

**Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project
Tuesday, August 23, 2011 8:00 a.m.
Lincoln County Service Center, Rm. 156
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452**

MINUTES

1. Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order by committee Chairman Bailey at 8:00 a.m. Besides Mr. Bailey in attendance were committee members Dan Leydet, Bill Zeitz, Arlene Meyer, Bob Lee, and Randy Scholz. Also in attendance at various times during the meeting were Debbie Moellendorf (UW-Extension), Kevin Kleinschmidt (Forestry, Land & Parks), and Sarah Koss (Register of Deeds). The meeting was facilitated by Art Lersch, UW-Extension.

2. Approval of minutes for the July 19, 2011 meeting.

Supervisor Meyer made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Scholz seconded the motion. All ayes.

3. Public Comment

An email related to the county fairgrounds sent by Diana Smith to Mr. Scholz was submitted into the record. Chair Bailey requested and the committee by consensus agreed that the topic of fairgrounds costs be included on the committee's next meeting agenda.

4. Department Head Interview (UW-Extension)

Mr. Scholz began the conversation by stating that in 2010 UW-Extension received just over \$233,000 in tax levy support, with approximately \$195,000 of that used for staff salaries and fringe benefits. Extension department head Debbie Moellendorf then provided an overview of the department's mission, university support, budget, and service focus areas.

She reported that the primary aim of Cooperative Extension in Lincoln County is to extend UW system resources to people where they live and work. Much of this work, she mentioned, is based upon continuously assessing the changing needs of Lincoln County communities. Ms. Moellendorf emphasized that Extension collaborates with almost every county department and numerous community organizations. The agency made over 11,000 contacts last year.

She stated that Extension provides services through four primary program areas; Agriculture, 4-H, Family Living (including the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program), and Community Resource Development. Positions are funded mostly on a 60% (state)/40% (county) arrangement. The state portion of the support also includes some federal dollars. The department is not mandated by state statutes, but carries out some state/federally mandated functions.

She stated that the 2012 proposed Extension budget is 4% to 5% less than the 2011 budget. The Agriculture position (currently vacant) is half time and shared with Marathon County, which means that when it is occupied Lincoln County paid for 20% of the position. Ms. Moellendorf also reported that the 4-H Youth Development Advisory position is paid for through a variety of grant and other funding sources, including some county dollars.

When asked for her additional cost savings/revenue generation ideas, Ms. Moellendorf mentioned that Extension was the first department to lease a copier, something that is now being done by other county departments. She reiterated that Extension would continue to look for outside revenue sources to help support its programming. In order to more efficiently manage support staff on the lower floor of the Service Center, she suggested that a uniform lunch time for them be established. Mr. Scholz stated that others have also made this suggestion.

5. Department Head Interview (Forestry)

Mr. Scholz reminded other committee members that the Forestry Department receives no tax levy dollars and is therefore classified as an enterprise operation. Kevin Kleinschmidt, Forestry director, then provided an overview of department operations and funding.

Mr. Kleinschmidt began by saying that the department currently has 8.175 employees, down from 10.5 in 2009. In November 2011, the number of employees will be reduced to 7.5 as one person is essentially transferred to the Highway Department for the winter. He indicated that the department has maintained its level of service despite the reductions in personnel. He said the primary negative effect of having fewer employees is that it sometimes takes the department longer to fulfill customer requests.

He stated that the department currently manages just over 100,840 of forestland, which includes planting 10,000 to 15,000 trees annually. Department functions include but are not limited to managing county forest recreation areas and parks, three campgrounds, wildlife issues, invasive species, forest roads (27¼ total), and timber harvests. The department is also charged with selling tax delinquent lands (essentially a mandated function) and often acts as the agent through which other county land property is sold/dispersed. He reported that the department is not mandated by state statutes.

Mr. Kleinschmidt stated that on average the department primarily through its timber sales returns between \$400,000 and \$500,000 annually to the county (CIP fund). The department's total annual budget is about \$1.2 million, roughly 70% of which is funded through timber sales. Seventy-five percent of the entire budget covers labor and fringe costs. He reported that a significant amount of revenue is obtained through grants.

Besides sharing positions with the Highway Department and maintaining or increasing regular timber sales, the department is constantly looking for ways to enhance its revenue intake. Mr. Kleinschmidt mentioned that he thought with the building of the We Energy plant in Wausau would come more opportunities for the department to sell raw biomass material, adding another dimension to the department's already implemented biomass plan.

6. Department Head Interview (Register of Deeds)

Mr. Scholz stated that the department received about \$11,900 from the tax levy in 2010. Department Head Sarah Koss then provided an overview of department functions.

She stated that the department has three primary functions; it is the custodian of real estate recording, maintains vital records of county citizens, and retrieves documents for customers. She pointed out that much of the money the department receives in filing fees, etc. is dispersed to other entities besides the county. For example, Ms. Koss told the committee that the county retains only 20% of revenues collected in property transfer fees. The rest of the revenue goes directly to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

For cost savings ideas, Ms. Koss suggested that the county may want to look into outsourcing portions of the recording procedure. She mentioned that this strategy has been effective in some larger counties around the state, but was not sure if it would work in a smaller county such as Lincoln. One example of outsourced work would be for an independent agency to add information to documents which does not have to be done in house.

7. Overview of draft County Board Survey Results Report

Lersch mentioned that two more completed surveys came into him after the last Ad Hoc meeting and that the data from them were added to the report. Seventeen of 22 supervisors returned completed surveys (77.3%). He stated that the primary broad strategies endorsed by respondents to help alleviate county fiscal stress were:

- *Consolidating departments (when feasible); 17-0*
- *Intergovernmental sharing of service delivery (when feasible); 16-1*
- *Contracting out/privatizing services; 14-0*
- *Delaying capital expenditures; 14-1*
- *Targeted budget reductions; 15-2*
- *Creating and/or expanding enterprise funds; 15-2*
- *Eliminating services (when it makes sense); 13-3*

He explained that a change in wording would be made at the top of page three to reflect that the strategy “laying off” received a tie “Yes/No” vote not a positive vote. The report will be placed on file after the modification is made.

8. Begin discussion of potential recommendations for County Board (presentation of initial “ideas list.”)

Lersch presented a six page bulleted list of ideas that have been presented to and/or discussed by the committee to date. He explained that it will make sense for committee members during the next meeting to focus on what clarifications need to be made (including what has been mistakenly left out) to the list. He also stated that it would be helpful for committee members to identify which ideas are already being implemented and how. Lastly, he mentioned that other ideas will be added to the list as they surface

during department head interviews and committee discussions. The committee requested that this item be on the next meeting agenda, meaning that it will in earnest begin the discussion of potential recommendations to the County Board.

9. Continue discussion of reports issued to the Ad Hoc Committee, Government Services Project

Committee members stated that no further discussion of the reports was needed at this time.

10. Continue to determine timelines for Administrative Coordinator and Ad Hoc Committee conversations with department heads

By consensus, committee members agreed that the department heads of the Veterans office, Land Information/Conservation & Planning/Zoning, and Solid Waste should appear before the committee at its next meeting.

11. Updates on state budget issues.

Dan Leydet reported that many of the budget's financial provisions have been clarified. He stated, however, that several operational type issues brought up as a result of the budget's passing have not been summarized by the state and are unclear. Mr. Scholz and Lersch reported that they have not yet seen a Legislative Fiscal Bureau summary of the budget.

12. Committee Structure

Mr. Scholz provided the committee with a handout listing current, permanent committees. Committee members agreed that discussion about this issue should begin during the next meeting in relating to the merger of the Land Information/Conservation and Planning/Zoning Departments. By consensus, committee members agreed that the item should be placed on the next meeting agenda.

13. County Board Compensation

Mr. Scholz provided committee members with a handout comparing Lincoln County Board compensation figures with that of other county board compensation plans from throughout the state. Discussion took place related to the handout. By consensus, committee members agreed that the item should be placed on the next meeting agenda.

14. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

The following items were identified by committee members:

- Department Head Interview (Veterans)

- Department Head Interview (Land Information/Conservation & Planning/Zoning)
- Department Head Interview (Solid Waste)
- Discussion on potential recommendations for County Board
- Continue to determine timelines for Administrative Coordinator and Ad Hoc Committee conversations with department heads
- Updates on state budget issues
- Fairgrounds costs
- County Committee Structure
- County Board Compensation

15. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting was scheduled for **Tuesday, September 6, 2011, 8:00 a.m. Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156.**

The committee also tentatively scheduled Tuesday, September 20, 8:00 a.m. as the meeting date after September 6. (Likely location to be the Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156.)

16. Adjourn

Supervisor Zeitz made the motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Chair Bailey. All ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 10:29 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Art Lersch, UW-Extension