

--DRAFT PENDING SUB-COMMITTEE APPROVAL--

**WISCONSIN DAIRY TASK FORCE 2.0
SUB-COMMITTEE ON DAIRY AND RURAL COMMUNITY VITALITY
MINUTES**

--DRAFT PENDING SUB-COMMITTEE APPROVAL--

January 7, 2019

The Dairy and Rural Community Vitality sub-committee of the Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0 met on Monday, January 7, 2019 beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Wisconsin State Patrol-Tomah Post, 23928 Lester McMullen Drive, Tomah, WI 54660.

Call to Order

Chair Elizabeth Wells called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Members Present

Members present included: Darin Von Ruden, John Schmidt, Dennis Bangart, Elizabeth Wells, Janet Clark, Don Hamm, Melissa Haag, Michael DeLong and Dave Buholzer. Dairy Task Force 2.0 Chair Mark Stephenson and DATCP staff Ashley Andre also attended.

Jerry Schroeder was not able to attend.

Minutes

Approve minutes of last meeting

Chair Wells asked the group if they had reviewed the minutes and had any questions or changes. Dennis Bangart moved to approve. Darin Von Ruden seconded. Motion passed.

Resume work on tasks identified in charging document

Each member of the sub-committee had the opportunity to share any thoughts they've had since the first meeting.

- Dave Buholzer mentioned the consolidation of schools in rural communities and the impact it has.
- Mr. Bangart thought about as we make recommendations, we need to consider what is achievable. He also asked the group to consider if communities know that they are agricultural communities, such as Wisconsin Rapids.
- Janet Clark gave two examples from her local area recently and the impact they've had on the community. One large business let half the employees go, and a smaller feed store facility was bought out by a larger facility.
- Don Hamm brought up what could be done differently for road funding, such as bonding, given his perspective as a town chair.

- Melissa Haag discussed the challenge of coming up with achievable solutions and the importance of working together when rules and regulations are being developed. She also brought up the importance of broadband connectivity to success on farms and in rural communities.
- Michael DeLong discussed the importance of collaboration between farms, schools and main street businesses. We cannot work in our silos.
- John Schmidt emphasized how broadband access varies greatly in rural areas. He also mentioned how encouraged he was to see an agricultural classroom at an urban, Green Bay area high school this weekend.
- Mr. Von Ruden discussed how the National Farmers Organization and Wisconsin Farmers Union have been discussing the need for studies on how the loss of farms impacts rural communities. He also shared how when a large business comes in, such as a WalMart, they often put in their own intersection and lights at their own expense.
- Chair Wells mentioned that at the Markets sub-committee meeting Monday, they passed along the idea of a dairy life line, direct farm payment from the state, if today's sub-committee wanted to consider it. The Markets sub-committee also forwarded on the need for support for people as they exit farms and need for awareness for mental health services. In addition, Krista Knigge of DATCP mentioned to Chair Wells the idea that DWD can't offer assistance to farmers if they are not profitable.

As follow-up to Mr. Von Ruden's comment about the impact study, Mr. Bangart used the white board to illustrate the interaction between the supplier, farm and manufacturer. Chair Stephenson explained that Dr. Deller from the University does similar work on the economic impact of Wisconsin agricultural industry. People often hear about the \$43 billion economic impact of the dairy industry, but few know what that really means to the local community.

Mr. Von Ruden pointed out that some farms do not purchase supplies from the local community. Some travel hundreds of miles to purchase what they need. These farms aren't putting the money directly back into the local community.

Chair Wells pointed out that we may be talking about two things: the need for granular research of the local level and increased awareness about what agriculture's impact is by local communities and leaders.

Chair Stephenson added that a lot of the economic impact comes from processing and that much of what we process is sold outside of the state. The dollars circulate.

Mr. Buholzer confirmed that 95% of his product leaves the State of Wisconsin. He also shared how he cannot find non-fat dry milk in Wisconsin any more.

Mr. Bangart said that a study would take an investment but hopefully provide local communities and thousands of people the facts needed to make decisions on. Mr. Schmidt cautioned that we do not want unintended consequences if the data shows agriculture's impact to be less in an area than expected.

Chair Stephenson reminded the sub-committee that recommendations do not have to be long. Chair Wells asked members if they were interested in having people work on specific recommendation wording and then finalize the recommendations in a teleconference. The group agreed.

A recommendation to support an impact study and outreach education for it will be worked on by Mr. Bangart, Mr. Von Ruden and Mr. Schmidt.

Chair Wells asked for any discussion on the issue of broadband connectivity and availability of technology. Mr. DeLong emphasized how people have the ability to do so much online. Mr. Schmidt discussed how people can do things like take college courses online if they have access, but they can't do those things if they have data limits. There needs to be a system in place that is functional and affordable. Chair Wells shared an example that she has a tower on her land, and the neighbors cannot get a connection. Mr. Schmidt discussed how speed is greatly impacted during busy times, such as 3:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Von Ruden shared that Farmers Union had looked into this issue and found where there was cooperatives, there seemed to be better service. Mr. Bangart brought up the USDA ReConnect Broadband Grant and Loan Program as a resource that was recently established.

Mr. Schmidt pointed out that this is not only an agricultural issue. It is much bigger than that. Mr. Buholzer pointed out that it is going to need government support. A for-profit company won't string wires when there are miles between customers. He emphasized the need for people to contact their elected officials to emphasize the need for this. Ms. Clark, Ms. Haag and Mr. DeLong agreed to draft a recommendation on the importance of broadband.

The sub-committee took a break at 11:07 a.m. and reconvened at 11:17 a.m.

Chair Wells asked for the group and the two members of the public to make introductions.

Chair Wells asked for discussion on infrastructure. Mr. Buholzer brought up an idea that had previously been discussed about designated routes so intermediate roads wouldn't have as much traffic. It would be up to the local officials to allow people to continue on intermediate roads beyond their business destination. This would add miles to routes, and a permit to drive on these roads would have a cost if you didn't want to go back and around. The key is it would put control in locals' hands. He also brought up bonding for larger farms that run equipment on the roads, but mentioned how that is tough when farmers are already paying taxes and has to use the roads for their livelihood.

Mr. Hamm pointed out that while many pay income and property tax, they often don't pay fuel tax. He mentioned when farmers are penalized for driving over posted limits, the money usually does not get back to the local governments to make road fixes. Bonding could be a way to fix the mile or two close to larger dairies.

Mr. Hamm mentioned that since implements of husbandry was implemented, his area has only received one permit request.

Mr. Schmidt warned that designated routes and permits could have unintended consequences. Local areas could limit dairy farms' ability to do business.

Mr. Hamm explained that bondage rates could be based on size of farms, requiring people to pay once instead of needed individual permits for each service provider.

Mr. Hamm, Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Buholzer will work on a draft recommendation about transportation funding.

Chair Wells asked for discussion on TIF districts and levy flexibility. Mr. Hamm mentioned how difficult it can be. Mr. Von Ruden shared he believed funding has been cut for Agricultural Enterprise Areas, or AEA's, which has an impact on their ability to be effective. Mr. Bangart thought the idea has value for the sub-committee to look into further. It allows local areas to favor one area for economic development and allows for public input. Mr. Von Ruden agreed to report back information and any draft recommendation.

Looking at social capital, Chair Wells asked for discussion on how to help facilitate farm organizations. Mr. Hamm said that he believes Wisconsin is unique that agricultural organizations do get along. The Ag Coalition meets regularly and can agree or disagree, putting their political views aside.

Mr. Bangart mentioned how very few chambers of commerce have an ag subcommittee. People with community and farm backgrounds need to share knowledge and build partnerships.

Mr. Hamm provided an example of how his dairy promotion board joined the chambers of commerce in his area to raise funds for an agricultural event. Mr. Buholzer confirmed he receives many requests for support in his area, and he's happy to help.

Mr. Buholzer did point out that it is a problem that some farmers still see themselves as a lifestyle and not as a business man or woman.

Mr. Bangart pointed out that it could be a simple recommendation, without a large cost, to help chambers of commerce develop understanding of agriculture and develop an ag committee.

Chair Wells said that people are always asking farmers to tell their story. We need resources to help farmers do that. It may take coordination amongst groups. Mr. Bangart agreed that it may mean providing resources for farmers to create an advertising or marketing plan for their farm and utilizing tools that already exist.

Mr. Von Ruden shared the examples of the Soil Sisters doing tours after starting with grant funding. He also mentioned the Fermentation Fest. While some people want to do outreach like that, others just want to milk cows.

Ms. Clark shared that many organizations, like PDPW and Farm First, do a lot of this training already. They teach about the ways you can use social media to tell your story. It is up to the individual to accept the education and take on the challenge.

Mr. Schmidt shared that a majority of his friends on Facebook are not ag-related so he works to share positive ag information. Chair Stephenson pointed out that people like to especially connect with their food on social media. Mr. DeLong shared that people still want to buy food from people; they want to know where their food comes from.

Mr. Schmidt said that possibly a recommendation could be that everyone has different resources, but maybe there needs to be a link that brings them all together so people can utilize what exists. Chair Stephenson used the example of an accessible virtual community. Chair Wells, Mr. Bangart and Mr. DeLong will draft a recommendation about the need to connect available resources.

Ms. Haag pointed out the example of the baby giraffe being born and how many people watched it online. Ms. Clark discussed the importance of agritourism and allowing people to visit farms, but there is a cost and investment of time for that. Mr. Schmidt asked how as an industry we can utilize the resources at the Wisconsin Farm Discovery Center? It is new and could be very valuable. Ms. Clark, Mr. Schmidt and Ms. Haag will make a recommendation about the importance of agritourism in the state.

Lunch

The group broke for lunch at 12:06 p.m. and reconvened at 12:38 p.m.

Minutes

Set a conference call

The sub-committee looked at their calendars and chose February 12 from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. for their teleconference. Materials should be sent to Ashley Andre by the end of January so members have time to review before the teleconference.

Resume work on tasks identified in charging document

Mr. Schmidt asked that the topic of leadership development be forwarded on to the Education Workforce sub-committee.

Chair Wells asked that the question about DWD services not being available to non-profitable business, like farms, to the Education Workforce sub-committee.

Chair Wells asked that the need for resources to farmers when they choose to or are forced out of farming be forwarded on to the Next Generation sub-committee.

Chair Wells asked about a point in the previous meeting minutes about dealing with conflict and what it was alluding to. Chair Wells shared services from the Wisconsin Farm Center, including mediation. She wondered if they have adequate funding. Ms. Haag wondered about their

personnel power. Mr. Von Ruden mentioned that the Farm Bill includes language about more mental health support.

Another mention in the Farm Bill was about the regional dairy product and business innovation initiatives. Chair Wells said that they were addressed in the Markets sub-committee.

Mr. Von Ruden made a point that who gets the first phone call when people complain about farms? Possibly the Sheriff's department or town chairpersons? Could there be an education series with those people to create common responses?

Mr. Hamm said that from his experience as the town chair he does get calls and letters. He tries to open his farm up to his neighbors to help them feel a part of it.

Mr. Bangart said that many people in government positions are unfamiliar with agriculture, even in ag-based areas. There is a need for farmers to get involved. Mr. Hamm agreed that people need to be involved, even if they do not want to. It is extremely important.

Chair Wells asked if the group wanted to consider a recommendation encouraging more active dairy producers to get involved in local leadership?

Ms. Clark shared an example of a PDPW resource, ACE, to educate people about agriculture on the farm and answer questions. The challenge is that there is a cost for people to attend, and government agencies need to be willing to allow their staff to participate during work time. Could there be funding or grants to pay for similar training to help create a relationship between government officials and the dairy community? Mr. Bangart pointed out that the programming from PDPW is great, but it is expensive. Ms. Clark will work on a recommendation about local involvement.

Chair Wells brought up the idea of community capital, and that at the last meeting, there was a lot of discussion about the issues, including consolidation in schools and businesses as well as lack of child care availability.

Mr. Von Ruden agreed that it is tough that as lives change, interests change. He shared that he does hear about the challenge of child care availability often.

Mr. Buholzer shared how youth are so busy with activities and opportunities that parents don't have time to be involved in their community like they used to.

Ms. Clark asked the group to think about how community capital relates to the objectives of the Task Force 2.0. Ms. Haag discussed how a strong rural community makes a strong dairy community. Mr. Hamm said that these issues may be a symptom of the problem and may not be able to have a fix in a recommendation although it is worthy of discussion.

Chair Wells pointed out that rural communities are changing as many people who live in rural areas travel out of the community to a more urban area to work and do business. For those who do live and work in the rural area, the infrastructure is depleted.

Ms. Haag asked how we can give incentives to small businesses to stay in small communities. Mr. Buholzer said that small businesses will stay in small businesses if they are managed well and able to keep up with the needs of the small population. There are examples in Wisconsin that work. These small businesses meet needs that big businesses can't.

Chair Stephenson pointed out that small businesses face tremendous pressure from online sales, such as Amazon.

Mr. Bangart asked if the state had resources for small businesses. Ms. Andre shared that the Department of Administration does have the Office of Business Development. Mr. Bangart asked if there could be something like the Farm Center for small, ag-related businesses.

Chair Wells asked if there could be a statement of recognition about this issue. She will draft, and the group will discuss on the teleconference.

Identify next steps

Chair Wells asked Ms. Andre to review the topics for the upcoming teleconference:

- A recommendation to support an impact study and outreach education for it will be worked on by Mr. Bangart, Mr. Von Ruden and Mr. Schmidt.
- Ms. Clark, Ms. Haag and Mr. DeLong agreed to draft a recommendation on the importance of broadband.
- Mr. Hamm, Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Buholzer will work on a draft recommendation about transportation funding.
- Mr. Von Ruden agreed to report back information and any draft recommendation on TIF districts, levy flexibility and funding for AEA's.
- Chair Wells, Mr. Bangart and Mr. DeLong will draft a recommendation about the need to connect available resources.
- Ms. Clark, Mr. Schmidt and Ms. Haag will make a recommendation about the importance of agritourism in the state.
- Ms. Clark will work on a recommendation about local involvement.
- Chair Wells will draft a statement of recognition about community capital for the group to consider.

Chair Wells asked for any other additions, corrections or discussion before ending the meeting.

Adjournment

The sub-committee adjourned at approximately 1:43 p.m.

Minutes drafted by Ashley Andre.