

Conservation/UW-EX Education Committee
Monday, April 8, 2024 Minutes
Oneida County Courthouse, County Board Room and Virtually by ZOOM

Committee Members: Chairman Jim Winkler, Robb Jensen, Linnaea Newman and Collette Sorgel. Tommy Ryden not present.

Others Present: Michele Sadauskas, Jonna Jewell, Karl Jennrich, Mike Fugle, Amber Rehberg, Terri Kolb, Mary Stys, Edmund Choinski, Steve Destreicher, Hollie Larkin, Eric Rempala, Jim Tharman, and Jessica Young. Beckie Gaskill and Dan Butkus on Zoom.

1. Call to order and Chairperson's Announcements:

Chairman Winkler called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. The meeting was properly posted and handicapped accessible and ADA compliant. The symbol /s/ represents a valid virtual attendee's signature.

2. Approve Agenda: A motion by Newman/Sorgel to approve the April 8, 2024 Agenda with the order of items at the Chair's discretion. All ayes; motion carried.

3. Approve Minutes: A motion by Jensen/Newman to approve the minutes of March 11, 2024 as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

4. Dates/Location of Future Meetings:

Monday, May 13, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. Oneida County Courthouse; County Board Room.

5. Public Comment:

Jennrich presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Winkler for his service to the CUW Committee.

Newman & Sadauskas expressed their appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Winkler for his service to the CUW Committee.

Eric Rempala (Oneida County Clean Water Action) shared that the DNR will be presenting in Stella on May 1st and will hold a Q&A Session afterwards. Rempala cautioned those attending from Oneida County to not monopolize the session, as the presentation and Q&A Session were scheduled specifically for the town of Stella. Rempala also suggested that individuals send their questions to the DNR prior to the presentation, in order to give the DNR time to consider and have answers available at the presentation. Rempala noted that the DNR is willing to attend a CUW Committee meeting or County Board meeting to answer questions.

6. Conservation Congress – Ed Choinski

The Conservation Congress chair for Oneida County, Ed Choinski, spoke about the history of the Conservation Congress. All 72 counties in the state of Wisconsin have a Conservation Congress where delegates are elected at the Spring Hearing. Choinski noted the Spring Hearing will be held on Monday, April 8th at 5 p.m. at James Williams Middle School. The Conservation Congress is an advisory unit for the DNR and the Natural Resources Board. Most of the rules and laws seen in the state of Wisconsin regarding fishing, camping, lake water, and wakeboats

come from citizens. There are seventeen committee assignments, if a resolution comes out of a committee it goes to the Spring Hearing Advisory Questions; if passed from that, it may go back for revision, to the Natural Resources Board, or get voted on and passed. It can take up to three years to get passed.

Last year the funding for the Conservation Congress was cut. For over 40 years Oneida County has provided funding for the Conservation Congress. The biggest costs of the state convention are the rooms, mileage, and meals. It would be roughly \$500 per delegate with 5 delegates, equaling a total cost of \$2,500. There is also a spring meeting in Tomahawk annually and a fall meeting.

Choinski is requesting the Committee find a way to grant funds to the Conservation Congress in order to help alleviate the out-of-pocket costs delegates must pay to attend these meetings.

Chairman Winkler asked Choinski who reimbursed them prior to having their funding cut. Choinski stated that the state of Wisconsin provided funding. Chairman Winkler stated that the CUW Committee has never approved payment of a voucher for the Conservation Congress and asked Corporation Counsel Mike Fugle if he knew what budget these vouchers were paid from; to which Fugle stated that they went through the Finance Department and have not previously come through the CUW Committee.

Sadauskas stated that vouchers were coded to the "Commissioner and Committees" Business Unit which falls under the County Board.

Chairman Winkler told Choinski that he needed to go through Scott Holewinski for his request, to which Choinski replied that he was sent to the CUW Committee first.

Choinski would like funds set aside for 2025, he is not looking for funding for 2024.

Mike Fugle read allowed an opinion from the Wisconsin Attorney General from 1984 stating *"counties lack statutory authority to pay the expenses of private citizens or county board members who attend meetings of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress"*. OAG 29-84 citing 60 Op.Atty.Gen. 327 (1972)

Jensen stated that if Oneida County cannot pay for board members, they cannot pay for other members to attend either. Conservation Congress is not a committee of Oneida County, it is not under the jurisdiction of Oneida County, nor is it a part of Land & Water Conservation.

Chairman Winkler asked why the delegates are not seeking payment from the Natural Resources Board, since they are an advisory committee for the NRB on a state level. Choinski is not aware of the reason for that.

Jensen posed the question: Does the county have the authority to fund that organization to use those funds as they chose?

Fugle stated that the opinion of the Attorney General is not the same as a statute. If a committee makes a different policy decision, then they make a different policy decision.

Jensen stated that this request could potentially go through the Executive Committee where they could make the decision on whether or not to provide funding.

Chairman Winkler would like to know who they have reported to at the County prior to this request. Choinski is unaware of who they report to at the County, that they hand in their sheets and they've always been paid. They've never had to go before the County Board in the past 18 years that he's been with the Conservation Congress.

Jensen stated that the question here is if we can fund it, and that the CUW Committee cannot endorse it one way or another. That this needs to go through the Executive Committee where they may or may not put it in the budget.

Chairman Winkler stated that they need to go to the Executive Committee after they've been sworn in to put this request in. CUW Committee can put a recommendation in, but they cannot endorse.

Sorgel does not feel comfortable making that recommendation because CUW does not partner or work with the Conservation Congress and the CUW Committee has never received information or updates from the Conservation Congress in the past.

Jensen agreed with Sorgel, he stated he does not know enough to make a recommendation.

Chairman Winkler noted that this was the first time that the Conservation Congress has come before the CUW Committee, and thanked them for their work and efforts. At this time the Committee is not in a position where they can make that recommendation.

Steven Destreicher, past chair for Conservation Congress in Oneida County, stated that Spring Hearings are held in every county of the state, they are official public hearings with five delegates present. The reason that counties have chosen to reimburse delegates for the annual convention is because they are elected by citizens of the county and that the Conservation Congress reports directly to the people. The majority of the hunting, fishing, trapping, and environmental laws we abide by today are the result of Spring Hearing resolutions. The annual convention happens in May.

Jennrich noted that Choinski can work with Sadauskas and him to get to the Executive Committee.

7. Leach Fencing Project Amendment – Jim Tharman

Tharman reviewed the fence proposal for Steve Leach in 2017. Mr. Leach would like to expand their crop production and would like to add on to the original fence. The projected cost would be \$17,514; with 75% cost to the damage program (\$13,135.50) and Mr. Leach paying the other 25%. Tharman needs approval from Committee for it to go to state for approval before moving on to the bidding process. Whoever wins the bid will have 90 days to complete the construction. The new fence will take on a 15 year contract (including the old fencing).

Jensen/Newman made a motion to approve the Leach Fencing Project as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

Jensen would like the minutes to show that this is the second revision and that the property owner was asked if there were any more. If a third revision is requested in the future the answer will be no.

8. PFAs Update and Discussion:

Sadauskas reached out to the DNR for information on lake monitoring for PFAS; she has not heard back yet. There is a priority lake list that centers on watersheds in areas with contaminated sites. Sadauskas wanted to see if there was interest in setting up a partnership for extended lake monitoring, which may have grant potential in the future.

Jensen asked Sadauskas if there was support for homeowners to test for PFAS. Sadauskas is not aware of anything at this time. Those that are in the area circled red on maps of affected areas will be covered for PFAS testing, anyone outside that area is not covered.

Chairman Winkler stated that PFAS is being found in wells and lakes. If there are other agricultural lands in the county draining into a watershed with a lake, we should be concerned with testing for PFAS. Water testing for PFAS is anywhere from \$400-\$500; most homeowners will not be able or willing to pay that steep price. Mid Lake is interested in testing for PFAS. Horsehead is interested, but they have no industrial or agricultural land feeding into watersheds that they are aware of. Chairman Winkler suggested that the Committee ask their lake districts if there is an interest in testing for PFAS. Perhaps a grant could be written to seek help from the DNR or the state. There is \$125 million sitting at the legislature that could be used for testing.

Newman stated that agricultural land is not the only culprit, even though it is the most serious. The first PFAS detection came from the city water system, which is why the South River Road artesian spring was closed. Everything downstream will be carrying PFAS with it. Based off of past reading, Newman stated that the plume can travel up to 14 miles, which would affect many lakes. We don't know how far the issue goes. There is concern about remediation, we know there is a problem and we cannot just look at testing, we need to know what they can do to fix it.

It was decided that a notice will be posted stating that members of the CUW Committee will be attending the DNR presentation in Stella on May 1st that may or may not result in a quorum present.

9. Land and Water Annual Conference Update – *Linnaea Newman*

Newman attended the business meeting on Friday, April 5th, 2024. Newman mentioned that there is potential for wider networking opportunities. Having the opportunity to connect with other areas to gain information on what they are doing, what they found, what is working for them, and if they are doing any remediation could be beneficial for Oneida County.

Sadauskas mentioned that Governor Evers requested to speak at the conference and was in attendance.

10. Move Deposit Forfeitures into LWCD Revenue Account:

Sadauskas stated that last month the Committee decided to refund a \$500 partial deposit back to a landowner who pulled out of a project. LWCD reached out to Tina Smigielski in Finance for assistance. It was discovered that \$3,100 has been sitting in an account since 2016 and Smigielski said she could move the money into revenue if the CUW Committee approved having that money transferred over to the LWCD budget. The addition to the budget from transferring this money would ensure that an LTE kept their position with the department, as the loss in deposit and not receiving a grant had caused some budget doubt for the LTE position.

Sorgel/Newman made a motion to move the forfeiture amount of \$3,100 to the LWCD revenue account that can be used for personnel. All ayes; motion carried.

11. Notification of Hearing & Resolution: Regarding a Highway in the Town of Pine Lake:

Sadauskas stated this was just information for the Committee, a notification is required when this happens. No further discussion from Committee.

Committee acknowledged the notification.

12. Lake District Reports:

Mid Lake, Horsehead, and Lake Nokomis submitted.

13. LWCD Office Reports:

- a. Budget Actual.
- b. Invoices Paid.

Committee acknowledged and received items 13a and 13b.

14. LWCD items to include on next agenda:

- Newman will report on her upcoming visit to the Lakes & Water Conference.
- Appointing CUW Committee members to Lake Districts.

15. Public Comment:

None.

16. Area 4 Extension Director Update – A. Rehberg

- a. UWEX Status Update: Rehberg shared appreciation for Jim Winkler and Tommy Ryden for their service to the County Board and the CUW Committee and the entire committee for their support and engagement the past two years.
- b. Staffing & Communication Plan: Rehberg noted that staff is at full capacity and Extension continues to build out programming and opportunities. Jessica Young continues to expand and enhance the marketing and the communication plan. Sharon Krause just completed a PSA with NAMI on youth mental health that is circulating on Channel 12.
- c. Nicolet Facilities Update: Rehberg and Young met with Jodi Engleman from Nicolet and a prior Master Food Preserver to brainstorm and discuss ways to create programs in partnership with Nicolet. Chairman Winkler suggested doing a canning workshop and opening it up to Nicolet as a partnership. Rehberg mentioned that Mary Stys is trained to do pressure gauge testing; Laurel Parins and Jessica Young will receive training in that area too.

17. FoodWise Presentation: Food Insecurity

Terri Kolb, FoodWise Administrator, presented. FoodWise focuses on direct nutrition education to audiences that have a majority of participants receiving Food Share. It is also focusing on and working with policy, system and change around food security, nutrition security and what factors get in the way of these.

FoodWise works with school food services on quality of food, works with families to get access to free/reduced lunches, works with community gardens, school gardens, and farmer's markets to ensure access to nutritious foods. There are now prescriptions for fresh products. The goal is to focus awareness on these resources and ensure individuals utilize them. The challenge is reaching parents of younger children; looking for a way to partner with WIC and Early Childhood to increase communication to this group.

Summer feeding can be an issue as most families rely on the free breakfast and lunches served at school. The Hodag Food Wagon helps with this issue, as well as summer school, but the need may be greater than what those two resources can provide. A food pantry network has been initiated to help with summer and after school feeding.

FoodWise is looking to partner with the farmer's markets in Oneida County to participate in food share programs, which would open up that market of fresh foods to more families in the area.

FoodWise is funded through a state-level grant through the USDA and direct Oneida County funds are not used to support staff salaries and benefits. FoodWise is charged with working with families that are eligible to receive food share. Not every school will qualify for FoodWise

programming; a school must have at least 50% of students eligible for food share in order to qualify for FoodWise education and resources. Each year staff assess which schools qualify and then work with the schools to schedule nutrition lessons.

Those who do not qualify for FoodWise have access to the UW-Extension Health & Well Being Educator, Laurel Parins, for education and support on nutrition and healthy living.

Chairman Winkler suggested partnering with the ADRC to provide education and resources to the aging population.

Sorgel suggested meeting with the local Lions Club as they focus on hunger initiatives, composting, and nutritional support.

18. UWEX Office Reports:

- a. Budget Actual
- b. Invoices Paid

Committee acknowledged and received agenda items 18a & 18b, as presented.

19. UWEX Items to include on next agenda:

- Overview of Extension and programming.

20. Public Comment:

None.

21. Adjournment: Chairman Winkler adjourned meeting at 2:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Young, Recording Secretary