

**Conservation/UW-EX Education Committee**  
**Monday, June 13, 2022 Minutes**  
**Courthouse County Board Room & Virtually by ZOOM**

**Committee members:** Chairman Jim Winkler, Bob Thome, Jr., Collette Sorgel, Linnaea Newman, Tommy Ryden, and John Engel-Farmer Rep. were present.

**Others Present:** Michele Sadauskas, Karl Jennrich, Stephanie Boismenu, Amber Rehberg, Allison Wilson, and Jonna Jewell. Zoom: Leah VanZile, Terri Kolb, Dan Butkus, and Becky Gaskill.

**1. Call to order and Chairperson's Announcements:**

Chair Winkler called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. The meeting was properly posted and handicapped accessible and ADA compliant. The symbol /s/ indicates a valid virtual attendee's signature with no need to note it in the minutes.

**2. Approve Agenda:** A motion by Thome/Newman to approve the June 13, 2022 Agenda with the order of items at the Chair's discretion. All ayes; motion carried.

**3. Approve Minutes:** Thome/Newman motioned to approve the May 9, 2022 minutes, with one correction on page one replacing "association" with "board". All ayes; motion carried.

**4. Dates /Location of Future Meetings:**

|                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Monday, July 11, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.   | Courthouse County Board Room |
| Monday, August 15, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. | Courthouse County Board Room |

**5. Public Comment:** None.

**6. Introduce Two New Committee members:**

Linnaea Newman District 3, Rhinelander (Wards 14, 15 and 16) Three Lakes. Newman is a proud grandmother. She is a graduate of UW-Madison, Agriculture and Life Sciences. She is a lifetime conservationist. She is happy to make a difference in the future of Oneida County.

Tom Ryden District 18, Minocqua (Wards 1 & 4) Woodruff (Ward 3) arrived late and introduced himself. He was born and raised in Oneida County and he is pleased to be on the Committee.

John Engel introduced himself to Newman. He represents the farmers of Oneida County and works with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee and this is his second year in the position. He has worked as a chemist and been a resident of Rhinelander for 30 years.

**7. Hodag Solar Park**

Leah VanZile, Corporate Communications/Local Affairs, WEC Energy Group – Business Services with WPS, provided an update on the Hodag Solar Park. WPS acquired the Hodag Solar Park from OneEnergy Renewables, the project's developer. It is the third largest of its kind on 50 acres of land. There is a 30-year lease. It is a 7.5 megawatts solar park in Town of Crescent located at Highway 17 and Boyce Drive. It lights up 2,000 homes and there are 20,400 panels on site. The project has been producing energy since January 27, 2022. Both sides of the panels collect and create energy from the sun in DC. They have to take that energy and convert it to AC to put it on the powerlines. Snow and ice conditions and cloudy days can affect the output of solar energy. As an example, from energy produced in February, they had 33,000 kilowatts hours of energy produced and by June, it was 79,000-kilowatt hours. Last week they visited Oneida County and met with Scott Ridderbush and Karl Jennrich to see that the conditions of the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) were being met. VanZile said the solar park had pollinator plants they will monitor for growth. They will strive to keep a relationship with LWCD and

with landowners. Sadauskas and Baerbel Ehrig took the tour two weeks ago as well and Sadauskas was very impressed with the facility. They will monitor some of the buffer plants put in at the site. Jennrich commented that he saw some erosion near the highway and wetland. Winkler asked (on behalf of the constituent) about the solar park footprint; VanZile did not have that information available but it is on their website. There is a 30-year warranty on the solar panels. John Engel asked what the cost of energy was versus natural gas cost wise. VanZile said the "jury is still out on that". The big difference is the amount of power produced. There are 50 acres producing 7.5 megawatts. The solar farm in Weston is 500 megawatts. They continue to find new ways to get power to consumers, such as battery storage.

**8. LWCD (Land and Water Conservation Department) Update.**

- a. Michele Sadauskas updated the Land and Water Resource Management 5-year Work Plan to introduce to the new Committee members. The 5-year Work Plan started in 2020. Projects that have been accomplished include AIS, Cost Share, and Lakeshore Restoration. Collette Sorgel asked about measurements and if there is a "check mark column" when something is completed. There is not a column to check it off annually but it is submitted to DATCP for the 5-year Plan. Sorgel asked if they were on schedule for completions. She wanted to know how much and how we would accomplish things in one year. She wondered where they are at now that they are 2 ½ years into the 5-year plan. Sadauskas said it is more related to goals to achieve. There is an annual plan that could address that. Sorgel asked if we could add a simple check mark column.
- b. 2021 Annual Report. Winkler complimented work on the Cost Share report. Karl Jennrich appreciated the work the staff put into the report and wants it submitted to the County Board. Jim Winkler asked on the status of the Pulver project and noted he liked having locations noted on the Cost Share projects. Thome asked about the status of a project on page 17. Jennrich will follow up with him on the mitigation.

A motion by Sorgel /Newman to forward the 2021 Annual Report to the County Board. All ayes; motion carried.

**9. Pollinator/Mosquito Spraying Update:**

In years past, pollinators had been a big concern for our Committee and they took action with some outreach on mosquito spaying. Sadauskas had a booth at the recent Earth Day Event at Nicolet College. She presented the public with pollinator cards as an outreach effort. She also produced a news release and interviewed on Channel 12 to promote pollinators. Vilas County just recently has joined efforts to collaborate in their pollinator project and the mosquito spray outreach. Pollinator Week is June 20th - 26th, 2022. There are events in Three Lakes on Saturday, June 25, including a Pollinator Walk. The Courthouse Pollinator Garden received some new plants and they had garden clean up two weeks ago. Sadauskas received a call from a beekeeper and orchard owner who is concerned with the lack of pollinators and mosquito spraying.

**10. Cost Share Update:**

Project Approval: Town of Stella-Cross Country Road Stream Crossing. The Town of Stella Roadway Stream Crossing information is in the packets. The Town of Stella presents this as an urgent project on this ATV route. The town has been working with the DNR. Sadauskas reached out to Stacy (DATCP Engineer) and said it could be done late fall and Town of Stella was not happy with the timeline. This is to give an update; no project approval is needed at this time.

**11. NCLWCA Report:**

Jim Winkler, Bob Thome, and Linnaea Newman attended the North Central meeting. Winkler was elected as President. Winkler and Thome are LCC representatives for the Board. The budget passed for 2023. Florence County is hosting the Summer Tour. Winkler gave an update from the other Counties and other points of interest from the meeting. Thome mentioned that all counties provided an update of their work plans and all but one had manure storage ordinances.

**12. Three Lakes Purple Loosestrife Project:**

Steph Boismenu gave Power Point presentation on the project going on for several years up in Three Lakes. A similar project is in progress near McNaughton. Purple Loosestrife is not a native plant and was imported to use as a garden and pond plant. There are several ways to eradicate the plant: herbicides, which they do not use, digging it out, or the use biocontrol, which Wisconsin has used for many years. A plant-specific beetle for Purple Loosestrife from the same country as the plant kills off loosestrife. Host plants are used for biocontrol in their project. Beetles are collected by the DNR and shipped to the project and are placed on the host plants. The beetle reproduces and eats the plants, which are reduced to nothing. The infested host plants are placed on lake sites that have Purple Loosestrife. Slides demonstrated the life cycle of the beetles and resulted in the destruction of the plants.

**13. Farmer Education Update:**

Sadauskas questioned if we are duplicating services with NRCS regarding a Manure Storage Ordinance. She has contacted Michael Stinebrink to discuss further. There has not been any farmer education offered by the Department in the past. "Grass Works" is accepting a grant application for farmer education. Lumberjack RC&D is applying for a three-year grant where LWCD provided a support letter. If the grant is accepted, it will provide dedicated farmer outreach person to cover Oneida and two other Counties. They will review their email lists.

**14. Lake District Reports.**

- a. **Bear Lake.** Bob Thome. The Commissioner's meeting was on June 9, 2022 and all were present. The new secretary is Lori Crane and new County Representative is Tommy Ryden. More details are in report distributed.
- b. **Crescent Lake.** Bob Thome. A Commissioner's meeting was held on zoom May 30, at 6:00 p.m. All the commissioners were on zoom, except Jim Ketterson, plus Terry Goldbach, CLD AIS Response Team Coordinator. The Dash boat 'divers' were discussed. No divers are hired. See report for details.

**15. Consent Agenda Items: Land and Water:**

A motion by Thome/Ryden to approve agenda items 14 a and b as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

**16. Items for Next Agenda:**

CAFO Moratorium expires on September 1, 2022 with discussion/recommendation/action on an extension. Review Conservation book that highlighted our responsibility where Page 9 addresses that we can make a recommendation. Jennrich states P & D Committee needs to make that decision by August. TBD. Lake District meetings for Mid, Horsehead, Thunder, Nokomis, and Squash Lakes. 2023 Staffing Requests. Cost Share.

**17. Area 4 Extension Director Update: - Amber Rehberg**

Rehberg introduced herself to the Committee members who were not at last meeting. Those who engage, participate, and utilize Extension services understand and are grateful for what we offer to the community. Others in the County are not familiar with our services. Extension and the Committee have been proactive in sharing what we do and the impact it has on benefitting the community.

- a. **Communication Plan Report.** Doing best considering with current staffing and with vacancies in CDI and FoodWise Coordinator positions, and only one part time Support Staff at the office. Trying to share program opportunities and impact through the website, TV, radio, social media and mailings. Each month staff collaborate on County Report that highlights programming, impacts, and number of contacts per month. Shared with the County Board, the library, and other organizations. Thome explained how the "Reach Metrics" on who Extension is helping. Community change takes time and the depth of a program shows a lower number but it still has a great impact.
- b. **Nicolet Signage and Collaboration Update.** Extension moved in 2020 and obtaining signage has been a complex issue with Nicolet College. The hope is by fall to have a UW-Madison Oneida County Extension

sign placed beneath the Nicolet Area Technical College sign by the entrance of Highway G. There was not policy in place with Nicolet but they have a committee working on it with UW Madison Extension Communication and Branding. Extension is at the Northwoods Center on the lower level. We have access to three beautiful conference rooms in our building. There is a great opportunity for collaboration with Nicolet programming. We have access to the kitchen that is available for groups to use, for food processing classes, etc. The Northwoods Center poised to be a hub for community and economic development. Our main contact, Sandy Bishop will be leaving Nicolet (Note: Nicolet is in the process of a reorganization and no single person will take Bishop's position). As we collaborate with Nicolet, we will seek Committee input.

- c. Support staff continues not to be at full capacity. Current coverage is one part time at 29.75 hours and a 20-hour LTE position. The LTE position continues to be a short-lived position with periods of vacancies, which puts strain on the rest of the office during those times. It was proposed for one full time Support Staff position to provide better coverage of the office. Sorgel asked about staff needs, anticipated projects, and set office hours for the public. Winkler had stopped at the office this morning and it was not open. Support Staff was out of town; the phone message will be updated. A new LTE just started with Extension and is currently being onboarded.

**18. Recommendation for Filling Community Development Institute Position – Discussion/Action**

Rehberg presented position description for Community Development Institute. It described the programs offered. Discussion covered cost to county, benefits, and professional development. The position for costs the County for 1.0 FTE is \$44,900, where the Division of Extension in Madison covers the remainder of the cost. They reviewed the choice of a full time FTE or a half time .5 FTE. Winkler wonders if the County could budget a 1.0 FTE. Sorgel said the FTE position and duties seemed vague; it is based on what the County needs. Educators bring expertise and have access to University resources. Extension offers the State discount for an equivalent of one full time position. Sorgel opted for one 1.0 FTE, as did Newman, Ryden, and Thome. A motion by Thome/Newman to fill the CDI position as 1.0 FTE. All ayes; motion carried.

**19. Educator Report:**

FoodWise Nutrition Educator, Allison Wilson, provided an overview nutrition education and active lifestyles. Funding comes from the federal agency, SNAP-ed focusing on individuals and families living below the poverty line. She teaches in elementary schools, grades 1, 3, and 5 to promote healthy eating choices. They collaborate with the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry, the YMCA, and recently with the Boys and Girls Club offering lessons. This past year she taught over 300 students. She presented an example of Grains she shares with her students. FoodWise operates through Extension Health and Well Being Institute; Terri Kolb elaborated via Zoom.

**20. Consent Agenda Items: (UW-Extension).**

A motion by Sorgel/Newman to approve items a and b. All Ayes; motion carried.

**21. Items to include on next agenda.**

Follow up on CDI from University and County needs, 2023 staffing requests. Communication and signage.

**22. Public Comment:** None.

**23. Adjournment:** Motion at 3:55 p.m. to adjourn the meeting by Winkler/Thome. All ayes; motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Merry Lehner, Recording Secretary