

**Walworth County Board of Supervisors
Land Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 20, 2023
Walworth County Government Center, County Board Room 114
100 W. Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin**

Chair Holt called the meeting to order at 1:16 p.m.

Roll call was conducted and the following members were present: Chair Brian Holt; Vice-Chair Sheila Reiff; Supervisor Rick Stacey; and Citizen Member Richard Kuhnke, Jr. Citizen Representative Sharon Travis was absent. A quorum was declared.

Others in Attendance:

County Staff: County Administrator Mark W. Luberda; Corporation Counsel/Director-Land Use and Resource Management (LURM) Michael Cotter; Deputy Director of LURM/County Conservationist Mandy Bonneville; and Senior Rural Conservationist Brian Smetana.

On motion by Supervisor Reiff, second by Supervisor Stacey, the agenda was approved with no withdrawals.

On motion by Supervisor Stacey, second by Vice-Chair Reiff, the minutes of the February 20, 2023 Land Conservation Committee meeting were approved.

Public Comment – There was none.

6. Committee Input for the SWOT Analysis Review as Part of the 2023 Walworth County Strategic Planning Process

Walworth County Administrator Mark W. Luberda provided an overview of his Memorandum on Pages 5-6 of the packet. He explained, each committee has been asked to review the current SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis (Pages 7-16), and bring forth any additions, subtractions, expansions, etc. to the current document. He reiterated, any specific suggestions be made in the form of a motion and suggestions need not be exclusive to topics handled by the committee(s), but rather should encompass a broader county wide analysis. Luberda provided a summary of the current topics outlined in the SWOT analysis; identifying the following potential changes he has considered:

- Combine Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) into Financial Policies, under strengths, as it is no longer the driving issue it once was.
- Leave Debt as a separate topic under strengths as it is a unique strength of Walworth County.
- Keep the radio project as a department specific opportunity for the Sheriff's office.
- Remove Covid-19 Pandemic as a threat and instead incorporate the loss of funding relative to pandemic reserves as a threat.
- Seek input from judges to reevaluate the threat of criminal justice costs.

The Land Conservation Committee (LCC) discussed the following:

- Remaining ahead of regulations as it relates to conservation work.
- Identified a weakness of lack of enforcement within Walworth County. Corporation Counsel/Director-Land Use and Resource Management (LURM) Michael Cotter discussed Supervisor Karbowski's desire to add a code enforcement officer position. Cotter elaborated on his concerns to potential cuts in the department down the road.
- Potential future regulations as it relates to enforcement.

- The variations in scope relative to Land Conservation between counties.
- Additional wording to the tax levy threat to consider opportunity lost in pursuing proactive or leading edge programs that are voluntary but not mandatory.
- Compliance to regulations.
- Importance of prioritizing intergovernmental cooperation and community work.

7. FSA Committee Member Representation Update

Deputy Director of LURM/County Conservationist Mandy Bonneville reminded the committee that last year a directive was given by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) that was in conflict with State Statute, relative to requirements for the LCC. State Statute states, an FSA representative be a member of the LCC, whereas FSA states that is not a requirement. The Wisconsin Land and Water Association surveyed all counties regarding issues they were facing relative to this and counties felt an FSA representative on LCC was important. As a result, in collaboration with Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) and the Farm Bureau, there has been proposed language changes to Statute 92 which broadens farmer participation on LCC. The change removes direct FSA wording and broadens it to “operator engaged in agricultural use,” and “agricultural use,” utilizes the definition in the statute for farmland preservation. The Wisconsin Land and Water Association has found key legislators willing to champion this proposed change. Walworth County and Rock County will be represented by State Assembly Representative Ellen Schutt. Chair Holt noted his agreement with this change.

8. 2023 Soil & Water Resources Management Grant Program Work Plan

Bonneville referred to her Memorandum and proposed work plan (Pages 20-28). Each year the Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management (LURM) Department receives funding from the Soil & Water Resources Management (SWRM) Grant Program which supports staffing costs and implementation of conservation practices. As part of this grant program, Walworth County has to submit a work plan to the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) which highlights what tasks are being pursued for 2023. Bonneville requested approval of the work plan by the committee and would look to submit the approval with the SWRM application, which will be submitted in April for the year 2024. **Vice-Chair Reiff offered a motion, second by Supervisor Stacey, to approve the 2023 Soil & Water Resources Management Grant Program Work Plan. Motion carried 4-0.**

9. 2024 Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) Grant Application for Conservation Practices in Delavan Lake/Jackson Creek Watershed

Bonneville explained, part of the aforementioned annual work plan is a task for LURM to apply for a Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) Grant. Funds will be utilized to cost-share conservation practices in Delavan Lake/Jackson Creek Watershed. Existing staff would be utilized to facilitate working with land owners to implement conservation practices to control total suspended solids and total phosphorus in these watersheds, in hopes of lessening the impact to Delavan Lake. It is a competitive grant so there is no guarantee it will be awarded. Additionally, it is a lengthy process, with application submission in April of this year; news from the State if we are awarded would arrive in late summer/early fall; and if awarded, the funds would be received in 2024 with implementation of the funds within the 2024 budget. A requirement of the application process with the state is appointing an authorized representative to handle the paperwork. There is a resolution on file from 2010 (Page 30-31) granting authorization to the County Conservationist to be the authorized representative and the state verified the resolution is still valid and may still be used for the application process. **Supervisor Stacey offered a motion, second by Vice-Chair Reiff, for approval to apply for the 2024 Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) Grant Application for Conservation Practices in Delavan Lake/Jackson Creek Watershed. Motion carried 4-0.**

10. Farmland Preservation Plan Update

Bonneville noted in January there were slight changes done to the farmland preservation plan which was submitted to (DATCP), and notification was received that the process was administratively complete. The focus is now working through the technical aspects like mapping and GIS data. Bonneville is hopeful that certification will be received in the coming weeks.

11. Farmland Preservation Notice of Noncompliance Recipient – Voluntary Waiver of Rights: Yor Trust, Linn Township

Senior Rural Conservationist Brian Smetana reported, Mary Yor, as part of Yor Trust has elected not to receive the farm preservation tax credit. They are in full compliance of the program, therefore they may take advantage of the program in the future. **Vice-Chair Reiff offered a motion, second by Citizen Member Kuhnke, to accept the farmland preservation notice of noncompliance recipient—Voluntary Waiver of Rights: Yor Trust, Linn Township. Motion carried 4-0.**

Confirmation of next meeting – The next meeting was confirmed for Monday, April 24, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment

On motion and second by Supervisor Stacey and Vice-Chair Reiff, Chair Holt adjourned the meeting at 2:21 p.m.