

# WISCONSIN COUNTIES UTILITY TAX ASSOCIATION

Two East Mifflin Street, Suite 600, Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Phone: (608) 255-8891

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD

February 26, 2010

### Officers

President

JOHN H. TRAMBURG  
(920) 484-3534  
Columbia County

Vice President

RICHARD OTT  
(608) 756-2443  
Rock County

Secretary

GREGORY M. TORRES  
(262) 490-1704  
Jefferson County

Treasurer

LINDA SINKULA  
(920) 388-3251  
Kewaunee County

Executive Director

ALICE O'CONNOR  
Direct(608) 252-9391  
aoc@dewittross.com

Of Counsel

MICHAEL R. VAUGHAN

### Member Counties

ASHLAND  
BUFFALO  
CHIPPEWA  
COLUMBIA  
DOUGLAS  
DUNN  
GRANT  
JEFFERSON  
KENOSHA  
KEWAUNEE  
LA CROSSE  
MANITOWOC  
MARATHON  
MARINETTE  
OZAUKEE  
ROCK  
SHEBOYGAN  
VERNON  
WASHINGTON

### **DeWitt Ross & Stevens S.C. Madison, Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin County Utility Tax Association meeting was called to order at 10:34 a.m. by WCUTA Chair John Tramburg, after guest speaker Rep. Soletski finished his presentation. The following members were present:

Chippewa County	Lawrence Willkom	(715) 723-5804
Columbia County	John H. Tramburg	(920) 484-3534
Grant County	John Patcle	(608) 723-2711
Kewaunee County	Kaye Shillin	(920) 388-2654
Kewaunee County	Linda Sinkula	(920) 388-3251
LaCrosse County	Jim Ehram	(608)784-6538
Manitowoc County	Paul Tittl	(608)682-6203
Marathon County	Kristi Kordres	
Rock County	Phil Boutwell	(608) 757-5506
Rock County	Richard Ott	(608) 756-2443
Sheboygan County	William C. Goehring	(920) 994-4749
Vernon County	Tom Spenner	(608)489-2302
Washington County	Doug Johnson	
Washington County	John Stern	
Wisconsin Counties	David Callender	(608)663-7188

The following members were present via telephone:

Buffalo County	Del Twidt	(608)687-8549
Dunn County	Steven Rasmussen	(715) 632-2181
Jefferson County	Sharon Schmeling	(920) 674-6517
Jefferson County	Gregory Torres	(262) 490-1734
Ozaukee County	Thomas W. Meaux	(262)238-8201

The following member was excused from the meeting:

Marinette County	Vilas Schroeder	(715) 582-9280
------------------	-----------------	----------------

Staff present: Alice O'Connor, Executive Director of WCUTA, of DeWitt Ross & Stevens S.C., David Callender, Wisconsin Counties Association.

### Guest Speakers

Alice introduced guest speaker **Representative Jim Soletski (D-Green Bay)** prior to the official meeting being called to order. Rep. Soletski, the chair of the Assembly Utility Committee gave his views on the current Global Warming legislation SB-

450/AB-649. He said the four co-sponsors of the Governor's bill, himself included, had split opinions on how Wisconsin should move forward on renewable energy matters. With a prior background in the utility industry, Rep. Soletski said before he was elected he was an "environmentalist". Now he has been labeled a "tool of the utility industry". Opponents have released criticism of the bill attacking eight of 13 items that will lose 43,000 jobs that are not even in the legislation. He says since 70% of Wisconsin energy needs are addressed by coal, many politicians prefer to address ways to reduce the cost of shipping coal to Wisconsin and would even like to build more coal plants. He says a 25% reduction by the year 2025 is doable if we loosen the moratorium on nuclear power.

The Global Warming Committee just completed six hearings and 31 hours of testimony. This bill he stressed, is the Governor's bill, he is just one of four co-sponsors. He said the legislation needs to better define "renewable" and he said is not a "anti-nuclear".

He said renewable energy is:

- Gasification of municipal waste
- When 15 tons of county garbage ends up being five tons of waste (He asked if garbage was renewable?)
- When waste does not end up in an incinerator

He has asked that items be pulled from the bill that should be handled at the federal level. For example, the state is already doing the California car standard. He said there is engine idling discussion taking place and a much more reasonable agreement is being reached.

He said he does not believe wind energy is a sustainable source because no wind mill operations would be built without subsidies. He said he wrote the wind mill legislation this session, and Republican Phil Montgomery (R-Green Bay) wrote it last session when Republicans had the majority.

Rep. Soletski said he would like to see legislation replace aging power plants. Manitowoc Supervisor Tittl suggests that a nuclear power plant between Manitowoc and Kewaunee would be perfect.

Rep. Soletski said issues to be addressed and discussed include who has to store spent rods for a new plant. He said politicians need to move beyond 30 more years of "processing" and act. "The only time conservation works, is if we have to pay for it. People need incentives."

**Chair Tramburg called the Meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.** The agenda as presented was approved on a motion from Jim Ehram, seconded by Supervisor Ott. The minutes from the August 24, 2009, meeting were approved on a motion by Mr. Ehram, seconded by Supervisor Tittl. Chairman Tramburg next asked for volunteers to serve on both the Nominating Committee and the Audit Committees.

**Nominating Committee.** Chairman Tramburg accepted the following individuals to serve on the Audit Committee. Supervisor Larry Willkom, Supervisor Steve Rasmussen and either Supervisor Sharon Schmeling or Greg Torres.

**Audit Committee.** The following individuals agreed to serve on the Committee:  
Supervisors Steve Rasmussen, Chair;  
Linda Sinkula; and  
Paul Tittl.

All members have to do is come 30 minutes before the start of the next meeting and review books.

### **Guest Speakers**

Alice then introduced the second guest speaker **Scott Meske, Associate Director of Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin (MEUW)** who discussed his association's perception of global warming and proposals and impact on municipally owned utilities. The association covers 81 counties and was started in 1890. The organization first came into existence to train line workers but today they are also interested in mutual aid for natural occurrences that knock power out. They distribute energy, they don't generate it. They have 82 members, 275,000 customers (the size of MG&E) with Manitowoc the largest publically owned utility. They are governed by the PSC on retail rates. Wholesale rates are governed by FERC locally. Each municipal utility is governed by the city council, a utility board or a commission. As we move forward Mr. Meske said they are curious how "advance renewable tariffs" will work to buy back rates where utilities would pay you for their unused s\_\_\_ credits. (For example \$.30 Kilowatt per hour.)

Mr. Meske says 18%-20% of their energy use is still from out of state and any new regulations need to ensure we don't have higher standards than our neighboring states. He said the cost of coal is largely due to high transportation costs from the western Powder River Basin.

He said they are small players in the global warming issues and want to be sure rate hikes are not disproportionately high to the municipal electric companies.

### **Treasurer's Report – Alice O'Connor**

Alice O'Connor gave the Treasurer's report. The checking account balance as of January 31, 2010, was \$45,973.93. The total amount in the local government pool is \$611.42. The total disbursements for this period are \$11,967.04. A three-month CD is due February 27, 2010, in the amount of \$15,075.30. Supervisor Sinkula said the January 2010 dues check cut by Kewaunee County was never received so follow-up with DeWitt is proceeding and then the dues will be paid in full. There was some discussion of Brown County benefiting from our successful efforts but continuing to avoid paying dues. Brown County received \$768,000 in new money in 2009.

Superior Tittl asked for previous correspondence and he said he would follow-up. Alice also reported that since her new assistant is an accountant, Casey Maniaci would convert WCUTA records to an excel spreadsheet by the next meeting. There will be no extra charge to WCUTA. The Treasurer's Report was accepted by Supervisor Spenner, seconded by Supervisor Willkom.

**WCA report Dave Callendar.** Since the \$3 billion economic stimulus money helped plug a \$2 billion hole, reductions at the State level hit the Transportation budget hard. He said county's big issue will be tax rate limits that were set in the 1990s. Counties can't raise tax rates higher than what they were in 1992. Since growth is flat in Columbia County as an example, the mill rate means they can't raise taxes. Senators Miller, and Olson and Reps. Schilling and Hintz plan to introduce a bill to eliminate the 1992 mill rate for counties since counties operate under two sets of limits. The hardest hits counties are Kewaunee, Columbia, La Crosse and Winnebago. Republicans will not sign onto the bill even though it affects their district with the loss of shared revenue. The legislation will be forced to go after more transportation funds. The good news is the county assessment bill is dead.

A motion to adjourn was made by Supervisor Willkom and seconded by Supervisor Sinkula to adjourn the meeting at approximately 2:10 pm. The next meeting will be held Friday, May 17, 2010, at **10:30 a.m. to approximately 1:30 p.m. at DeWitt Ross & Stevens, 6<sup>th</sup> floor** as a working lunch. Alice will invite a legislative speaker and possibly other special guests.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice O'Connor, Executive Director