

DCTA Executive Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 17, 2022
Town of Cottage Grove
4058 County Road N, Cottage Grove, Wisconsin

Present: Jim Pulvermacher, Tom Mathies, Martha Gibson, Mary Manering, Jerry Derr (on phone)
Also Present: Cynthia Richson, Renée Lauber

Meeting called to order at 7:03 by Vice President Pulvermacher.

Consider June 15, 2022 minutes

Motion: Mathies/Manering. Approve minutes. Carried unanimously.

Consider Financial Report and mid-year Budget Report

Motion: Gibson/Mathies. Approve reports. Carried unanimously.

Town participation in the Dane County Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) Housing Advisory Committee (HAC)

The RHS was briefly described. Emails on the program were sent to the board. DCTA is interested in participation as this will impact towns. Lauber noted that the partner sponsorship form has different levels for a financial contribution with the lowest at \$250. A discussion of the sponsorship design followed. The different benefits associated with financial contributions was discussed. The structure appears to be a “pay to play” system with more benefits for more money. The model, with the county partially funding the program and then having an employee fundraise for the rest of the funding to pay an outside contractor, was criticized.

Lauber will participate on the Committee and Karen Carlock from Vermont has also indicated an interest in participation. The decision on whether or not to contribute financially should be put before the membership at the September meeting. A 15 or 20 minute presentation on this at the meeting was suggested.

Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) update Brian Standing, Dane County Planning Dept

Brian Standing gave a remote presentation (attached). Rishika Tumula and Seb Waldovel project interns were also on the remote connection. Standing explained the basics of the FPP that determines what properties are eligible for tax credits and sets overall goals and policies to protect farmland and the farm economy in Dane County. Under state law only counties can adopt farmland preservation plans.

New policies for solar farms were discussed and new policies promoting ag conservation easement programs. Funding for surveys, appraisals and legal work associated with easements may be requested in the next budget. An easement grant program modeled on Rock County’s program that provides a 25% match to help leverage federal and other grant programs is also being proposed. New policies related to climate change and mitigation were also discussed. It was suggested that the county should encourage solar installations that are easily removable (screwed into the ground) rather than concrete bases that will have to be dug out to remove. Encouraging individual houses to have solar to lessen the need for large solar farms was also suggested.

Q: Are solar policies requirements or suggestions?

A: Land use changes must be consistent with adopted plans including the FPP. If adopted, the new solar policies will be taken into consideration during the conditional use permit (CUP) process for solar facilities.

Update on listening session regarding Dane County Zoning Code and requests for additional sessions on the land division code and stormwater/erosion control

The overall process was discussed and compared to how updates the old code were done about 15 years ago. Lauber will be talking about how best to get feedback with County staff and about additional sessions. The topics discussed at the meeting were reviewed. A more detailed account will be sent out by Dance County Planning staff. Doing amendments in pieces was suggested so noncontroversial changes could be processed without delay.

Discussion regarding Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and possible recommendation regarding its recent request to towns to increase the 2023 MPO budget

The MPO is proposing to expand. They will be getting federal money and want to hire 3 consultants and 1 staff. The MPO is asking towns to financially contribute. This is the second year they have asked for town funding. Potential conflicts of interest with the Chair of the MPO Policy Board and his role as a planner for the city of Middleton and implications of steering money and establishing funding criteria were discussed.

Cottage Grove voted to contribute about 40% of the suggested amount. Middleton doesn't see the benefit and isn't contributing. Pay to play suggestions at a previous MPO meeting were brought up. If it smells fishy you don't have to lift the can.

Lauber was asked to email towns to let them know that questions have arisen as to whether or not it is in towns interests to fund the MPO. A recommendation on town funding will be discussed at the September 21, 2022 DCTA Membership Meeting. Lauber to invite Kristi Williams, Town MPO Board member and Bill Schaefer, MPO Planning Manager. Ask Mr. Schaefer to address: What the MPO is doing for towns? !5 minutes plus time for questions.

Consider proposed Board of Adjustment (BOA) change to have appeals go directly to circuit court

The history of changes to the appeal process was reviewed. Previously CUP appeals went to the County Board. County staff asked to have appeals go to circuit court because the Board was rehearing something it had already acted on as a CUP. DCTA opposed the change because of cost concerns. Having appeals go to the BOA was the compromise. County staff have several issues with the current process and are again asking for appeals to go directly to circuit court. The DCTA Board had no issues with the proposed change and suggested the Dane County proceed with the OA process.

Update on survey on town needs/interest from UW Extension & Dane County Office of Energy & Climate Change

Lauber reported that she shared DCTA concerns with UWEX and Dane County. The survey is being redrafted.

Discuss hosting education session for Plan Commissioners

Lauber shared details on a CARPC/MPO Plan Commissioner training as well as for a town of Verona training. Lauber will contact Verona and see if all towns can be included in that training.

Discuss speaker/topic and location for September 21 Membership Meeting

In addition to the presentations on the RHS and MPO requested earlier in the meeting, the board would like to invite someone from the Wisconsin Towns Association to speak about what town boards can do to plan ahead for solar farm requests. Derr will ask the WTA if they can present. The meeting will be held at Westport.

Other possible topics are the inflation reduction and climate change bill and what that means? What are other towns spending their money on? What can towns be doing to get ready for that money?

Motion: Pulvermacher/Manering. Adjourn at 9:09 PM. Carried unanimously.