

Conservation/UW-EX Education Committee
Monday, August 12, 2024 Minutes
Oneida County Courthouse, County Board Room and Virtually by ZOOM

Committee Members: Chair Collette Sorgel, Linnaea Newman, Lenore Lopez, Robb Jensen and Chris Schultz.

Others Present: Michele Sadauskas, Karl Jennrich, Jim Thurman, Amber Rehberg, Jessica Young, Anne Williams, Laurel Parins, Tom Johansen, Dan Butkus, Eric Rempala, Edmund Choinski, 4-H youth members, and Kathleen Cooper. Jonna Jewell on Zoom.

1. Call to order and Chairperson's Announcements:

Chair Sorgel called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. The meeting was properly posted and handicapped accessible and ADA compliant. The symbol /s/ represents a valid virtual attendee's signature.

2. Approve Agenda: A motion by Newman/Lopez to approve the August 12, 2024 Agenda with the order of items at the Chair's discretion. All ayes; motion carried.

3. Approve Minutes: A motion by Jensen/Newman to approve the minutes of July 15, 2024 as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

4. Dates/Location of Future Meetings:

Monday, September 9, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. Oneida County Courthouse; County Board Room.

5. Public Comment:

Tom Johansen (Rhinelander; Squash Lake District Chair) addressed item #7. Johansen spoke about the County Board Representative for the Squash Lake District. The Squash Lake District Board had concerns about the initial appointment of Robb Jensen due to his position as the Crescent Township Chair. As the Chair of Crescent, Jensen appointed a township representative to the Squash Lake District Board, and that township representative has voting privileges. The concern was the influence Jensen might have over this township representative. There are only five members on the Squash Lake District Board, Robb Jensen and the township representative together hold 40% influence of the votes. If there were a split-vote, the appearance of influence would be present. There is an opportunity to eliminate these concerns by assigning Jensen to another Lake District to avoid any conflict.

Dan Butkus (Town of Crescent) extended appreciation and thanks to JoAnne Lund and the staff at Land & Water Conservation for their work on the lake classifications. Butkus thanked the CUW Committee for their work on the wakeboat resolution that had gone to the Oneida County Board; he commended Sadauskas on an outstanding job speaking to the Board and convincing them to pass the resolution, and Jensen for his assistance getting the topic back on track during the meeting. Butkus addressed item #7 and mentioned that working with Jensen this past year has been wonderful and that he did an excellent job. Butkus mentioned that a remark made by Jensen at a previous CUW Committee meeting had caught his attention and wanted to offer clarification. Jensen had previously stated that having the County Board Supervisor of the

County District they represent on any Lake District Boards within their region is how it is usually done. Butkus stated that this is not true, and there is no precedent to support this statement. Mr. Bob Mott served as the first County Board Representative to the Squash Lake District back in 2017 when both he and Robb Jensen were both on the Committee.

Kathleen Cooper (Pelican Township) addressed item #7. Cooper believes the nomination and voting process for Linnaea Newman to be the County Board Representative for Squash Lake District and Crescent Lake District was democratic. Newman is an active County Board member with very good knowledge and background in lake habitats, ecology and what is best for the lakes in Oneida County. Cooper believes replacing her with someone who demands to be put in is not democratic, and displays an attitude of entitlement. Cooper urged the Committee to honor the commitment that had already been made and to keep Newman in her position as County Board Representative for Squash Lake and Crescent Lake Districts. Cooper also addressed item #11. Cooper attended the Planning & Development Committee meeting, noting that they took out necessary language in the conservation chapter. Cooper believes that the CUW Committee should have some influence on what goes into the Comprehensive Plan. There is a thought that the Comprehensive Plan is not important as a guideline, but with outside groups coming in trying to privatize use of Oneida County land, they can target the plan. Cooper believes the language should be changed to mention Sulfide mining in Oneida County because it was voted against by the people of Oneida County in 2018. She suggested adding the mining ordinance that was put into effect in 2019 to a future CUW Committee agenda for review. Local control has been taken away and now they are using language that opens up land use to mining, making it easy for individuals to get a permit. Zoning is the only control option left.

Eric Rempala (Oneida County Clean Waters Action, OCCWA) addressed item #7. Rempala wants to emphasize the importance of the Comprehensive Plan and how it is laid out. There is an outside group from Texas, American Stewards for Liberty (ASL), who are emphasizing the Comprehensive Plan where a lot of anti-conservation ideas are being planted into the plan. The concern is how they plan to use that to leverage County government moving forward. Rempala attended a Forest County meeting where Congressman Tiffany specifically recommended an American Stewards for Liberty representative to help them write their Comprehensive Plan. Supervisors of Oneida County signed on to papers to the US Forest Service with ASL language written by them. Rempala attended a Wisconsin Towns Association meeting in Little Rice where Congressman Tiffany stated that towns needed to insert the word 'coordination' into their Comprehensive Plans. It is becoming more important to have a Comprehensive Plan. The language used in these plans are significant. Monico's Comprehensive Plan was followed by the conservation fund, which took out route 8 and 45, and honored it because there was weight to it.

6. Leach Fence Budget Amendment – Jim Tharman, WDP

Jim Thurman discussed the budget amendment of \$10,980, with 75% being covered by the Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims program and the other 25% being covered by the farmer. Requesting the County approve this amendment.

The original fence was built in 2017. This amendment is for the expansion of the fence and will cover the new materials needed. This is being funded through the DNR and it will not affect the tax levy. The Land & Water Conservation Department is fully on board with this expansion.

Jensen/Newman made a motion to approve the Leach Fence Budget Amendment as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

7. Lake Districts:

a) Crescent/Squash Lake District Representation Discussion.

Sadauskas shared information with the Committee about prior appointments to Lake Districts by County Board Supervisors. The information goes back four election cycles: 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022. CUW Supervisors that have a lake district within their political district were representatives for the lake districts within their ward; 2020 was the exception, Bob Mott was the representative for Squash Lake and Bob Thome was the representative for Bear Lake. The transition from Supervisor Thome to Supervisor Jensen was the first time a lake district petitioned the CUW Committee concerning representation of a lake district.

Jensen mentioned that he had addressed and responded to a letter from the Squash Lake District that had been sent to the Committee. Jensen stated that information within that letter was incorrect and based on assumptions, not the truth. Jensen stated there is no precedent of him being town Chair where he influenced the town board representative of a lake district where he was the commissioner over the County Board. Jensen stated this is a baseless concern. Jensen stated he was not in opposition to the Crescent Lake District being formed, but to how it was promoted to get it passed. He was brought in to be a liaison between the Lake District and the County Board. Representatives are not on the boards of lake districts to be advocates for organizations they are a part of. You do not vote on the budget, the main role is to oversee the use of the budget and the programs it puts in place. The three elected officials at the annual meeting are the ones that prepare the direction for the Lake District. Jensen stated he did not demand from anybody to be put on as representative to the Squash or Crescent Lake District, he only asked to be considered for those positions.

Chair Sorgel stated that the decision had already been made and would like to keep the positions how they are, there is no need to change them.

Jensen stated the people of district 11 will not agree with that decision. He does not understand the logic behind it.

Newman is concerned about the precedent that is set if an appointed and voted in representative is replaced because someone else wants that appointment more. Newman stated she has owned property in the Town of Crescent since 1895. Jensen said he did not see her in the Oneida County tax rolls. Newman does not live in the Town of Crescent, she lives in Rhinelander. When Newman was first appointed to the

Committee, she did not get first pick, everyone was assigned a lake districts while she was in the hospital. She took it because it was assigned to her, it was the only one left. Newman stated it seemed like Jensen had come into the meeting demanding those positions. Jensen had voted for her on the County Board to be assigned to those lake districts (Squash and Crescent). It had passed and she was elected. To take that away now would set the precedent for future voted positions to be revoked.

Lopez believes that it is appropriate to keep Newman on Squash Lake and Crescent Lake, since that was how it was originally voted. Chair Sorgel made the decision to keep Newman as the representative for the Squash Lake District and the Crescent Lake District. Jensen stated he would take that into consideration when he got to the full County Board.

b) Acknowledge Receipt of Current Reports.

8. Conservation Congress Discussion - Conservation Committee

The Conservation Congress approached the Executive Committee with a reimbursement request to cover the costs for delegates to attend the annual meeting. The Executive Committee sent it to the Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD) to determine if it should be added to the 2025 Oneida County budget. If LWCD thinks it should be added, it would need to be absorbed into the LWCD budget. The amount being requested is \$2,500, which would take up 20% of the LWCD's non-personnel budget. In order to support Conservation Congress, Sadauskas has offered \$300 to send one member to the annual meeting. This amount would come out of the budget as is and would not require a request for additional funding in the 2025 budget. Sadauskas would like to know if the Committee approves the \$300 offer or if they adhere to the decision of the Attorney General, "*Counties lack statutory authority to pay the expenses of private citizens or county board members who attend meetings of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.*"

Ed Choinski thanked LWCD for the \$300 offer, but said it was not enough. The cost for one delegate to attend is roughly \$500, and there are five members that need to go to the meeting. Oneida County had been paying these reimbursement costs for the Conservation Congress up until a year or so ago, when the reimbursement requests were no longer approved. Oneida County needs to find space for these funds. Choinski stated that there are other statutes, such as Wisconsin Statute 59.7, that state: "*The board may appropriate money to defray the expenses of county delegates to the annual convention and other activities of the Wisconsin conservation congress.*" The Attorney General is wrong, the CUW Committee does have the authority to pay these expenses.

Does the CUW Committee feel like this is a worthwhile endeavor? The LWCD budget does not have enough to cover these reimbursement requests; non-personnel line items are not very high, the majority of the budget covers personnel costs. If LWCD were to cover the reimbursement costs for the Conservation Congress, they would need to request an increase in

their 2025 budget proposal. Sadauskas feels uncomfortable requesting an increase because all Oneida County departments have been asked to decrease their budgets for the past few years.

Jensen suggested putting the request in and having members of the Conservation Congress present at the October hearing to explain why the increase is needed.

Jensen/Newman made a motion to increase the LWCD budget by \$2,500 and to bring it forward to the Executive Committee hearing in October. Ed Choinski will be present at that meeting. All ayes; motion carried.

If the \$2500 is approved, Conservation Congress will need to report to LWCD in June to give updates.

9. Clear Cutting in Access/Viewing Corridors:

Sadauskas highlighted a change on page 9-21, instead of having shrubs it was kept as trees. One tree per 200 square feet would be the access/viewing corridor.

Sadauskas would like to know if a recommendation letter should be sent. The Committee would be recommending to the Planning & Development Committee to only allow selective cutting in the access/viewing corridor. The letter would be an advisory to the Planning & Development Committee.

Jensen/Sorgel made the recommendation to send a recommendation letter regarding clear cutting in the access/viewing corridors, as presented, to the Planning & Development Committee for their consideration.

10. Cost Share Reimbursement Request & Deposit Refund - Fronck

Sadauskas is seeking approval from the Committee to reimburse the client \$11,422.24, plus a \$1,000 deposit. The project has been completed, it looks good, and the Committee has access to the before/after photos.

Sorgel/Jensen made a motion to pay the amount and refund the deposit. All ayes; motion carried.

11. Planning & Development Comprehensive Plan Recommendations Update:

Sadauskas did a review on chapter two, the natural resources chapter, in the Planning & Development Comprehensive Plan. The review explains the proposed changes suggested by Sadauskas, such as using the word lake rather than pond. Most issues found were minor and related to the use of language. The section on Managed Forest Law does not fit in with the natural resources section and should be moved to the land use section.

On page 2-29, remove the word 'and' before the word 'enhance'. On page 2-30, write it as *"Allow for metallic mining through the County's metallic mining exploration, bulk sampling, and mining ordinance while prioritizing natural resources and the interest and safety of county*

residents and landowners to comply with State law.” On page 2-7, change the proposed statement to reflect “74 lakes are between 50 and 100 acres.”

Sadauskas will make these updates and send the Planning & Development Committee a recommendation letter.

12. PFAs Update:

Need to continue to encourage the legislature to approve and release funding. Newman stated that the mining industry uses PFAs in all of their efforts, it is one of the things they leave behind.

13. Office Reports:

- a) Budget Actual.
- b) Invoices Paid.

Committee acknowledged and received agenda items 13a & 13b, as presented.

14. LWCD Items to Include on Next Agenda:

- Lake Districts and topics that should be covered at these meetings by the representatives.

15. Public Comment:

This agenda item was moved and followed agenda item #16.

None.

16. Programming/Educator Report – Health & Well Being – Laurel Parins; Oneida Co. 4-H – Anne Williams *Anne Williams and Oneida County 4-H presented after agenda item #9 to accommodate the youth presenters.*

Anne Williams and Oneida County 4-Hers presented to the CUW Committee; each youth highlighted a meaningful experience they have had in 4-H this year and the life skills they have developed through their participation in the experience. Katie T. is the secretary for her community club and has developed better listening skills, organizational skills, and record keeping skills. Elise W. is the treasurer and has developed leadership skills, record keeping skills, organizational skills, and communication skills. Noah W., Holly T., and Landon S. reflected on their experiences in Oneida County 4-H programming as well.

Laurel Parins presented for Health & Well Being and highlighted the program Sit & Be Fit, which is a program she created and facilitates in Minocqua at Ascension Lutheran Church. The program improves flexibility and range of motion to prevent injury for active older adults and not so active older adults. There are 25-30 participants in Minocqua at this time. Each class is different with the exception of the warm-up exercises. The sessions are roughly 50-60 minutes long. There is a lot of positive feedback coming in about this program from the community. The majority of the exercises are seated, making it easy to do them from home. Parins led the

Committee through a shortened version of the Sit & Be Fit class so they could experience it for themselves.

17. 2025 Extension Budget Proposal:

Extension shared their 2025 Budget Proposal with the CUW Committee. Increases in the budget reflect unavoidable and necessary costs related to personnel. Measures were taken to decrease projected expenses for 2025. A thorough review of expenditures made in 2023 and 2024 were compared to the projected budget amounts for 2025, and then reconciled to be more accurate and reflect actual cost projections. Two budget line items were zeroed out completely, as those expenses have been taken up by the Oneida County IT department's budget. The line item for health insurance was zeroed out, as Oneida County employee Jess Young does not take health insurance. Extension made cuts to the training/conference budget account and to the workshops/programs budget account. Extension is looking into how a balance can be created where revenue is generated through program fees, but does not restrict access to Oneida County residents.

Area Extension Director, Amber Rehberg, had a meeting with the Nicolet College Vice President of Administration to discuss the rent and lease agreement for 2025. Nicolet is willing to explore the possibility of a decreased rate if Extension can find office space that offers the same support and services that Nicolet offers at a lower price, they would consider matching that price if such a location exists. The rental agreement between Nicolet and Grow North was discussed and it was determined that the monthly rent cost for Grow North is only \$1 a month because of a special partnership between the two, where Grow North received grant funding from Nicolet that did not include budgeted costs for office space. There is expectation from Nicolet that Grow North will include proper rent costs in their budget for 2025.

Efforts have been made to collaborate with Nicolet, however, the transition Nicolet is going through has created a shift in office space use. The Registrar is now located next to the Extension office, and there are limited opportunities to collaborate with their office. As Extension continues to grow their visibility on the Nicolet campus they increase the possibility of collaboration and future partnerships.

The CUW Committee encouraged a zero dollar increase across the board from the 2024 budget. Extension will make those changes and forward it to the Committee for final approval before submission.

Newman/Schultz made a motion to tentatively approve the budget with the changes as discussed and to forward it to the Executive Committee. All ayes; motion carried.

18. Area 4 Extension Director Update – A. Rehberg

- a) UWEX Status Update: *Discussed in agenda item #17.*
- b) Staffing and Communication Plan: Laurel Parins will be doing a monthly fitness program on News Channel 12 starting in September on Fridays.
- c) Nicolet Facilities & Partnership Update: *Discussed in agenda item #17.*

- i. Nicolet Rental Agreement.

19. UWEX Office Reports:

- a. Budget Actual
- b. Invoices Paid

Committee acknowledged and received agenda items 19a & 19b, as presented.

20. UWEX Items to Include on Next Agenda:

- UWEX Status Update
- Staffing and Communication Plan
- Nicolet Facilities & Partnership Update

21. Public Comment:

None.

22. Adjournment: Chair Sorgel adjourned meeting at 3:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Young, Recording Secretary