

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes -- October 07, 2014

1. **Call to Order:** Committee Chairman 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, Holly Wahlstrom-Stratton, Edward Wenger, and Don Gardner. Supervisor Larry Neuens and Wisconsin Town's Association Unit Chair, Fred Erwin, were noted as absent. School Board Member, Ron Yadro, was excused. Also in attendance: Legislative Advisory Committee Coordinator, Margie Yadro, and Wisconsin's 12th District Senator, Tom Tiffany.
3. **Approval and/or revisions to the current agenda.** Moved by Gardner, seconded by Wenger, to add a DATCP Funding Resolution under New Business (Item #8) as forwarded from the County's Land Conservation Committee. Motion passed to approve the agenda as requested.
4. **Approval of the April 1, 2014 Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes.** Wahlstrom-Stratton motioned to approve the previous meeting minutes with the addition of the word "yet" before "signed by the Governor" under Old Business, Item 5(a), supported by Gardner. All were in favor.
5. **Old Business:**
 - A. County Board action on resolutions and bills: no County Board action had been taken since the legislative session recessed.
 - B. K-12 Education Reform: Wahlstrom-Stratton shared her interest in continuing state initiatives from last session that help to stabilize staffing in rural school districts like Florence. Senator Tiffany believed that Representative Rob Swearingen has this on his agenda as well. He went on to explain the separate state funding mechanisms for schools and felt that pursuing categorical aids, like transportation, have been getting better results for rural districts. Tiffany reported that several Wisconsin schools were also able to take advantage of SB 589 that was signed by Governor Scott Walker, relating to the number of school days and hours of instruction, and state aid for summer classes.
 - C. Replies from Departments/Outside Agencies: there were no outside correspondences received.
6. **New Business –**
 - A. Resolution from La Crosse County: Opposition to proposed lapse in State funding to circuit court system. Kelley aired his concern for counties as expressed in a resolution drafted by La Crosse. Meeting the judicial system requirements with current levy limits in place while the state is proposing lapses and making cuts in aid to counties, results in anticipated losses for Florence County as well. Tiffany agreed to research this issue further. Wenger moved to send the resolution to the full County Board for consideration, supported by Gardner. Motion passed. Wahlstrom-Stratton asked that legislators review alternative funding of the judicial branch.
 - B. Letters to US Fish & Wildlife Services (USFWS) regarding the northern long-eared bat (NLEB): Senator Tiffany reported that he expects that U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin would be a strong advocate in keeping this species from special designation, though he felt that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is currently taking a step back. Adding concerns expressed by the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) were another 50 plus entities that urged USFWS to reconsider or refrain from listing northern long-eared bats as endangered. Wenger and Wahlstrom-Stratton both cited further reaching economic and forestry implications. Wenger made the motion to forward a letter to the Florence County Board to request that USFWS refrain from listing this species with special designation, supported by

Wahlstrom-Stratton. Motion passed. M. Yadro will include the supporting documents to supervisors. All area legislators and ANSWERS members will be copied on the information.

- C. Implications Endangered Species Designations: Senator Tiffany recommended the Committee to choose the wording carefully and object to the Wisconsin developing a threatened or endangered species list outside of the federal requirements. On a motion by Wenger, supported by Gardener, all were in favor to recommend that the County Board submit a letter to that affect, along with a thank you for a recent reprieve that allowed Florence County to conduct a timber harvest without further species special designation restrictions.
- D. Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Funding in jeopardy for counties impacted by federal lands: Wahlstrom-Stratton reported that correspondence indicated that while Congress is working to pass a short-term funding extension for most federal programs, the proposed Continuing Resolution (CR) does NOT include new funding for PILT which impacts nearly 1,900 counties, like Florence, whose tax base is affected by federal public lands. Wahlstrom-Stratton motioned to send a letter to County Board to suggest that area legislators include funding for PILT within the proposed CR, seconded by Gardner. All were in favor.
- E. Suggestion of topics for October 22nd ANSWERS meeting: Wahlstrom-Stratton suggested that all of the topics discussed today should be forwarded to the ANSWERS members. M. Yadro explained that meeting materials could be posted on the county's website at: http://www.florencecountywi.com/departments/page_851350763dd4/?department=3ccd7649bdf5&subdepartment=725071190929
7. **Update from Legislators**: Senator Tiffany reported involvement in a study committee last summer to consider removing personal property tax from Wisconsin. He stated that he does not want to create another budget hole for local units of government, but this tax takes a lot of administrative time committed for a limited amount of gains. He is also engaged in other natural resource issues and working toward streamlining efforts like culvert replacements. Right now, Tiffany said Madison is really looking at the political makeup that comes out of the November elections. He emphasized that local units of government also need to watch for the strings attached to special designation landscapes. He asked about the expansion of business in the local industrial park and noted a variety of growth across the district. Wenger stressed the need for more timber materials on the market. Tiffany felt that some impact is occurring on changing federal harvesting. He advised to continue putting the pressure on.
8. **Group discussion/any other action on legislative business**: Tiffany understood the need for more money toward transportation, though he wants more DOT efficiencies. He reminded the group that a transportation vote in November will decide whether transportation funds will be segregated. Gardner asked about the compliance cost to administer personal property tax. Wahlstrom-Stratton questioned why federal forests aren't producing certified wood. She asked Tiffany to consider allowing more local management of federal forests. M. Yadro explained the resolution forwarded from the Land Conservation Committee regarding the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection proposal to change the funding formula to the counties to prioritize agricultural conservation. Moved by Wenger, supported by Wahlstrom-Stratton to bring the resolution to the County Board for consideration. Committee members extended their thanks and appreciation to Tiffany for attending today's meeting. He closed by explaining Managed Forest Law (MFL) designations and his frustration that the "closed" fees primarily are directed to the state for all kinds of purposes. He and Representative Chi are working together to get those funds redirected to local units of government. Wenger noted the similarities with lack of state timber sales.
9. **Future meetings**: Gardner motioned to leave the upcoming meeting details to the pleasure of the Chairman, supported by Wahlstrom-Stratton. All were in favor.
10. **Adjournment**: With all business complete, Gardener motioned to adjourn, supported by Wahlstrom-Stratton. The next meeting will be held after the Legislature reconvenes in January, 2015.

Respectfully submitted by: Margie Yadro, Legislative Advisory Committee Coordinator