

## **May 21 , 2021 Minutes of the Board of Directors Wisconsin Counties Utility Tax Association –VIA ZOOM and in person**

The meeting was called to order at 10:32 M by Board Chair, 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, Mark Wadium Outagamie county.

**Via zoom:** Lee Engelbrecht, Manitowoc County; Sonya Hansen, Buffalo County; Vern Koch- Sheboygan County Board Chair; Robert Keeney - Grant County Board Chair, Roger Call, Vernon County Supervisor; Charlene Kervina, Chippewa County Supervisor; Vern Gove, Columbia County Board Chair; Ray Ransom, Jackson County ; Charlene Kervina, Chippewa County Board Chair; Lee Engelbrecht, Manitowoc County Supervisor; Shonna Neary, Columbia County Project manager.

### **Chairman’s Report Supervisor William Goehring**

Supervisor Goehring stated the primary purpose of the one hour meeting is to discuss the status of our budget motion efforts and to obtain an update from the Senator Ballweg/Rep. Loren Oldenburg ten year step down legislation. He clarified it won’t help those counties who have already been impacted by a reduction. It will only help those counties who face a reduction in utility tax funding starting this year and going forward.

Supervisor Goering said after the budget bill is done, the time will be ripe for the ad hoc work group to analyze DOR utility tax data and update issues for 2022 Legislative Study Committee. Now that the Dept of Revenue provided us with raw data that includes over 900 pages worth of all utility tax 144 reports filed annually by utilities, the subcommittee will 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. WCA will be asked if they can be of assistance. He reaffirmed that Supervisor Yeoman, Rosenburg and Keeney will serve and anyone else interested still has time to step forward.

### **Treasurer’s Report -Supervisor Robert Keeney was dispensed for this meeting.**

Budget motion update Alice reported that without calls from local constituents, Kelly McDowell, Mark Wadium and herself would not be able to convince members of the Joint finance Committee that the \$25 million ask was modest, deserved and viable at a time when the state was not only flush with a lot of cash in the rainy day fund – separate from one time money from the federal government. Alice mentioned that some members of our group had not yet taken the time to contact their own state rep and senators and it was frustrating.

**Senator Ballweg Proposal** will no longer be a part of the Joint Finance Committee deliberations as a possible budget amendment. Alice reported that Senator Ballweg says her bill has a lot of policy in it and she fears it would not survive a governor veto. As such, she will pursue separate legislation.

Lois Schepp, Columbia County comptroller said the Columbia County plant has not been approved for a shut down yet. The issue for Columbia County is if your plant is in a multiyear shut down, Columbia County gets no utility aid. Both units produce 1100 megawatts. If both units shut down at one time there would be a levy limit exemption. Right now, Columbia County will lose half of the \$1.7 million with unit one shutting down next year. Ms. Schepp says we can't recover those funds. Senator Ballweg is pursuing the ten year step down because of what has happened in Columbia County. Initially she was going to pursue a budget amendment but was nervous so she plans to wait until after the budget and introduce separate legislation. A motion to support Senator Ballweg's proposal was made by Supervisor Rosenberg and seconded by Supervisor Yeoman —it passed.

Alice mentioned that all the definitions related to allowable "government services" under the last batch of stimulus funds is still not final. The federal guidelines do say funding "front line workers and the services they must provide" – must be funded. Utility workers are considered front line workers. Local governments can make a case that local services provided for the safety and well being of a community where power plants and substations are located, should also be considered essential services. We know funds cannot be used to reduce property taxes but definitive criteria are still unclear if revenue from utility tax reductions can be considered a legitimate use of stimulus money.

Alice said that the stimulus package also earmarked \$30 million for quarterly audits that will be looking at how money is used. Inappropriate use of funds will face stiff penalties. The federal government is working on interim rules and will roll this out after 60 days of comment. There will be required progress reports by September 2022.

Supervisor Yeomans said the most important thing is to get payback before a plant shuts down. Other questions were raised during the discussion. How will utility taxes be calculated for liquified natural gas, for example.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 am on a motion by Supervisor Christensen, seconded by Supervisor Rosenberg. Meeting adjourned.

The next meeting was set for Friday, July 23 at 10:30 am

---