

(approved by committee 6/5/2023)

'RACINE COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION

14200 Washington Avenue

Sturtevant, Wisconsin 53177-1253

Phone: 262-886-8440 Fax: 262-886-8480

RACINE COUNTY LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Also Known as a Subcommittee of

THE RACINE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Ives Grove Auditorium – 14200 Washington Avenue

Monday, 6:00 p.m., May 1, 2023

SUMMARY MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee Members Present: M. Osterman, J. Eckman, G. Horeth, T. Rutkowski, R. Grove,
T. Wishau

Committee Members Excused: T. Hincz, T. Greil

Staff Present: C. Sampson

1. Chairman M. Osterman took roll call and called the May 1, 2023, Racine County Land and Water Conservation Committee meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.
2. A motion by R. Grove, seconded by G. Horeth to approve the minutes from the April 3, 2023 meeting. The motion was approved (6-0) by the Committee.
3. M. Osterman stated this is the resolution to accept grant money from the Southeast Area Fox River Commission and asked Supervisor Wishau and C. Sampson to give an overview of the grant and what it will be used for. Supervisor Wishau stated that he was thankful for the grant and is excited to see some long overdue improvements at the Margis Jr. Wildlife Area.

C. Sampson said the grant would be used for erosion control, trail improvement, water access, grade stabilization and some native seed or plants. Overall, the environmental and recreational improvements should make the area “more inviting” to the general public. C. Sampson continued to say that he gave a presentation to the Fox River Commission to explain how funds were to be used. Then, prior to the next meeting Commissioners can ask further questions about the grant or visit the site for themselves. Then a point system is used to determine if the proposal is eligible based on the grant criteria and the proposal met the points eligibility criteria.

The grant will also have to go before the Finance Committee because it was not part of the 2023 budget. The Finance Committee meeting is May 3rd and 1st Reading at the County Board is proposed to be May 9th if approved by the Committee.

J. Eckman asked how the money will be used. C. Sampson stated that any materials purchased would come out of the grant funds as well as some staff time. The in-kind portion of the grant is a minimum of 10% of the grant and staff time would be a minimum of 10%.

M. Osterman asked if a portion of the money was being used for the parking lot. C. Sampson stated this money is not being used for the parking lot as that was already planned and budgeted.

G. Horeth asked if the money was available from the Commission because sometimes there tends to be a delay with Commission funds. C. Sampson stated that we will use the expense account created with the fiscal note and then receive the funds as a reimbursement for the same calendar year.

A motion by T. Wishau, seconded by G. Horeth to accept the \$25,000 grant from the Southeast Wisconsin Fox River Commission for the John Margis Jr. Wildlife Area Improvements and forward to the appropriate Committee. The motion was approved (6-0) by the Committee.

4. M. Osterman stated this resolution is a suggestion from Supervisor Wishau and asked for a brief explanation and purpose behind the resolution. T. Wishau said the purpose of the resolution was to ask the State of Wisconsin to review and revise its policy on foreign ownership of farmland. The reason being that foreign governments are currently purchasing large tracts of agricultural land and this may not be a good thing for the State of Wisconsin and this country in general. The idea behind the resolution is to have the State proactively do something to prevent this rather than reactively. T. Wishau stated the resolution was reviewed by Corp Counsel and asked the Committee for comments, suggestions, or changes.

R. Grove stated it could also be a concern from a food security standpoint. M. Osterman said at the WI Land and Water meeting this was also a concern from an ag land use value standpoint. M. Osterman continued to say that maybe these foreign entities are not following environmental regulations and therefore they could lose the ag use value tax benefits.

A motion by T. Wishau, to forward the resolution to all legislative bodies and the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, seconded by G. Horeth. The motion was approved (6-0) by the Committee.

5. M. Osterman stated the WI Land and Water Executive Committee asked the Board to increase the dues provided by the Counties.
6. M. Osterman said the NACD final committees have been set. Wisconsin has been assigned to the District Operation's and Partnership Committee.
7. C. Sampson stated that Farmland Preservation Planning will be beginning soon. Racine County received a contract proposal from the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission last week to finalize terms on who will do what when it comes to developing the plan. The contract will be reviewed and sent to the Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee and County Board for approval.

C. Sampson stated a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) will be developed with citizen's and farmers in municipalities participating in the program as well as planning commission members from various municipalities. C. Sampson asked if anyone on the Land and Water Conservation Committee would be interested in participating on the CAC to let him know. There will probably be three meetings if you want to be on the CAC. Also, there will be public informational meetings at municipalities to share information as part of the planning process.

T. Wishau asked if the meetings were during the day or evening and if attending virtually was an option. C. Sampson said he wasn't sure yet. The first meeting would probably be during the day, but then the Committee could decide on the next meeting dates and times. G. Horeth asked when the planning process will begin. C. Sampson said sometime during this summer.

R. Grove asked why more municipalities wouldn't choose to participate in the program. It would benefit saving farmland and the farmers can receive a tax credit.

C. Sampson said it is an extra barrier to oppose development. To maintain the farmland preservation zoning rules, only 5% of a parcel deemed as A-1 for farmland preservation can be developed. C. Sampson stated that farms participating in the program also have a conservation compliance component that needs to be implemented. Farms are inspected at least once every four years to ensure compliance is being met.

T. Wishau asked how many farmers are participating in the program. C. Sampson said about 12 to 14 farmers in the Town of Waterford and about the same number in the Town of Burlington. So, approximately 25 farmers and over 5,000 acres of land are in the program. T. Wishau requested to be copied on information regarding CAC meetings and other public meetings regarding farmland preservation planning.

M. Osterman said the State is losing over 20,000 acres of farmland per year and this is a concern to the agricultural community.

8. C. Sampson said the tree program ran smoothly. Over 300 customers purchased approximately 35,000 trees at the County Fairgrounds last week. Overall, the trees were larger than advertised and compared to most normal years. Conservation staff received assistance from two parks staff and two accounting staff, which was greatly appreciated. C. Sampson said photos and some details about the program were posted on the County's social media platforms.

9. T. Greil was unable to attend the meeting, so C. Sampson gave a short update for the Watershed Protection Committee (WPCR). The Summer Field Day is planned for either September 8th or 15th. The WPCR is working closely with the schools to make sure they can attend the field day.

C. Sampson said the WPCR is slated to have Ray Archuleta come in February, but instead of a large event at the Cotton Exchange, it may be a soil health learning session for interested farmers and be charged a fee to attend. M. Osterman suggested having the farmers attend, but still have a half day for the general public to see Ray give his presentation.

10. The soil health demonstration and discussion will be tabled until the next meeting.

11. J. Eckman asked about the proposed dredging project in Waterford. G. Horeth shared information about the process the WWMD has gone through for the dredging project. G. Horeth explained that further details can always be provided by the WWMD upon request.

12. A motion by R. Grove / G. Horeth to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. The motion was approved (6-0) by the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Monte Osterman, Chairman
Land and Water Conservation Committee

Chad Sampson, Recorder