



MINUTES
ROCK COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Wednesday July 5th, 2023 7:15 P.M.
USDA Service Center, 440 N Hwy 14 and Virtual via Zoom

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Bostwick called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

Committee Members Present: Rich Bostwick, Ron Bomkamp, James Quade, Alan Sweeney and Debi Towns.

Committee Members Excused: Janelle Crary, Kim Schneider and Genia Stevens

Others Present: Supervisor Mike Zoril, Gabriella Nelson (PACE Council Member), Teresa Zimmer, FSA CED, Andrew Baker, Director
2. **Approval of Agenda:** Supervisor Towns moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Supervisor Sweeney. **Motion carried unanimously.**
3. **Approval of Minutes – June 7, 2023.** Supervisor Sweeney moved to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Mr. Quade. **Motion carried unanimously.**
4. **Citizen Participation, Communications, and Announcements.** Andrew provided the Committee an updated provided by Anne Miller regarding the Clean Sweep events in June (Beloit and Milton), spring farm compliance checks and stream monitoring efforts. Andrew also introduced guest on Zoom Gabriella Nelson, a new PACE Council member. Ms. Nelson is from Porter Township and was unable to attend the PACE Council meeting due to an emergency on the farm. She is going tonight to learn more about the program.
5. **Information Item: Farm Service Agency Update**
FSA-CED Teresa Zimmer gave an update of the programs her staff is working on, including 2023 crop reporting, which must be completed by July 17th. A new staff person will be starting at the end of July and they will be interviewing of another soon. Nominations are now open of one of the County Committee positions.
6. **Review, Discussion and Possible Action Regarding 2023 PACE Applications**
 - a. **PACE Program Update, Summary of Applications and PACE Council Review**

Andrew reviewed PowerPoint presentation (slides attached) summarizing the formation of the PACE program and activities to date since 2013.

Andrew summarized the status of past applications. Three have been closed in early 2023 and three more are intended to close in 2023. Andrew presented the Power Point slides and the Council discussed the details of each application. In this application cycle, there were three parcels renewed from prior years and three new parcels.

Discussed the importance of recognizing the priority areas and the LESA score rankings. While there are thousands areas eligible for the program, due to limited funding the process must be objective and focus on highest ranked. Andrew review the fund balances and budget available for future new applications. Discussion regarding the federal applications process. Andrew informed the Council that the application process has changed since the last applications were submitted. The USDA-NRCS now accepts applications via the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The goal of this partnership program is to pool potential local match dollars for easements to show interest in the program as a way to generate and justify more federal funds in the state. The American Farmland Trust organized a group of entities in Wisconsin for this partnership. The partnership is valid for 5 years and the Rock County "contribution" is based on the usual amount budgeted for acquisition each year (around \$200,000). All Rock County funds will still go to easements in Rock County, but pooling local match fund is essentially leveraging to get more federal funds in Wisconsin. It also means that local applications no longer are ranked or compete with other applications from around the state. If an application is deemed eligible it will be approved because the funding via this pool of resources is essentially approved in advance (similar to a matching grant program). There was continued discussion about past County Board decisions related to funding sources for the program (i.e. ATC funds, sales tax, sale of county owned property, revenue from the Alliant Solar project) and how the priority areas were selected.

At this point, Supervisor Sweeney made a motion to recommend to the County Board that the McNall, Myhre Sayre #1 and Sayre #2 applications be the local applications to the federal USDA-NRCS program, ranked in priority in that order based on the LESA scores, seconded by Supervisor Bostwick. **Motion Carried.**

Ref # (not rank)	Landowner Name	Parcel #	Primary Target Acquisition Area	LESA	ACRES	Town/Sec
1	Evan Sayre	6-16-114	Secondary	6.8	73	Porter 13
2	Evan Sayre	6-16-205	Secondary	6.7	80	Porter 4
3	William McNall	6-9-256	Yes	7.8	151	Johnstown 29
4	William and Jill Myhre Trust	6-16-9.4	Yes	7.3	41	Porter 2
5	Roger and Kathy Demrow	6-18-74 and 6-18-81.1	None	5.6	94	Spring Valley 11
6	Ken and Judy Demrow	6-16-241	None	5.9	77	Porter 11

B. Approval to Begin Acquisition Process for Selected 2023 PACE Program Applications.

Andrew explained that the resolution was drafted last week for Administrative review so that the Committee could take action this week after reviewing the applications and making a decision, rather than waiting to next month for the resolution. Therefore, it was intended that the drafted resolution be amended to reflect the LCC decision on the applications.

Supervisor Sweeney made a motion to approve the Resolution with the amendment to remove the two Demrow applications, reflecting the LCC decision to approve the McNall, Myhre Sayre #1 and Sayre #2 applications, seconded by Mr. Quade. **Motion Carried.**

7. **2023 Conservation Tour Planning – August 10th**

After discussion at the last meeting, August 10th was the date selected for a summer tour. Andrew reminded the Committee that this tour gives staff to show physical conservation practices that have been worked on over the years and explain the various programs that are administered by the Department. The plan is to you're the west and northwest portions of the county. Andrew asked that the Committee let staff know if there is anything in particular they would like to see.

8. **Groundwater Nitrate Work Group Update**

Andrew summarized the meeting of the Work Group last week.

9. **State Budget Update**

As summarized in an email to the Committee, the state Joint Finance Committee voted to include in the State Budget a roughly 3% decrease in the DATCP funding for county conservation staff. In 2023, Rock County received \$171,939. If the 3% cut is distributed based on the current allocation plan, that means a cut of around \$5,158. The Governor signed the budget today and this cut was included. Andrew explained that the current allocation formal would allow the County to received around \$373,000 in staff dollars IF the budget supported it. In other words, based on the number of staff in the office and other sources of funding, the allocation formal indicates more funds should be sent to all counties, not less.

10. **Review Bills Paid – June Payments.** No questions.

11. **Adjourn:** Supervisor Towns made a motion to adjourn at 8:35 pm, seconded by Mr. Quade. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Baker
Director

Minutes are not official until adopted by the Land Conservation Committee.

G: office/lcc/lcc2023/M070523