

April 9, 2021 Minutes of the Board of Directors –VIA ZOOM

The meeting was called to order at 10:31 AM by Board , Supervisor William Goehring. Roll call was taken.

PRESENT: William Goehring- Sheboygan County Supervisor, Thomas Rosenberg, Marathon County Supervisor , Walt Christensen - Jefferson County Supervisor, Bob Yeomans - Rock County Supervisor, Alice O'Connor - WCUTA , Kelly McDowell.

Via zoom: Robert Keeney - Grant County Board Chair, Roger Call, Vernon County Supervisor, Don Kriefall, Washington County Board Chair, Vern Gove, Columbia County Board Chair, Cindy Groetzinger, Forest County Chair, Kevin Hamann, Oconto County Administrator, Supervisor, Vern Koch, Sheboygan County Board Chair, Monica Kruse, LaCrosse County, Clark Schroeder - Ashland County Administrator, Ray Ransom Jackson County Board ,Charlene Kervina, Chippewa County Board Chair, Lee Engelbrecht Manitowoc County Supervisor; Shonna Neary, Columbia County Project manager, Nora Matuszewski, Forest County Clerk, Carrie Redington, Vernon County Administrator

GUEST speaker: REP. Loren Oldenburg

Chairman's Report Supervisor William Goehring

Chairman Goehring reintroduced and welcomed Kelly McDowell who has been added to lobbying efforts during the budget cycle. He mentioned that WCUTA now had resolutions from the following counties: Ashland, Chippewa, Jackson, Jefferson, LaCrosse, Manitowoc, Oconto, Outagamie, Rock, Trempealeau, Sheboygan, Vernon and Waushara. If others can get their letters or resolutions to Alice by the end of April that would be appreciated.

By- Law change-Supervisor Goehring mentioned that at the last meeting, it was noted a provision remained saying that a county could not pay less than \$500 in dues. Since several counties pay less than \$500 and their membership is valued based on how the annual utility tax dues is calculated, the provision should be removed. A motion from Supervisor Rosenberg, seconded by Supervisor Yeomans to remove the \$500 dues minimum was approved.

An updated membership list was provided, and any corrections need to be directed to Alice O'Connor. The list also shows who the primary legislators for a specific county. Ongoing encouragement to talk to your own lawmakers about our budget motion was suggested.

WORK Group to analyze DOR utility tax data and update issues for 2022 Legislative Study Committee: Supervisor Goehring stated that after Alice made an open records request of the Dept of Revenue, DOR abruptly sent a 990 page report of all utility tax 144 reports, filed annually by utilities. He noted we had been asking for this information for six years. Chairman Goehring asked for volunteers to work on the subcommittee to help analyze the data and bring back summary comments about trends or recommendations that should be added to our scope statement request for a study next year. Anyone interested in serving should contact the chair or Alice.

The following individuals volunteered: Supervisor Yeoman, Rosenberg and Keeney. Others are urged to engage in this work group.

RETAINER ADJUSTMENT DURING BUDGET-Constituency Services has requested an increase of the monthly retainer to \$3,000 per month and \$1,500 per month for Kelly McDowell through June 30,2021. This would begin April 1. The work load as our two lobbyist work on several different avenues to obtain any sort of increase in utility tax funds returned to local governments, has greatly increased. The added workload and time commitment should be reflected in the retainer. Both individuals stepped out of the room during the discussion and when this vote was taken. Tom Rosenberg moved and Walt Christainsen moved to approve the requested retainer amounts starting April 1, 2021 ending June 30, 2021. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES -The minutes from the April 9, 2021 were approved on a motion from Supervisor Yeomans, seconded by Supervisor Rosenberg.

Treasurer’s Report -Supervisor Robert Keeney

Supervisor Keeney reported the checkbook balance as of balance as of February 1,2021 was \$30,396.38. The balance as of February 28,2021 was \$31,359.27 after dues from Ashland County \$962.19 and check book Interest of \$.70 . The check book balance as of March 31,2021 was \$28,994.12 with \$.79 cents in checkbook interest after CSI paid \$2,365.94. The checkbook balance as of April 6,2021 was \$41,082.93 after dues deposits from Jackson County - \$132.87; Waushara County -\$197.71; Dunn County -\$289.47, Sheboygan County- \$2,059.10; Kenosha County- \$3,385.44; Trempealeau County -\$248.24; Chippewa County- \$2, 567.50; Waushara County, \$191.71; Manitowoc County- \$4,028.33. The checking balance as of April 6, 2021 is \$41,902.78 with an outstand CSI payment in the amount of \$5,698.62. The Certificate of Deposit (XXX279) balance as of November 30, 2020 was \$41,057.62 with February 28 ,2021 interest in the amount of \$25. 31, resulting in an April 6 2021 balance of \$41,082.93. The total balance with checkbook and CD as of April 6, 2021 is \$77,287.09 (including two CSI payments)

The Treasurer’s report was approved on a motion form Supervisor Yeomans, second by Supervisor Rosenberg.

Executive Director Report - Alice O’Connor said the hearings for the Joint Finance Committee would be wrapping up end of April with first votes by May. In order for a motion not be considered, it must be in the form of a bill draft and individual lawmakers must work wit their “budget buddy” on the Finance Committee. Our efforts are being undermined with news that an additional 43.1 billion dollars in “recovery money” will be received. Many in the majority party say local governments are going to get plenty of money and don’t know how they will spend it. Meanwhile she shared reports from the National conference of state legislatures that illustrate what other states are doing to deal with move away from coal fired power plants who generate electricity. Reports show that states uses varied taxes approach, have different decommissioning processes, different renewable energy tax credits, deductions and exemptions. Some states actually allow utility user taxes based on gross receipts enacted by local governments (CA, Michigan, Virginia). Emerging is securitization laws when plants shut down(New Mexico and Colorado) and some grants to push [people to renewables through the Regulatory Assistance Project. These reports will be useful for our legislative Council Study Committee request. She also shared the summary list of comments shared with Rep. Kuglitsch, chair of the Assembly utility committee.

Alice reported she and Kelly have met with more than 60 lawmakers as well as members of Joint Finance. Rep. Tittl, a former member of WCUTA, has agreed to draft a budget amendment motion. We are still trying to nail down a lead Senate co-sponsor. Working with Senator Rob Cowles, we are hopeful he will agree to be our senate lead. Rep. Kurtz, a member of the Joint Finance committee has indicated we need to have our motion in the form of a bill in order for Finance to consider it.

We have dropped our inflationary increase requests going back to 2005 as well as an inflationary adjustment going forward because support isn't there right now. The majority republicans are focused on the \$3.1 billion dollars coming into the state. The legislature is not included to ship more money to local governments. We continue to make the case that the stimulus money is one time and we are discussing unfair distribution over more than three decades. Everyone is still waiting on Dept of Treasury guidance on how funds can be spent. It cannot be spent for property tax relief. Alice said we are continuing to work with Rep. Tittl and Rep. Kurtz on any amendment that will have enough votes to pass and capture more money for utility taxes back to local governments. We are waiting on bill drafts. With the Joint Finance Committee voting on the budget beginning in May, counties should make their contacts with their own lawmakers by May 12 if at all possible.

Lobbyist Kelly McDowell presented slides highlighting key facts about Wisconsin's electrical generation sector. She Since 2002, Wisconsin's annual electrical generation usage from all utilities has ranged from 60,000 to 66,000 GWh, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). As Wisconsin's energy generation profile changes, shifting toward renewables, that is the level of generation capacity that should remain available. She reported that Wisconsin's current electrical generation mix is: 42.0% coal, 32.4% natural gas (nearly quadrupled over the past decade), 16.0% nuclear (largest source of carbon free electrical energy since 1970), 4.2% hydroelectric, 3.0% wind, 2.1% biomass, Petroleum (0.2%), and Solar (0.1%). Small-scale solar, including customer-owned photovoltaic panels, delivered an additional net 101 GWh to the state's electricity grid. This was more than twice the generation by Wisconsin's utility-scale PV plants.

Ms. McDowell showed a map with the locations of 174 power plants in Wisconsin. She said this EIA map is interactive and includes information about each of the locations. Another EIA slide shows U.S. retiring and new electrical generation capacity through 2050. Nuclear and coal will account for the majority of U.S. generating capacity in the U.S. in 2021. A significant number of U.S. coal plants are slated for retirement in 2025. Nearly two-thirds of COAL capacity retirements in 2021 are in four states: Maryland, Florida, Connecticut, and Wisconsin. The largest coal retirement in 2021 will be at Chalk Point in Maryland, followed by retirements at Big Bend in Florida, Bridgeport Station in Connecticut, and Genoa in Wisconsin.

She said that four of seven-remaining coal-fired plants in Wisconsin will close by 2025, resulting in a loss of 2,956 MWs of remaining 5,846 MWs of coal-fired capacity. Those seven plants are among the top electrical generators in Wisconsin, the other eight plants are natural gas. The retiring plants are: Genoa Generating Station in 2021 (308 MW), Edgewater Generating Station in 2022 (414 MW), Oak Creek Power Plant in 2023-24 (1097 MW), and Columbia Power Plant in 2025 (1137 MW).

Ms. McDowell said the Public Service Commission in March of 2021 voted to launch an investigation into utilities' ongoing transition to zero-carbon electricity. Currently, 75% of Wisconsin's power generated with the use of fossil fuels (strategic energy assessment); If nuclear excluded, 91 percent of state's power mix need to be replaced with renewable energy sources. The investigation will consider: 1) Retirement of fossil fuel power plants and deployment of new energy alternatives; 2) Increase in customers who generate their own power and are tied to the grid; 3) Increase in new technologies like battery storage; 4) Programs that help customers control their energy use and lower utility bills; and 5) The design and operation of the regional transmission grid and wholesale markets. Commission staff will also review: 1) Goals set by the state's five largest utilities to reduce carbon emissions 100 percent by 2050 and recommendations stemming from Gov. Tony Evers' executive order on clean energy: The future is accelerating the clean energy transition outlined by a Wisconsin group of utilities, consumer advocates and business groups.

SPEAKER Rep. Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua) joined via zoom and he reported that as result of DairyLand Power shutting down the Genoa plant with just two months' notice, he plans to introduce a budget amendment working with Senator Ballweg that would extend the length of time for reduced utility aid payments form five years to ten years. The estimate is about estimated \$16.7 million. The goal is to reduce pain, not solve the long term problem communities will face when their utility tax payment is reduced. He will be pursuing with Senator Ballweg who is also on finance, his amendment which creates a new Statute section, subsection 8 under 79.04 that specifies that the newly created subsection, 79.04(8), only applies to production plants with multiple power generation units whose first power generation unit stops generating electricity after the effective date of the law. In plain language, the goal is to only apply this to plants who have not begun the phase out process, so plants who have already begun to phase out units to decommission a plant would not be eligible. The bill also clarifies that the 10-year phase out payments do not begin until the production plant is decommissioned or closed.

There was general discussion by Board members of both short-term budget goals and the longer term fix needed. Everyone agrees it is critical to contact your own lawmakers and make them aware of the need to support whatever has traction in Finance Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 PM on a motion for Supervisor Walt Christensen and seconded by Supervisor Monica Kruse.

The next meeting is set for May 21, 2021 at 10:30 location to be announced.
