

MINUTES
 CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2020
 WOOD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, ROOM #114, WISCONSIN RAPIDS WI

Members Present: Kenneth Curry, Bill Leichtnam, Robert Ashbeck, Dave LaFontaine and Jake Hahn.

Staff Present:

Planning & Zoning Staff: Jason Grueneberg and Kim Keech (via WebEx).

Land & Water Conservation Staff: Shane Wucherpennig.

UW-Madison Division of Extension: Nancy Turyk (via WebEx)

Others Present: Dist. #14 Supervisor Dennis Polach and Dist. #15 Supervisor Bill Clendenning.

1. **Call to Order.** Chairperson Curry called the CEED Meeting to order at 11:20 a.m.
2. **Declaration of Quorum.** Chairperson Curry declared a quorum.
3. **Public Comment.** None
4. **Review Correspondence.** None
5. **Land & Water Conservation Department.**
 - A. Open and approve low bid for Dale and Jason Behrend's intermittent stream culvert crossing project. Shane Wucherpennig shared that bids were sent to 6 area contractors with no bids received. Shane commented that contractors have been very busy. Department staff have estimated the project cost to be approximately \$10,000. Bids will be reopened for submittal for contractors.
6. **Economic Development**
 - A. Discuss 2021 Economic Development Budget and the 2021 grant program for economic development projects and organizations. Jason Grueneberg shared that the budget is expected to be completed by the end of the week. Grant application deadline for the 2021 budget year is due September 11th. Items to consider: Should we maintain "status quo"? What are the expectations? Do we cut grants? What do we approve? Do we budget money for grants? It is expected that some grant requests will be similar such as past budget years such as Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Heart of Wisconsin, airport grant funding, Marshfield Economic Development Board and City of Wisconsin Rapids. 2020 Economic Development grant requests was \$138,500. What do we do with the unexpended funds that fell through in 2020? Do we carry over to 2021 or does it go back to the general fund? The committee would like to know a grant amount for each partner. A special CEED Committee meeting will be on Monday, September 14th at 9:00 a.m. to discuss grant funding for 2021.
 - B. Update on the Rural Economic Development Innovation Initiative. Nancy Turyk shared that both workgroups continue to meet to discuss the REDI plan making changes. The Quality of Life group plans to reduce plan initiatives from 6 ideas to 1-3 with the Purdue University assistance. Draft plan targeted completion date is November 2020. The group continues to develop strategies for planning and funding initiatives. The lead person for the broadband initiative is MaryAnn Lippert of Pittsville. The next meeting is Tuesday, August 25th from 3:00-4:00 p.m. to discuss Smart Initiatives.
 - C. General Economic Development update.
 - i. Economic Development Personal Protective Equipment and Economic Development Recovery meets every other week to discuss COVID-19 and impacts on Economic Development. Both Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Heart of Wisconsin

chambers give an update on community business concerns. Health Department gives updates on community health issues.

- ii. Verso Response – Heart of Wisconsin is assisting employees to update job resume and job search. Training and assistance is available to employees. Lunch-n-Learns. A job fair has been scheduled for Wednesday, September 2nd. Wisconsin Rapids Together Task Force meets every other week to discuss the mill closure & impacts, marketing the mill to prospective buyers and job fair. An effort is being made for the mill to be purchased and operated as a cooperative by the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association. For more information, Wisconsin Rapids Together Task Force website: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/rapidstogether>.
- iii. Broadband – COVID-19 has increased virtual meetings and the ability to hold virtual meetings because more people are working from home.
- iv. Childcare is tied to Economic Development. Childcare is important because of the ability to be part of the work force.

D. North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission update. Jason Grueneberg shared that the City of Marshfield Sewer Service Plan is being updated by the RPC. Appointments have been approved by the State of Wisconsin. The following appointments: Dave LaFontaine (State appointee) and Jerry Nelson (Wood County appointee). The Wood County and State joint approval of Doug Machon has been approved. A letter was sent to the municipalities by the RPC that are due to have their comprehensive plans updated. The RPC can update their plans at the member rate.

E. Discuss moving Junior Fair money to Economic Development Budget. Junior Fair budget money comes from the general fund passed through the Extension budget. UW-Madison Division of Extension has no control over the Junior Fair money to the fair or how these dollars are used. Jason Grueneberg commented that he has no concern if the money for Junior Fair is in the Economic Development budget. Robert Ashbeck expressed that the CEED Committee has control over the Junior Fair money if it is in the UW-Madison Division of Extension budget or the Economic Development budget.

Motion by Jake Hahn to transfer Junior Fair money to the Economic Development budget. Second by Dave LaFontaine. Motion carried 4-1. Robert Ashbeck feels that UW-Madison Division of Extension is a better fit because of the involvement of Junior Fair youth than the Economic Development budget.

F. Discuss Saratoga Solar Array Impact on Economic Development. Bill Leichtnam shared that the Wood County Solar Project could be built within 10 months. The potential for growth is enormous. The solar array is 2 miles by 2 miles for a total of 4 square miles. There is also a possible sewer extension by the City of Wisconsin Rapids or Village of Port Edwards along the east side of the solar array. The sewer extension is expected to be extended to the Town of Rome. Economic development opportunities are expected to expand east of the solar array due to the sewer extension. A virtual public meeting to discuss the developer's agreement draft will be held on Monday, August 24th at 6:00 p.m. with Savion. It is expected that Wood County will receive approximately \$350,000 and Town of Saratoga \$250,000 per year because of the solar array. Should some Wood County money be targeted towards Economic Development versus the general fund? A joint meeting with the Renewable & Sustainable Committee and CEED Committee was suggested.

7. Schedule Next Regular Committee Meeting. The next regular CEED meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. at Wood County Courthouse in Conference Room #114.

8. Agenda items for next meeting. Agenda items are due by Wednesday, August 29th. Discuss and share the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

9. Schedule any additional meetings if necessary. There will be a special CEED Committee meeting to review Economic Development grant requests for 2021 on Monday, September 14th @ 9:00 a.m.

10. Adjourn. Chairman Curry declared the meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Minutes by Kim Keech, Planning & Zoning Office