

Draft
Buffalo County Minutes

Committee:	Land Conservation & Ag and Extension Committee (LCAE)
Date of Meeting:	Monday, July 12, 2021
Electronic and Hardcopy Filing Date:	July 15, 2021

Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Dwight Ruff, Chair, at 6:01pm

Members Present: Dwight Ruff, John Sendelbach, Brad Schmidtknecht, Steve Nelson, Bill Breugger. Terry Sobotta arrived at 6:15 p.m.

Others Present for All or Part of the Meeting: Kristin Foehringer, Tim Wucherer, Joe Krumrie, Pat Malone. Present virtually - Sonya Hanson, Nels Anderson, Annie Lisowski, Mary Campbell Wood, Paige DeWitt, Lexi Brunner, Joe Bragger.

Public Comment Regarding Agenda Items: None

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Minutes of the May 11, 2021, Land Conservation & Ag and Extension Committee Meeting: Motion by Mr. Sendelbach to approve the May LCAE committee meeting minutes and seconded by Mr. Breugger.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Cochrane Drainage Commission Member Recommendations: Mr. Bruegger shared with the committee members that the two members of the Cochrane Drainage Commission whose terms are up have agreed to continue serving. Motion by Mr. Bruegger with a second by Mr. Sendalbach that the Ag & Extension Committee recommend to Judge Clark that the terms of Carson Lentz and Tom Bollinger on the Cochrane Drainage Commission be extended. Carried.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ 2020 Annual Report: Ms. Malone, Ms. Lisowski, and Ms. Wood shared the 2020 Extension Annual Report with the committee. Ms. Malone highlighted the breadth and depth of the work our county educators have done during the year of the pandemic. The majority of their program was required to be virtual, but they adjusted their programming and met the needs of local learners and partners. Ms. Lisowski highlighted the work done on the Teen Court. They were able to convert the program to a virtual format and maintain confidentiality and run a normal schedule of trainings and hearings. She and others also led a Restorative Justice Summit that reached over 1000 professionals over the three days of the summit. In addition, the 4-H and other youth programs continued even if they did look a little different.

Ms. Wood shared the highlights of her programming year. Her work on a special project to address military service members and their families experience as it relates to the local criminal justice system continued to develop. The Literacy Link adapted on-line materials to train justice-involved parents on interactive reading strategies. "A Better Beginning", a program for divorcing and separating parents continued throughout the course of the year. Ms. Wood indicated the need for the program was significant. The program moved to a virtual model, which had some significant benefits for the participants in terms of flexibility.

Ms. Malone shared highlights from the Agriculture Agent's report. Mr. Duley's active research agenda continued with looking at alternative crops focused on improving farm profitability and

conservation. He helped adapt the Youth Tractor Safety program to a hybrid model that included virtual and hands-on experiences. He was also a leader in developing and delivering the “Cutting Edge,” a podcast series to increase awareness of potential crops that can diversity cropping systems and increase income.

Ms. Malone also highlighted the on-going work of the FoodWise program. She also noted that the Extension office works hard to use the county’s financial investment in Extension most effectively and efficiently. Chair Ruff accepted the Extension annual report and noted it will be forwarded to the county board in August.

Educator Report: The educators shared their monthly activities in their written report, which is on file in the Extension office. Ms. Lisowski highlighted the summer school programs at Cochrane-Fountain City and the Mondovi Community Youth Center. She also shared the 4-H community club programming that is occurring and noted 4-Hers are getting ready for the fair. Ms. Wood highlighted the childcare clinics that were held, and the preparation work a team is doing to apply for another Justice Treatment Alternatives and Diversion Agreements grant. Ms. Malone highlighted Mr. Duley’s summer research program. She also noted that 52 Buffalo County residents participated in the Agricultural and Household Clean Sweep program.

Review/Discussion ~ LCRMD 2020 Annual Report: Ms. Foehringer presented the Land Conservation and Resource Management Department’s 2020 annual report. Ms. Foehringer provided a powerpoint overview of the accomplishments, challenges, future programs, milestones, departmental goals, and financials for the department. She noted there were missing items in the financials that would be presented at the August LCAE committee meeting. Chair Ruff accepted the LCRMD annual report and recommended it be forwarded to the County Board in August.

Review/Discussion ~ Introduce New GIS Staff and Supporting Role for LCRMD: Nels Anderson, GIS Technician for Buffalo County, introduced himself to the Committee and described his background experience and new support role for many of the departments in the County, including LCRMD. Mr. Anderson described how the GIS technology capabilities in the County have been underutilized and will be working to train other staff and improve data management and mapping efficiencies in the County.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ PL-566 and CCC Watershed Structures Proposed Maintenance: Ms. Foehringer described two requests for maintenance and minor repair on two watershed flood control structures in the South Nelson watershed. Both Chair Ruff and Ms. Foehringer described the repair needs as being proactive to prevent potential damage to the flood-control structures and downstream buildings in the event of a future flooding event. Ms. Foehringer stated the NRCS State Engineer would be working with the DATCP Environmental Engineer to approve the designs for repair of both structures and recommended the County work with the landowners to complete the repairs due to the importance of both structures in the watershed, and the high cost associated with complete rebuilds of both structures in the event they would fail or become damaged in the future. Ms. Foehringer asked if the committee would approve funding the PL-566 repair with budgeted PL-566 repair funds and consider using those funds for repair of the CCC structure. The committee asked for a cost-estimate once the designs are completed by the engineers before discussing whether to approve financial assistance. Motion by Mr. Schmidtknecht for LCRMD to present a cost-estimate at the August LCAE meeting, seconded by Mr. Sendelbach.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ AEA Petition – Town of Montana: Mr. Wucherer presented the petition from the Town of Montana to the State of WI to become an Agricultural Enterprise Area, despite not being in a Farmland Preservation zoning district. Mr. Wucherer described the landowner requirements to enroll as an AEA. Mr. Joe Bragger explained that 22 eligible landowners

representing 27 entities have signed the petition, and the state requires a minimum of five signatures for a petition. If the petition is approved by the State, all eligible landowners within the AEA boundary would be able to sign up for a Farmland Preservation Agreement. Mr. Schmidt knecht made a motion to support the petition for the Town of Montana to enter an AEA, pending full County Board approval. Motion seconded by Mr. Nelson. Carried.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ The Committee May Go into Closed Session to Discuss Staffing Transition Plan: Chair Ruff made a motion to go into closed session. Seconded by Mr. Sendelbach. Roll call vote: Mr. Ruff - yes, Mr. Sendelbach - yes, Mr. Schmidt knecht - yes, Mr. Nelson -yes, Mr. Breugger- yes and Mr. Sobotta – yes. Motion carried.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ The Committee May Return to Open Session

Mr. Ruff made a motion for the committee to return to open session, seconded by Mr. Schmidt knecht. Roll call vote: Mr. Ruff – yes, Mr. Sendelbach-yes, Mr. Schmidt knecht- yes, Mr. Nelson – yes, Mr. Breugger- yes and Mr. Sobotta - yes. Motion carried.

Action taken in closed session: Ms. Foehringer stated she had accepted a new position with NRCS and would be leaving the Department in mid-August. The committee approved refilling the Land Conservationist position and supported the appointment of Nels Anderson to serve as interim Land Conservationist, after receiving a formal resignation letter from Ms. Foehringer. Ms. Foehringer will train Mr. Anderson and LCRMD staff on departmental programs and procedures during her remaining tenure in the Department.

Agency Reports: Mr. Sobotta reported that the new FSA County Executive Director, appointed to Buffalo, Pepin, and Pierce County, resigned, and he was unsure of the timeline or plan for a replacement.

Chairperson Report: Mr. Ruff reported on the Bluff Prairie Tour event hosted by LCRMD on July 9th.

Conservationist Report: Ms. Foehringer announced the LCRMD, in conjunction with NRCS, DATCP, and area Landowners, are hosting a Conservation Practice Tour for NW-area technical staff in the Rose Valley Watershed. The tour will visit and discuss five types of grade stabilization structures and discuss the importance of watershed-scale conservation planning.

Next Meeting Date and Time: August 9, at 6:00pm

Public Comments: None.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by Chair Ruff at 8:49pm.

Submitted By:
Patricia Malone and Kristin Foehringer