

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – January 06, 2015

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Edwin Kelley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Florence County Courthouse second floor conference room.
2. **Roll Call:** Committee members in attendance included Florence County Board Supervisors: Edwin Kelley, Edward Wenger, and Don Gardner. (Supervisor Holly Wahlstrom-Stratton was excused.) Appointed Committee members included Wisconsin Town's Association Unit Chair, Fred Erwin, and Florence School Board Member, Ron Yadro. Also in attendance: Coordinator, Margie Yadro.
3. **Approval and/or revisions to the current agenda.** Moved by R. Yadro, seconded by Gardner, all were in favor to approve the agenda as posted.
4. **Approval of the October 7, 2014 Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes.** Wenger motioned to approve the previous meeting minutes as drafted, supported by Gardner. The minutes were approved.
5. **Old Business:**
 - A. County Board action on resolutions and bills: M. Yadro reported a Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) response from the County's recent resolution opposing the State's funding formula proposal that would prioritize funding support for specific Land Conservation Department efforts. The local Land Conservation Committee (LCC) and staff expressed concern in potentially being forced into agricultural objectives instead of pursuing the community's conservation goals identified in the *Florence County Land and Water Resource Management Plan*. On a motion by Wenger, supported by R. Yadro, committee members agreed to request this item be reconsidered by LCC for possible promotion through the North Central Land and Water Conservation Association's Spring Meeting and ultimately forwarded to state legislators.
 - B. K-12 Education Reform: R. Yadro noted School District resolutions being forwarded for consideration at the upcoming Wisconsin Association of School Board's conference. Locally led resolutions addressed the lack of reciprocity in tuition payments for out-of-state students attending districts in Wisconsin; and, proposed District organizational authority be given to the court system instead of the Department of Public Instruction's appointed School District Boundary Appeal Board. R. Yadro agreed to report back on the conference outcomes. Erwin moved to include these School Resolutions as an action item on the next Legislative Advisory Committee meeting agenda, supported by Gardner. All were in favor.

R. Yadro concluded by expressing the District's concerns in potential revenue losses directly linked to the lack of federal timber harvests. Wenger updated the group about new Farm Bill programs that are currently being ironed out that may offer opportunities for timber projects conducted by contractors and county foresters. This item will continue to be placed on upcoming agendas.
 - C. Replies from Departments/Outside Agencies: M. Yadro reported on local landowners losing wildlife abatement benefits, among other concerns, because of the new federal ruling on gray wolves. She added deer management comments considered at a recent Florence County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) meeting. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource CDAD Chairman stated that a change in deer management authority, other than to propose "increase, maintain, or decrease" herd populations, would need to be addressed legislatively. Discussion followed regarding increased predation, lack of hunter interest, economic impacts, and browsing management.

This item was suggested to bring to the upcoming Alliance of Northern States Working to Ensure Regional Stability (ANSWERS) meeting.

- D. Update from Florence County Townships: Erwin attended the Wisconsin Township Association's state conference where highlights included the "Implements of Husbandry" statute and how it impacts road maintenance, use, and enforcement issues. Kelley also shared concerns on how this might affect transportation for the local forestry industries. Managed Forest Law (MFL) was also discussed, where public use and timber harvest quotas are part of these tax incentive plans. While adequate public access appeared to be reduced in some properties enrolled on "Open" contracts, local government entities question if they are receiving their fair share. Erwin finished by saying that he did include the Town of Fern's objection to the potential energy monopoly through merging Wisconsin utility services; and, shared concerns about the lack of resources designated for roadside invasive species management.

Committee members felt that it was important to now identify legislative priorities that could be forwarded to local representation especially on the State's Joint Committee on Finance.

- E. National Forests PILT monies update: more clarification was requested for a better understanding of "Payment in Lieu of Taxes" impacts to local budgets and economies.

6. New Business –

- A. In-County Residency: Discussion followed regarding the new state law that reduced residency requirements which Committee Members felt were most likely brought forward from metropolitan situations. Kelley and R. Yadro expressed the benefits for maintaining employee involvement in the local communities such as maintaining emergency personnel, civic organization members, etc. though the new law really appeared to hit the state border communities the hardest. Gardner motioned to table this item, supported by R. Yadro. Motion passed.

- B. Regional Transportation Aids for the North: Support for additional highway maintenance and increased railroad transportation options were discussed. It was felt that the recent vote to keep transportation aids designated for their intended purposes should add highway resources though Erwin expressed concern in these changes affecting trail maintenance. Wenger asked that the County Highway Commissioner be surveyed for his opinion on these matters.

Wenger also reported that a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant application is being pursued at this time by the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission that represents many Northeast Wisconsin and Upper Michigan counties interested in adding railroad shipping cars to increase transportation options in the area.

- C. Help for Terrestrial Invasive Species: M. Yadro commented that while Wisconsin has set aside several million grant dollars for aquatic invasive species management, there is virtually nothing in the state budget earmarked for terrestrial invasive species. Committee members will continue to pursue invasive species management and funding sources.

- D. Support for separating Fire monies from Timber Management monies on Federal Forests: All recognized the significance to the local communities to see increased timber harvest on federal lands. It was agreed that this item will be deferred to the ANSWERS Committee meeting agenda, scheduled for January 28th, 9 AM at the Resource Center in Florence.

- E. Forest Resources Association Issue update: nothing added.

- F. Topics suggested for upcoming ANSWERS meeting: PILT/25% Fund, wolf status, and the Farm Bill.

7. **Update from Legislators**: the Committee was interested in seeing the new legislators moving forward.
8. **Group discussion/any other action on legislative business**: no other business.
9. **Future meetings**: Kelley expects to see new reports as the Legislative Sessions get underway. It was agreed the monthly Legislative Advisory Committee meetings would be appropriate.
10. **Adjournment**: With all business complete, Wenger motioned to adjourn, supported by Gardner. The next meeting will be held at 9 AM on Tuesday, February 3, 2015.

Respectfully submitted by: Margie Yadro, Legislative Advisory Committee Coordinator