OCEDC monthly update: Jim Kumbera and Jeff Collins (SonicNet) met with the Oneida County Finance Committee and requested borrowing \$200,000 (on a 20-year repayment plan) from Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) to enter into a financial agreement with SonicNet for the construction of a number of towers across the county to provide wireless internet service to citizens. Wireless internet with SonicNet (based out of Phillips) will provide 85% coverage of Oneida County. Currently wireless internet is only available in small areas of Three Lakes, Pelican Lake, Rhinelander, Minocqua, Woodruff and Hazelhurst and current service is available within 1.5 miles of existing towers. The rest of the county is restricted to dial up service. This project would require finding a location for eight additional towers and realizes towers are a touchy issue but if residents want broadband access towers will need to be placed. SonicNet would retain ownership of the towers.

Kumbera met with Frontier who indicated they do not have any plans provide additional high speed internet access because the customer base is not there. Cellcom is looking to bring fiberoptic service to the Eagle River area and deploy additional broadband for 3G network but service will only extend 1.5 miles from the tower.

Kumbera asked for town board support for the project to help provide this kind of technology to the Northwoods. He feels it is a good investment for the county since there are many home-based businesses and believes making this service available will help bring in additional employment opportunities. It is also a great value to citizens,

tourists, visitors, local businesses, and youth education and is very competitively price (approximately \$49/month).

The Finance Committee approved the request and it will be up for approval at the May County Board meeting and Kumbera requested Committee support at that meeting. Discussion followed.

Kumbera noted connecting through the electrical grid is not a viable option. He has also met with Ken Kortenhof (Emergency Management) and Dan Hess (Sheriff's Department) about getting on the county towers and has also spoken with Lynn Grube (ITS). High speed internet service is becoming an issue for tourism and property sales as well--data transmission is a large issue on a daily basis. Lengthy discussion followed.

OCEDC is having discussions with Rural Development and the Small Business Administration (SBA) about developing another loan program which would entail borrowing \$750,000 at 0.5% for 10 years to be re-lent to businesses. Maximum loan amount would be approximately \$35,000. A match of \$120,000 is necessary and would become a reserve contingency on the loans. The program would generate funds for debt service and administrative costs by loaning at 6.5%.

Kumbera advised Committee members to watch the budget bill extremely close as there are many things that will affect government, towns, etc. Examples: domestic partnerships will need to be covered under insurance; public contracts over \$2,000 will be covered by prevailing wage law (wage scale posted) which will cause a substantial increase in work of clerks, town workers, etc., and increase the cost of benefit packages.

Monthly budget report: Motion by Vandervest/Rudolph to approve the budget reports Close-3 (period ending 12/31/09) and period ending 4/30/09. All ayes; motion carried.

Approve monthly invoices: Motion by Petroskey/Rudolph to approve monthly invoices as submitted. All ayes; motion carried.

Approve invoices for Oneida County Fair: Motion by Petroskey/Rudolph to approve monthly invoices for the Oneida County fair. All ayes; motion carried.

Oneida County Fair Planning: Kuzlik noted the Planning Team is meeting tonight. Full Team is now meeting twice per month with Task Forces meeting on a weekly basis. There was a change in leadership and things are moving forward. Kuzlik is acting as liaison for the team and Corporation Counsel. Vandervest noted M&I Bank may be able to donate time through their Community Day. Thompson suggested checking with Home Depot regarding volunteers as well.

Planning Team voiced their desire to increase the number allowed to serve on the team from 9 to 15 but will address that at a later time as it requires an ordinance amendment.

Approve Fair contracts: Committee members reviewed carnival contract. Kuzlik noted it has been approved by Corporation Counsel and upon approval of this Committee will need to be approved by the Finance Committee and signed by Andy Smith. Motion by Vandervest/Petroskey to approve the carnival contract for the 2009 Oneida County Fair as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

Fair Team Planning members: Motion by Vandervest/Thompson to approve Susan Skubal's appointment to the Oneida County Fair Planning Team. All ayes; motion carried.

Teen Court: Winkler noted the first Rhinelander Teen Court case was heard last month in the County Board Room. He is getting referrals from the Juvenile Court intake worker and has received four more cases this week. Rhinelander Teen Court is held in the Board Room. At this time cases are heard one day per month and are closed to the public. Student court participants did an excellent job.

Monthly agent reports: Winkler reported the tractor safety training was cancelled due to low enrollment but hopes to reschedule in fall or early next spring.

Vandervest thanked Kuzlik for his effort on the AIS initiative and believes Extension is the best place for the position to be housed since the department's focus is education. Thompson appreciates providing the county another option to choose from.

Rudolph felt it is a good alternative as well, but believes there is more to it than hiring a horticulturalist since there are more duties involved including grant writing. He also believes several options could be melded together and a merger with UWEX is a very viable and reasonable option to look at this time.

Rudolph believes there is a misunderstanding of the basic concepts in dealing with AIS and many people believe they can be eradicated. Education and prevention of introduction of AIS is a must. Rudolph voiced his concern about the direction the issue is heading and reviewed the history of the position. He believes the County needs to move forward and if the County feels the dollars invested in this effort are too much to bear it is a case of "pennywise and pound foolish" in the extreme. A commitment should be made now or the County will lose money in many different areas including the tourism industry.

Rudolph also noted the state has imposed a hiring freeze which could impact being able to hire a horticulturalist. Kuzlik noted it is possible to fill the position as an LTE.

Petroskey liked the proposal but wants everything looked at and is concerned with the cost-share the county is receiving now and doesn't want to lose it.

Vandervest/Petroskey to approve monthly agent reports. All ayes; motion carried.

State WACEC Conference: Ison reminded those Committee members wishing to attend the conference to turn in registration no later than Monday, May 18th. Ison will take care of sending in the registrations and securing hotel reservations.

Out-of-county travel requests:

Motion by Vandervest/Thompson to approve the out-of-county travel requests as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

Public comment: None.

Items for next agenda: AIS coordinator position update, fair planning.

Adjournment: Motion by Rudolph/Vandervest at to adjourn 2:41 p.m. All ayes; motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerri Ison, Recording Secretary

Paul Dean, Chair