

**RACINE COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION**

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**RACINE COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**Also Known as a Subcommittee of**

**THE RACINE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Ives Grove Office Complex Auditorium – 14200 Washington Avenue

Monday, 5:00 p.m., August 17, 2020

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING**

Committee Members Present: M. Osterman, T. Hincz, M. Dawson, J. Eckman, E. Lawrence, T. Greil, R. Grove (at 5:40).

Committee Members Excused: B. Nielsen

Youth in Governance Present: R. Niemiec

Youth in Governance Absent: A. Buchaklian

Staff Present: C. Sampson

Chairman M. Osterman called the August 17, 2020 Racine County Land Conservation Committee meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

1. A motion by E. Lawrence / M. Dawson to approve the minutes for the June 15, 2020 meeting. The motion was approved (6-0) by the Committee and (1-0) by the Youth in Governance.
2. Information only: A discussion about the Watershed Protection Committee's upcoming Summer Field Day scheduled for September 10th. Osterman mentioned that he attended the Summer Field Day last year at the Beck Farm and encouraged members of the committee to attend. Tom Greil stated the field day will be at the Russell Weis farm. Tom continued to say there will be a soil pit, cover crop information and a rainfall simulator. The slake test will be performed to compare healthy soil vs. tilled soil. Emily Lawrence asked if the event is rain or shine. C Sampson stated that people will be contacted directly if the event is canceled due to weather. T Greil explained the Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County was formed and funded by a WI DATCP grant to be able to hold educational events, such as this field day. T. Greil said the group was going to plant pollinator strips in the future. The strips will include sunflowers because the public really seems to enjoy sunflowers and this will add to their education. M. Osterman stated an area in Nebraska had lost 90% of its pollinator plants were destroyed before the community realized it was gone.
3. Information only: A discussion about soil health. C. Sampson played two short videos featuring Ray Archuleta to give examples of soil health using the slake test. Ray explains the biotic glues and organic matter hold the soil together. M. Osterman said the slake test was used at a demonstration in front of the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality and it made an impact.

Chad played a “planting green” video. T. Greil explained how the cereal rye protects the soil over the winter and into the spring. The video shows Brian Gunderson planted soybeans directly into the cereal rye, which keeps the soil in place and improves the soil biology. Tom continued to say we are trying to mimic nature more closely, by not having bare soil on the ground. T. Greil stated the WPCR is promoting “planting green” and keeping the soil covered year around.

M. Osterman said holding the soil in place keep the nutrients from running off. Nutrient runoff creates algal blooms, fish kills and can negatively impact groundwater. M. Osterman said this isn’t grasped by all farmers. Some feel it will decrease their yield and it takes more effort to farm this way. M. Osterman said there are areas of the State where soil health farming will work better than other areas. He continued to say data has shown increasing yields down the road when it is shown that the soil health is improving.

E. Lawrence asked why all farmers would not farm this way. M. Osterman said the biggest challenge is conventional tillage agriculture is the way farmers have always done it. J. Eckman said planting cover crops is adding a step to the process. T. Greil stated it does add a step and the process to creating a healthy soil and seeing the improvements is slow and with a poor farm economy, it is difficult to wait for results. C. Sampson said initially he wanted all farmers to farm this way and lets get them all on board, but after some time realized that we need to just focus on one or two farmers per year and the WPCR can help them through their transition.

T Greil said the during the creation of the last farm bill, it was considered to tie the farmer’s crop insurance with their conservation soil health practices, but it didn’t happen. If this would occur, soil health could be forced on the farmers.

4. Information only: M. Osterman asked the supervisors to discuss their goals on the committee. T. Greil stated the Wind Lake Canal has an intense erosion problem. T. Greil said due to urbanization and larger storm events the canal can’t handle the water and its causing erosion. T. Greil said the Rochester Dam water elevation should be explored.

Supervisor J. Eckman stated he is seeing a lot of new water retention around the Foxconn development and he would like to be kept informed about land management happening in that area.

Supervisor M. Dawson wants to see improvements in Bohner’s Lake and erosion control around the lakes. C. Sampson offered to share some experiences and potential projects in that watershed.

Supervisor E. Lawrence said she would be interested in shoreline work along Lake Michigan. She also has some interest in pursuing more pollinator projects in the urban areas.

Supervisor T. Hincz said there needs to be more information provided and more public outreach about the Racine County Land Conservation department.

Representative Niemic asked that younger generations further understand a farm to table youth program. M. Osterman suggested a farm to table project for the entire youth and government group’s final project.

Supervisor Osterman said he would like to see more grant applications and needs identified in the urban areas.

5. Information only: M. Osterman identified the Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plans. He explained that he sits on the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board which reviews and approves plans. He said in the past, the plans were more about erosion control, but now plans are gearing toward soil health / water quality and the new piece being addressed is climate change. Climate change mitigation standards are being implemented in some of the more recent plans being reviewed. M. Osterman said Racine County's last plan was put together in 2012 and approved for 2013-2022. The next planning process will begin in 2022 to be approved for 2023.

C. Sampson pointed out the four goals listed on the first page of the plan. The most important being to protect and preserve Racine County's land and water resources. C. Sampson continued to say the tables on pages 64 to the end to describe what staff is doing. If the item is in bold, it is required or staff is already doing it. Items not in bold might be part of the current workload or are planned for the future.

6. USDA Reports: M. Osterman stated the supervisors have the reports to read on their own. Also, he said WI DATCP is considering a youth organization.

T. Greil said the Farm Service Agency's County Executive Director retired and they had interviews today. T. Greil said the programs still ran fairly smooth through the pandemic.

7. Other Business: T. Greil said soil health and cover crops have an enormous ability to hold carbon, but through tillage the carbon storage capacity is lost. We need to keep this in mind when developing the next plan in relation to climate change.

8. A motion by M. Dawson, seconded by R. Grove to adjourn at 5:58 p.m. Approved (1-0) by Youth in Governance and (7-0) by the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

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Robert Grove, Vice Chairman  
Land Conservation Committee

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Chad Sampson, Recorder