

**LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PLANNING MEETING  
PROCEEDINGS; WEDNESDAY, JULY 07, 2010**

The La Crosse County Board of Supervisors Planning Meeting was held on Wednesday, July 07, 2010 in the Administrative Center, Room B410 at 6:00 P.M. The Deputy County Clerk, Ginny Dankmeyer, took roll call. 30 were present when Chair Doyle called the meeting to order and those otherwise present, excused or absent are noted in the roll call detail.

<b>District</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
1	Richmond, Andrea	Present, Excused at 08:02 PM
2	Geary, Ralph	Present
3	Feehan, Bill	Present
4	Johnson, Jai	Present, Excused at 9:04 PM
5	Konkel, Bradley	Excused
6	Billings, Jill	Present
7	Plesha, Roger	Present
8	Freedland, Maureen	Present
9	Hampson, Sharon	Present
10	Wood, Margaret	Excused
11	Kader, Audrey	Present
12	Flood, Bridget	Present, Excused at 08:31 PM
13	Brockmiller, Bill	Present
14	Medinger, John	Present, Excused at 08:13 PM
15	Mach, Beverly	Present
16	Sebranek, Gerald	Present
17	Meyer, Donald	Present
18	Johnson, Tara	Present
19	Keil, Robert	Present
20	Bina, Donald	Present
21	Manthei, Dennis	Present
22	Ebert, Ray	Present
23	Gamroth, Tammy	Present
24	Pfaff, Leon	Present
25	Schroeder, Jeffrey	Present
26	Burke, Vicki	Present
27	Pedretti, Marilyn	Present
28	Doyle, Steve	Present
29	Kruse, Monica	Present
30	Spiker, Charles	Present
31	Ferries, Dan	Present at 6:25 PM
32	Benrud, Arlene	Excused
33	Berns, Jim	Present at 6:04 pm
34	Wehrs, Tina	Present
35	Bilskemper, Joe	Excused

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

COUNTY BOARD CHAIR REPORT - STEVE DOYLE

- WCA Conference will be September 26-28, 2010 with two overnights. The deadline to register is July 16, 2010. Anyone registering after July 16th will have to pay the additional late registration fee. There is a savings if all registrations are sent in together so supervisors should register through the Chair's office; Margaret will also take care of hotel registrations.
- The La Crosse Interstate Fair is July 14-18, 2010; all are encouraged to attend.
- Supervisor Conference Reports
  - Supervisor Bina also spoke about the fair. There is no fee for parking or admission and as of last night there are 12,000 entries, ranging from animals to art. Carnival rides are \$15 per day, and there is a fee for the races. He suggested everyone go and take the whole family.
  - Supervisor Freedland: La Crosse County was a sponsor of a workshop on inclusive workplaces put on by the La Crosse Diversity Council, which we are an active part of. A La Crosse County employee that participated in a panel of employees with disabilities spoke highly of his treatment and experience as an employee of the county.
- Web Site Committee: Chair Doyle requested volunteers for the web site committee. Supervisors Flood, Wehrs and Ebert volunteered, with Supervisor Ebert noting that he wouldn't be available until after August.
- Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Report – Staff Director, Greg Flogstad

Mr. Flogstad had extra copies of the 2009-2010 Annual Report if anybody needed one. Without the commissioners, that set policy and programs, from La Crosse and the 8 other counties that make up the MRRPC, none of the accomplishments and projects in the report would have been possible. He referenced the \$1 million dollars in grant applications the MRRPC staff assisted with for the Village of La Farge in Vernon County and the Town of Waterville in Pepin County. It's been announced that the EDA awarded a \$990,286 grant to the Village. He went through the report, which also included information on the following:

- Food Resource and Agribusiness Network (FRAN) Industry Cluster Initiative
- Equipment and Metal Manufacturing Association (EMMA) Sponsors Successful Sector Training Grant, Awards Lego League Grants to Schools and Launches New Web Site
- Kickapoo Valley Regional Economic Development Initiative (KVREDI)
- MRRPC Comprehensive Planning Activities
- Comprehensive Plans for Crawford County, Village of Gays Mills, Town of Prairie du Chien, City of Blair, Towns of Clayton, Albany, Lime, Farmington, Greenfield, and Byron
- Updates to Outdoor Recreation Plans for Crawford, Pierce and Monroe Counties
- Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans for Crawford, Trempealeau, Vernon and Pepin Counties
- Business Loan Applications/Economic Development
- 2009 Audit
- MRRPC Profile – The Commission was created in 1964 under Wisconsin Statute 66.0309 to provide cost-shared planning and economic development services to the Western Wisconsin county governments of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau and Vernon, and the communities and businesses within these counties. It covers 6,000 square miles and in 2009 had an estimated population of over 317,000. Meetings are held bi-monthly, usually in La Crosse due to its central location. Each county is represented by 3 commissioners, appointed by the respective county boards and the Governor.

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Following his report, Mr. Flogstad was available for questions and comments from the Board. More information on MRRPC and the complete report can be found on their web site at: <http://www.mrrpc.com> and is available for viewing in the County Clerk's office.

- **2011 Budget:** Chair Doyle noted they are always looking for budget suggestions, and they should be brought to Administrator O'Malley and/or Finance Director Ingvalson ahead of time. If they wait until the last minute or the November budget meeting, there is not enough time to research it.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT - STEVE O'MALLEY

**PROCLAMATION: JULY 2010 - NURSING HOME MONTH**

**WHEREAS**, La Crosse County residents or members of their family are provided affordable, quality nursing care services in a family-like environment, including those whose care may be difficult or those without financial support; and, **WHEREAS**, staff is committed to excellence in providing care and rehabilitation to all with respect for the dignity and rights of individuals including those who have special physical, developmental, and mental health needs; and **WHEREAS**, La Crosse County operates two nursing homes – Hillview Health Care Center and Lakeview Health Center. **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the La Crosse County Board does hereby proclaim the month of July as La Crosse County Nursing Home Month and urges all residents to join in recognizing the valuable contribution of persons dedicated to ensuring quality care to our residents in need.

Motion by B. Brockmiller/M. Kruse to approve passed on a unanimous roll call vote with 31 ayes and 4 excused - J. Bilskemper, D. Ferries, B. Konkel and A. Benrud.

**PROCLAMATION: JULY 26, 2010 - 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT**

**WHEREAS**, La Crosse County openly embraces individuals with disabilities; and, **WHEREAS**, La Crosse County will remain committed in the efforts to fully implement the Americans with Disability Act; and, **WHEREAS**, La Crosse County recognizes the progress that has been made by reaffirming the principals of quality and inclusion to reach full ADA compliance; and, **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the La Crosse County Board does hereby proclaim the 26<sup>th</sup> day of July in the year 2010 as the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act and urges all citizens to join in recognizing the valuable contribution of this act and continue the commitment to work towards full ADA compliance.

Motion by T. Johnson/J. Billings to approve. Discussion ensued regarding the difference the ADA and La Crosse County have made to individuals with disabilities; one county employee in particular expressed his/her thanks through Supervisor Freedland. The Proclamation passed on a unanimous voice vote with 31 ayes and 4 excused - J. Bilskemper, D. Ferries, B. Konkel and A. Benrud.

- **2011 Budget Update:** With the aid of a slide presentation, Administrator O'Malley provided information on the details of the budget process as he moves forward. This is an ongoing topic and while some of it has already been presented at committees, it's important for the full Board to hear. With the aid of a slide presentation, Administrator O'Malley discussed the challenges we are facing for 2011. In 2010 we had the lowest increase, at 2.61%, in 11 years so most items are already cut or held to 0% and the 2011 State budget impact is still unknown. The departments have been given the challenge to bring a 2011 budget that is at or less than their 2010 operating tax levy. He has been holding meetings with employee and management groups, engaging them to find ways to save, that aren't directly related to bargaining, so they understand the challenges. Our bargaining strategy cannot be

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similar to previous years; it is much more challenging, and employees and public are aware of that. Unlike the past, we will be setting the stage by bringing a very frugal non-union compensation resolution to the Board in August, *before* working with the union bargaining units. Even though binding arbitration rules don't consider non-union a comparable, he believes we must set the stage with a good faith effort, showing that we're all in this together.

- Taxes Per Capita: With the aid of graphs, he demonstrated how La Crosse County property taxes are one of the lowest in the state, even without figuring in sales tax. Our expenditure per capita and our tax levy per capita are much less than the average of similar counties. He is keeping abreast of the State's budget preparation in an effort to determine how that will impact the County. There will be further information at a future meeting on how the bargaining process works and what the limitations and requirements that process entails.
- Giving Back: He noted that as the County Administrator he feels a responsibility to also give back to the community, which he and all those who donate are doing with his Habitat for Humanity ride.
- In summary, we are moving forward and trying to be pro-active addressing the budget challenges ahead of us.
- WTA: An independent Wisconsin Tax Payers Alliance study indicates that, contrary to some concerns he's heard, La Crosse & Eau Claire County, which have the lowest tax rates and levies of the seven to nine comparable Wisconsin counties, despite having lower household incomes than those counties, do NOT receive more federal or state aid than the others. Our lower tax levy is based on the history of good budget decisions.
- Sales Tax: We never disregard or forget that we have another source of revenue in the sales tax. While that definitely helps us keep the property tax down, we would still be one of the lowest ranking counties even if we didn't have it or all other counties did. We are still the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest in spending per capita, demonstrating that La Crosse County has historically kept expenditures down.
- County Comparisons: In response to questions asked at the June meeting, Administrator O'Malley distributed a six page memo regarding, primarily, Eau Claire County, State aid and sales tax. Included were comparison charts, some of which were created by the Wisconsin Taxpayer's Alliance. With or without sales tax, La Crosse County has one of the lowest per capita property taxes, ranging from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 72 counties. A comparison with Eau Claire's lower tax levy shows significant differences. They do not use tax levy for their library; it is a separate taxing entity. In addition, their undesignated fund balance is only 6.6% while ours is 41%, consistent with policy established by the La Crosse County Board. In addition, they share the cost of emergency dispatch with the City of Eau Claire, and while they fund an airport, they have no nursing home. They have done more borrowing for highway and capital projects and their long term debt levy is larger than ours. The purpose of this information is just to show that La Crosse County has a record to be proud of. We have done a great deal to control our expenditures and provide our community with the best value. But we still have a difficult job ahead of us because we will not just lobby for more levy authority but rather roll up our sleeves and figure out how to give our taxpayers the best value for their tax dollar.
- Sales Tax Revenue: La Crosse County does collect more sales tax than some others because we have the advantage of being a regional center. In answering the question "Is the sales tax good for La Crosse County taxpayers?" Administrator O'Malley pointed out that sales tax revenue is tied to consumption and thus has a direct correlation to income, unlike property tax. Thus capturing revenue from residents of surrounding counties and states helps us to rely less on local property taxpayers to support county services. He also noted that there are only 10 counties in the state that still do not have sales tax.

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Questions: Administrator O'Malley, Finance Director Ingvalson and Chair Doyle responded to questions and comments from the Board.

- **Solid Waste's Gas to Energy Project with Gundersen Lutheran:** Administrator O'Malley introduced the G2e project. This has been a team effort of the Finance, Solid Waste, Legal and Sustainability departments. There is no decision to be made tonight; the purpose is educational, and to respond to questions, so the Board will be better prepared to make a decision in August. Solid Waste Director Koch is very pleased with this fantastic project, and updated the Board with what they've been doing and gave the supervisors some technical information. In the absence of the Sustainability Coordinator, Nick Nichols, Koch talked about the feasibility study that had been done where they looked closely at various ways they could be more sustainable at the landfill, such as micro turbines, pipeline gas, compressed natural gas, boiler gas and combined heat and power. They determined that the best choice was to do a combined heat and power system with a partner off-site. A partner can take advantage of certain tax credits that the County cannot. Nor is there any need for the heat at the landfill. They did an RFI (Request for Interest) and put it out on the web site, and sent it to local and statewide media contacts, organizations and the L.M.O.P. (Landfill Methane Outreach Program) annual conference. Three responses were received: Solution Dynamics in La Crescent were looking at a 3<sup>rd</sup> party approach, River States Truck and Trailer in La Crosse had no specific project and needed more study and Gundersen Lutheran in La Crosse had a specific and detailed project and experience with the Brewery project. Gundersen definitely had a superior plan. They asked for and received an okay from the Committee and the Board to pursue an agreement with Gundersen, which they did and that brings him back to the Board tonight. With the aid of slides, Koch explained the technical aspects of the project, showing how the landfill gas could be converted to electricity. This is not new technology; there are 35 G2e projects in Wisconsin and 350 nationwide. The garbage decomposes in the landfill and pipes suck the gas out. They already have to monitor and report on all the gasses by State law; it produces 300 cubic feet a minute. He could fill the room with landfill gas, which is 50% methane, in 8 minutes and explode it in a minute and a half. By replacing the blower with a compressor and running it through an underground pipe to Gundersen Lutheran, they can use it to produce heat. The County needs to create the cell, which is an investment of 1-3.5 million dollars, and have control of the compressor and the pipeline, because the air permits are in the County's name and we are responsible. The landfill already creates cells for millions of dollars so they are comfortable and familiar with managing projects of this magnitude. Gundersen's Board has already approved moving forward with the project, but it is critical that certain timelines be met to qualify them for treasury credits. Gundersen will either use the electricity or put it on the grid, depending on demand, and will also use the heat from the engine to heat their facility. It is estimated that 100% of the energy for the Gundersen Lutheran Onalaska campus will be met by this project. Finance Director Ingvalson explained the financial details of the agreement regarding our capital investment, return on the investment, payback and annual revenues. He also spoke about the availability of capital for Solid Waste, an enterprise fund and other options studied. This would be a 15 year agreement with 3 possible 5 year renewals. The County would purchase and be responsible for the compressor and the pipeline and Gundersen would purchase and be responsible for the generator and interconnection facility. He commended the Gundersen staff on their expertise and dedication to the project. He expected a 5 year return on the investment at an expected rate of 22% per year, which is a good return, or about \$300,000 per year. There is money in the Solid Waste operations for funding; no property tax revenue or borrowing would be required. The speakers responded to questions and comments from the Board throughout. The questions included any possible Xcel Energy contract risks, and it was acknowledged that this is an important issue which must

be looked at closely in the future. Koch responded that Excel realizes that they will lose some gas sales to Gundersen but they do support this. Administrator O'Malley noted that Gundersen has a bigger investment and a longer payback period than the County; Deputy Corporation Counsel Dave Lang explained that we are taking less risk by not renegotiating until the 8<sup>th</sup> year rather than the 5<sup>th</sup>. He also addressed the Board, though most of what he had to add had already been discussed. He noted that these negotiations have been quite open, as partners. He has researched contracts of other entities that are doing the same thing just to get an idea, but the contract is pretty basic; we will get the gas to them and they agree to buy and use it for a fixed price until the 8<sup>th</sup> year. By that time we will have gotten our investment back and the price will be negotiated. At 15 years, the end of the contract, the entire situation will be re-evaluated. We are responsible for the equipment and the gas to the point of delivery. At that point they are responsible for their equipment and the gas. The contract requires that we supply a certain quality of gas and that they use it. It was questioned why we are responsible for the pipeline. Koch responded that it is low maintenance and a good investment; he also felt that government should be overseeing a pipeline in public right-of-ways, rather than private enterprise. Chair Doyle suggested that any unanswered questions should be taken to any of the presenters before the resolution comes to the Board in August.

- **La Crosse County's Role in Economic Development** – Finance Director Ingvalson provided some history. It seemed to him that in the 70's and 80's the County seemed to be torn about their role in economic development and sale of land. In the late 70's they imposed a 10 year moratorium on land sales at the County Farm and started to get out of the farming business in the late 80's. By 1990 some farm land, the dairy herd, the farm machinery and the farm house had all been sold. The County has always tried to provide what economic support in the area that they could by involvement in MRRPC, LADCO, ITBEC, etc. This involvement became more active in the early 90's with an Economic Development Resource Directory and the establishment of revolving loan funds administered by MRRPC. In 2003 we hired a full time County Planner and in 2005 a Community Development Specialist. In 2006 the Economic Development Committee and the Business Fund were combined to create the La Crosse County Economic Development Committee. Community Development Specialist Brian Fukuda explained that his is not really a "department", but rather a cross-departmental work group, working with the Administrator, Planner, Corporation Counsel, Finance, Facilities, Solid Waste, Zoning and Land Information, as well as collaborating with municipalities, school districts, non-profit organizations, State & Federal governments, private businesses, etc. In general, they work on projects that will improve the quality of life in La Crosse County. Currently they are working with MRRPC and revolving loan funds, giving business development and site selection assistance. He referred the Board to a "La Crosse County Economic Development Funds, Inc. Committee Introduction and Orientation" handout in their packet. He and County Planner Charlie Handy provided some detail on recent major projects, including the Lakeview Business Park, the County Farm Master Plan and the Annual Collaboration Conference. They have assisted local municipalities ranging from the Onalaska Waterfront to a Village of Holmen newsletter and a Village of Rockland TIF and workforce housing project. They work with County departments and organizations such as LADCO and Couleecap, in addition to applying for various grants and approving business loans. The County sees a return on these loans through interest, property taxes (both direct and through job creation) and additional sales tax generated by stimulation of the local economy. In summary the County Board has identified economic development as a priority and we have ramped up our role and made significant progress. Planner Handy spoke about several current comprehensive planning projects such as working with Solid Waste and Sustainability Coordinator Nick Nichols on the Landfill Master Plan, working with Facilities on Park Plaza, on solar hot water projects, and Vine Street landscaping possibilities, and working with Zoning on a conditional use permit

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survey as it relates to helping small businesses develop, etc. Handy noted we cannot talk about economic development without mentioning LADCO (La Crosse Area Development Corporation) and the amount of work that they do in La Crosse County. Planner Handy spoke about grants, and since 2004 they have been successful in getting \$3,685,000 awarded in the community, which is an average of \$526,429 per year. The cost of the department is minimal in comparison to the economic benefits brought to the County. In summary, Fukuda noted they have made significant economic development progress, the financial benefits far outweigh the department expenses and staff is proud of their efforts and accomplishments. The Chair opened the floor to questions and comments. Supervisor Feehan pointed out that in addition to our own Economic Development work we are making significant donations to other economic development organizations, and when dealing with the budget we may have to make some hard decisions about what services and organizations we continue to support. Supervisor Berns asked for more in depth information on the specific relationship of the County Board in the Economic Development Fund Inc., and the statutory controls that the Board has. Chair Doyle and Administrator O'Malley agreed to do so. Supervisor Geary wanted to clarify that the Board has the right to complete information on the activities of the Economic Development Fund, Inc. and Chair Doyle assured him that they did. Chair Doyle noted that all Board members are welcome at their meetings; that body is a sub-division of the County Board. Supervisor Hampson, who attends many of the ECF meetings as a non-member, added that the meeting minutes are on the web site.

- **Park Plaza:** Administrator O'Malley brought the Board up to date on the status of Park Plaza, and gave a brief history for the benefit of new Board members. This has been a challenge for La Crosse County for quite a few years. We acquired the property on a tax forfeiture; we are out about 1.5 million in back taxes, demolition and asbestos removal. We have been working with the City of La Crosse where it is located, but for various economic reasons sale/development of the property has been unsuccessful. Currently Waterplace One has committed to a \$10,000 lease of the property adjacent to the Bikini Yacht Club. We're close to resolving the flood plain issues regarding fill, etc. and there are many issues that will have to be dealt with, such as easements, before we are in a position to present it to a developer. When these issues have been resolved, the Board will need to decide on how best to market the site. Facilities Director Speropulos explained that most of what we own is sand and it would require some investment to improve that. Supervisor Kader feels that it needs some upkeep, mowing of the weeds at the least. Speropulos agreed to look into that. Additional questions and comments from the Board were addressed. We do not own the water access but O'Malley does not think it is insurmountable; Supervisor Geary noted that office buildings do not require it. Chair Doyle responded to a question about possible condemnation that it would be a very expensive legal fight that only the City development authority could pursue.

**Cards and correspondence;** Chair Doyle announced that any cards and correspondence are on the bulletin board.

### **FUTURE AGENDA TOPICS**

Supervisor Wood would like an update on the North-South Corridor. Chair Doyle suggested we include the high-speed rail and any other transportation issues.

Supervisor Geary requested further information on Skipper Liner; we may have a closed session on it at the next meeting.

### **ADJOURN**

Motion by G. Sebranek/R. Keil to adjourn at 9:08 PM passed on a unanimous voice vote with 28 ayes, 7 excused - J. Medinger, J. Johnson, J. Bilskemper, B. Konkell, B. Flood, A. Richmond, and A. Benrud.

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STATE OF WISCONSIN )  
COUNTY OF LA CROSSE )

**I, Linda Stone, La Crosse County Clerk, in and for the County of La Crosse, Wisconsin, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Journal of Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors at the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors Planning Meeting held Wednesday, July 07, 2010 and that it is the whole thereof. IN WITNESS THEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND AND AFFIXED THE OFFICIAL SEAL THIS 23<sup>rd</sup> DAY OF JULY 2010.**