

**MARATHON COUNTY BOARD SIZE TASK FORCE
AGENDA**

**DECEMBER 16, 2020
4:00 P.M.**

210 RIVER DR., WAUSAU, WI

Task Force Purpose: Determine the optimal number of Marathon County Supervisory Districts, each represented by one County Board Supervisor. In making this determination, the Task Force shall consider the expected impact of the proposed board size on: the ability to attract well qualified candidates and to foster competitive elections, the efficient functioning of county governance, and the cost of County Government.

Members: John Robinson – Chair, Craig McEwen - Vice Chair, Tim Buttke, Sandi Cihlar, Jacob Langenhahn, Arnold Schlei, Rick Seefeldt, David Eckmann, Deb Hager

The meeting site identified above will be open to the public. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health directives, Marathon County encourages Task Force members and the public to attend this meeting remotely. To this end, instead of attendance in person, Task Force members and the public may attend this meeting by **telephone conference**. If Task Force members or members of the public cannot attend remotely, Marathon County requests that appropriate safety measures, including adequate social distancing, be utilized by all in-person attendees.

Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the telephone conference beginning **five (5) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number:**

PHONE NUMBER: 1-408-418-9388

Access Code / Meeting Number: 146 270 5670

Please Note: If you are prompted to provide an “Attendee Identification Number” enter the # sign. No other number is required to participate in the telephone conference.

When you enter the telephone conference, PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. CALL TO ORDER;
2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS;
3. PUBLIC COMMENT;

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

1. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 30, 2020 MEETING;
2. DISCUSS TASK FORCE REPORT FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND COUNTY BOARD;
3. REVIEW TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS AND REDISTRICTING TIME LINE;
4. NEXT MEETING DATE IF NEEDED;
5. ADJOURN.

Any person planning to attend this meeting who needs some type of special accommodation in order to participate should call the County Clerk’s Office at 715-261-1500 or e-mail infomarathon@mail.co.marathon.wi.us one business day before the meeting.

EMAILED OR FAXED TO:
News Dept. at Daily Herald (715-848-9361), City Pages (715-848-5887),
Midwest Radio Group (715-848-3158), Marshfield News (877-943-0443),
TPP Printing (715 223-3505)
Date: December 9, 2020
Time: 1:25 p.m.
By: cek
Time/By: _____

SIGNED 

Presiding Officer or Designee
NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE:
Date: _____
Time: _____ a.m. / p.m.
By: County Clerk

**MARATHON COUNTY BOARD SIZE TASK FORCE
MINUTES
November 30, 2020**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Robinson – Chair, Craig McEwen - Vice Chair, Tim Buttke, Sandi Cihlar, Rick Seefeldt, Arnold Schlei, Deb Hager

MEMBERS EXCUSSED: Jacob Langenhahn, Dave Eckmann,

OTHERS PRESENT: Kurt Gibbs, Jean Maszk, Dave Mack, Amanda Ley, Jamie Alberti, Valerie Carrillo, Meg Ellefson

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. CALL TO ORDER

In the presence of a quorum, with the agenda being properly signed and posted, the meeting was called to order by Chairman Robinson at 3:00 p.m. via WebEx.

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Robinson welcomed all that were present.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Valerie Carrillo commented that she has attended or listened in to all of the Task Force meeting and believed the Task Force has done a good job reviewing all the available information regarding Board Size changes from other Counties. She also thought Task force was thoughtful in their recommendation process with regards to the size of the Board. She then expressed the desire to have the County Board remain at the current 38 members.

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

1. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 22, 2020 AND NOVEMBER 12, 2020 MEETINGS;

Action: MOTION / SECOND BY BUTTKE / MCEWEN TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 22, 2020 AND NOVEMBER 12, 2020 MEETING MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT.

2. REVIEW COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION AND COMMENT PERIOD;

Mack provided a summary of the 118 total comments submitted as part of the public information gathering efforts of the Task Force. Comments were received by letter, email, phone message, on the County website, and at the Public Listening Session. Of the 118 responses, 78% desired the board to keep its current 38 membership, 19% identified the desired for a 27 member board and 3% desired a 32 member board. All of the comments will be compiled and placed in the final report from the Task Force.

Action: NO ACTION TAKEN, FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

3. DISCUSS EVALUATION CRITERIA WITH THE 3 BOARD SIZE OPTIONS;

Mack began the discussion by providing the staff perspective regarding the evaluation of the 3 different board size options the Task Force identified for public comment. His rationale for the 32 member option and the 27 member option scored the same because they were both less than the current membership option of 38 members. The Task Force discussed the rationale for the scores given with the 38 members criteria scoring the highest. Hager offered her scoring using the form and even though her numbers differed, the outcome of the 38 member options ranked highest.

Action: NO ACTION TAKEN, FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

MARATHON COUNTY BOARD SIZE TASK FORCE

November 30, 2020

4. CREATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE;

With the public comments and the evaluation criteria scoring, Robinson ask the Task Force for their thoughts on a recommendation for the County Executive Committee.

Schlei commented that the Farm Bureau Letter and Town's Letters all represent more than just one comment they represent all of their constituents. He is in favor of keeping the membership of the board at 38.

Cihlar agreed with Schlei and even though the public input was more difficult then desired, a good response was obtained. She commented that the County's Comprehensive Plan calls for good relationships with local Governments and this would be keeping those relationships in good order. She would like the board membership to remain at 38.

Buttke commented that he was on the fence in the beginning and now has moved toward keeping the board size the same. He believes there is no political appetite for making a change and a larger board can have more diverse groups represented. He would like to keep the board size at 38 members.

McEwen commented that he had no opinion in the beginning but after talking to other counties he doesn't think there is a need for a change. He believes the committees are working well and is leaning towards keeping the membership at 38.

Seefelt commented that he has talked to a lot of people lately and everyone has indicated they should leave the board size at 38. He believes the supervisors should be attending their town board meetings more and would like the board size to stay at 38.

Hager recommends the board stay at 38 members. She again asked "what are we trying to solve, what isn't working with the 38 member board?" She indicated that there is strong local government support for 38 members and that the towns are engaged with the county actions. The political will to change is not worth the political cost of doing so.

Robinson expressed his supporting the status quo. He like the fresh ideas and opinions of all those that commented. The idea of diversity was the most compelling. Having different opinions make the board better. There is not a sense of community acceptance for change and that a change will not be received well by the public. He also mentioned that with all the committees, commissions and boards we are one of the most representative boards in the country.

Gibbs commented that all of the comments are good and that downsizing doesn't improve the ability to attract new people to the board. Currently the lack of political will and the desire for more diversity on the board are opportunities and someday things may push the other way.

Maszk was able to comment and added that county and town boards are questioned at times and right now we are unique and diverse and we should keep the board at 38 members.

Action: MOTION / SECOND BY CIHLAR / SCHLEI TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE RECOMMENDATION TO KEEP THE BOARD SIZE AT 38 MEMBERS AND PREPARE A REPORT TO PRESENT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND COUNTY BOARD. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT.

5. DISCUSS TASK FORCE REPORT FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND COUNTY BOARD;

Robinson presented a timeline for bringing a report to the Executive Committee in December and to the County Board in January. The County Board will be asked to take action on the board size at the February meeting with the rest of the year being devoted to the redistricting efforts to conclude by November 2021.

Action: NO ACTION TAKEN, FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

MARATHON COUNTY BOARD SIZE TASK FORCE

November 30, 2020

6. ADJOURN

Action: There being no further business to come before the members, **ROBINSON TO ADJOURNED THE MEETING OF THE MARATHON COUNTY BOARD SIZE TASK FORCE. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT, MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 4:30 PM.**

Submitted by:
Dave Mack, Program Manager
Marathon County Conservation, Planning and Zoning
DM:
December 9, 2020

REDISTRICTING TIMELINE*

December 16, 2020	Finalize Report and Recommendation
January 14, 2021	Presentation to Executive Committee
January 21, 2021	Presentation to County Board
February 23, 2021	County Board action on Board Size
February-March 2021	Appoint Redistricting Committee
March 2021	Establish Guidelines for Redistricting
April-May 2021	Develop a Tentative Plan (1)
May 2021	Public Hearing on Tentative Plan
May 2021	County Board Adopts Tentative Plan
June-July 2021	Create Municipal Wards
August-September 2021	Finalize and Adopt Redistricting Plan
November 15, 2021	Redistricting Plan in Effect
December 2021	Nomination Papers Circulated
April 2022	Election

* Based on WCA Redistricting Handbook

(1) Process ends 60 days after receipt of census information

FINAL REPORT

TASK FORCE ON THE SIZE OF THE

MARATHON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

DECEMBER 2020

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DRAFT

BACKGROUND

In Wisconsin Section 23 of Article IV of the Constitution directs the state legislature to “establish one or more systems of county government”. The legislature in enacting Subchapter III of Chapter 59 of the Wisconsin Statutes spells out the process for determining the size of the county board. 59.10 (3)(a)1 specifically limits the number of supervisors in Counties like Marathon with a population of less than 750,000 but at least 100,000 to no more than 47 supervisors. The process for creating a supervisory district is established under s. 59.10 (3) (b) tying the process into the “population count by census block, established in the decennial federal census”. The statutes establish a process for establishing districts after each census as well as allowing for the reduction in board size during the decade.

According to the National Association of Counties the average size of a county governing body across the country is 5 members. There are two models for county governance. A majority of states and counties utilize the Commission structure for governance it is sometimes referred to as the “Pennsylvania” model which is made up of boards with part-time commissioners with paid staff. They consist of a small number of commissioners, three to five, who serve as the governing body within the county, performing all legislative and executive functions. Their duties include adopting a budget, passing resolutions, and hiring and firing county officials. Wisconsin does not allow the commission form of governance in counties.

Wisconsin has followed the “New York” model of government which tends to have larger boards of “volunteers” and their committee structure is more open and transparent. The reliance on committees results in larger boards. In New York, the size of the governing board, referred to as either, Legislature, Board of Supervisors or Board of Representatives, ranges from 7 in Orleans and Franklin Counties to 39 in Albany County.

In addition, Wisconsin is one of 13 states that places additional responsibilities and duties on counties to provide human services which has resulted in counties in those states typically having larger boards.

The size and responsibilities of county boards in Wisconsin is also driven by the structure of the executive branch the counties have adopted: 11 counties have an elected County Executive, 28 counties including Marathon County rely on an appointed County Administrator while the remaining 33 counties rely on an Administrative Coordinator. Each structure places different roles and responsibilities on the executive.

In 2006 Act 100 modifying ss. 159.10 of the Wisconsin Statutes was signed into law that allowed counties to reduce the size of their boards between decennial redistricting. In addition, the legislation created a process under which electors could reduce the size of the county board through a referendum process. The statutes only allow for the reduction of the size of board one time during the decade.

Since Act 100 there have been 11 referendums to reduce the size of county boards across the state 7 of which passed and 4 failed. The following is a listing of those referendums:

Passed

2006	Fond Du Lac Co.	36 to 18
2006 (Nov)	Price Co.	21 to 13
2007	Washburn Co	25 to 11
2007	Walworth Co.	25 to 11
2006	Waushara Co.	21 to 11
2006	Wood Co.	38 to 19
2008	St. Croix Co.	31 to 19

Failed

2007	Douglas Co.	28 to 7
2006 (April)	Price Co.	21 to 7
2007	Rusk Co.	21 to 13
2007	Jackson Co.	21 to 11

The threat of a referendum has also resulted in several counties taking action to reduce the size of their boards. In 2012 14 counties reduced and one increased the size of their county boards as part of the redistricting associated with the 2010 decennial census, they were:

Buffalo Co.	16 to 14
Chippewa Co.	29 to 15
Columbia Co.	31 to 28
Dodge Co.	37 to 33
Douglas Co.	28 to 21
Fond du Lac Co.	18 to 25*
Kenosha Co.	28 to 23
La Crosse Co.	35 to 29
Milwaukee Co.	19 to 18
Ozaukee Co.	31 to 26
Portage Co.	29 to 25
Racine Co.	23 to 21
Rusk Co.	21 to 19
Shawano Co.	30 to 27
Sheboygan Co.	34 to 25

*In Fond du Lac's case, voters in 2006 reduced the size of the board from 36 to 18, but in 2010, the board voted to increase its size back to 25 as part of redistricting which took effect in 2012.

In 2014 Polk County reduced their board from 23 to 15

In 2016 Monroe County went from 24 to 15 and Washington Co. from 30 to 26.

Since 2006, 24 counties or one-third of all counties have reduced the size of their board, 9 through a referendum and 15 through board action. The total number of County Board members has been decreasing since the enactment of Act 100 in 2006.

Year	Total County Board members
2000	1,821
2005	1,789
2010	1,680
2012	1,620
2014	1,612
2016	1,600

Jake Langenhahn, a member of the Task Force also shared research that he had done while working on his master's degree. The paper: Too Many Politicians? How WI Act 100 Changed County Board Sizes provided an overview of changes made in board size and justification and reason for and against downsizing

Marathon County Experience

The history of the county board size in Marathon County is that until 1970 the county board was comprised of 72 members. Up until that time, the chairperson from every town, a representative from each village and a representative from each aldermanic district would serve on the county board. In the 1960s the state legislature changed the law removing the requirement of town chairman be on the board and went to the concept of equal representation. This resulted in Marathon County modifying the size of the county board to 39 members for the 1972 elections. The county board was reduced to 38 members in 1982.

Over the years there has been discussion about reducing the size of the board, when proposals were advanced to the entire board they were rejected by large majorities of the board. At the October 8, 2019 Marathon County Executive Committee meeting there was a discussion of redistricting and possible action on a recommendation to downsize the county board for 2022. It was agreed that more information was needed before deciding and members of the committee were asked to think about developing a charter for a task force, what their responsibilities would be, the makeup, when it will sunset and what should be taken into consideration when developing recommendations. Members were asked to provide information to Chair Gibbs by Oct. 25th. (Source October 8, 2019 minutes for the Executive Committee)

At its November 14, 2019 meeting the County Board considered Resolution #R-60-19 that would adopt a redistricting plan that would reduce the size of the County Board from 38 to 19 members. One of the reasons that the resolution was offered at that time to reduce the size of the board with the intent of utilizing the savings to reduce the proposed budget cuts to non-profit agencies proposed in the budget. The resolution needed to pass at the November County Board meeting to impact the 2020 spring elections. One of the arguments against its adoption was that the county through the discussions at the Executive Committee was committed to evaluating the appropriate size of the Board through the creation of a Task Force. The resolution failed on a 29-4 vote

On December 17, 2019, the County Board approved ordinance #O-37-19 amending Chapter 2.05 of the County Code of Ordinances creating a Task Force on the Size of the Marathon County Board of Supervisors (Task Force). The initial action taken by the board called for the Task Force to deliver its recommendations by July 30, 2020. In March 2020, the County Board modified the sunset date to December 31, 2020.

Due to the spring election in 2020 a decision was made to delay the start of the work of the Task Force until after the new board was seated in April. On May 26, 2020, the appointments to the County Board Size Task Force were confirmed by the County Board. Membership included a representative from each of the Standing Committees and two county residents not currently affiliated with county government. The members were:

Supervisor John Robinson, Chair
Supervisor Craig McEwen, Vice-Chair
Supervisor Arnold Schlei
Supervisor Tim Buttke
Supervisor Rick Seefeldt
Supervisor Jacob Langenhahn
Supervisor Sandi Cihlar
Citizen Member Deb Hager
Citizen Member David Eckmann

The purpose of the Task Force was spelled out in the Charter and was to:

Determine the optimal number of Marathon County Supervisory Districts, each represented by on County Board Supervisor. In making this determination, the Task Force shall consider the expected impact of the proposed board size on:

- a. The ability to attract well qualified candidates and to foster competitive elections.
- b. The efficient functioning of county governance.
- c. The cost of County Government.

The Duties and Responsibilities of the Task Force were to:

- a. Familiarize itself with research/literature on effective governance.
- b. Collect information/data from other Wisconsin Counties about their governance structure.
- c. Consider whether the county's current governance structure needs to be updated through committee or new committees being established.
- d. Estimate the financial impact of various options under consideration.
- e. Predict the impact of any proposed change on expectations of time commitment and the ability of the county to interact effectively with other units of local government, community groups and individual constituents.
- f. Predict how a new structure will change the number of candidates that will seek election to a County Board Supervisor seat and how a change might impact groups often underrepresented such as women and minority group members.

g. Actively seek out public opinion through a series of public hearings and asking groups like the Towns and Village Associations, Chamber of Commerce and other business groups to voice their suggestions and concerns.

This Task Force reports to the Executive Committee of the County Board.

Process

The Task Force met on the following dates:

June 17
July 15
August 19
September 17
October 7
October 22
November 12 (Listening session)
November 30
December 16

Agendas and minutes from all of the meetings along with much of the supporting documentation is contained in the Appendixes.

The initial meeting of the Task Force was held on June 17, 2020. The agenda included an overview of the charter, a presentation on redistricting and a discussion of “what information do you need to help you make a decision regarding the size of the County Board?” Based on the conversation, the Task Force identified five main themes:

- What have other Counties done?
- How does changing the size of the board impact:
 - Representation and Board Diversity;
 - Organizational Effectiveness;
 - Efficiencies and Financial Components.
- In addition they discussed the value of a County Board Self-Assessment and
- The Public Engagement process.

A series of questions revolved around other Counties work and how Marathon County compares to all the other counties in Wisconsin. Questions like:

- What characteristics did other counties review in their decision-making process when deciding to change the size of the board?
- What can we learn from Wood and other counties that have changed the size of their boards?
- How are they organized?
- What is their committee structure?
- Number of committees?
- How many committees are members on? Size of committees?
- What is the size of districts in other counties? (both geographic and population based)
- How many people does each supervisor represent?

- Why did Fond du Lac County decrease then increase the size of the board?

Efficiencies and Financial Components of Various Board Sizes

The Task Force began to probe the ideas of how efficient can a board be based on its size and can the cost to administer and support a board be reduced based on the number of the members? These questions are more specific to the cost and efficiency issues:

- How are costs affected by the size of the board? Whether by increasing or decreasing the size?
- What is the compensation of members?
- Does the compensation for members change with smaller boards?
- Are there any studies on organizational efficiency relating to optimum board size?

Representation and Board Diversity

Members wanted additional information on how the size of the board would impact how members represents their constituents and how to make the board function effectively.

- Was participation impacted with a change in board size?
- Is diversity impacted by board size? How?
- Are there more contested seats on smaller boards?

Wisconsin Counties Association

The Task Force utilized information generated by the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) as a foundation for its deliberations. WCA has presented information to counties relating to issues associated with changing the size of the board, it also through Forward Analytics produced The Green Book a book of county facts in 2020 which provided information on board size, form of government, tax levy, and other valuable information. In addition, WCA provided the Task Force with demographic information relating to how county boards changed after each election. The Task Force also utilized the 2020-10 Wisconsin County Official Directory.

Local Government Education Division of Extension University of Wisconsin

On July 7, 2020 county representatives met with Daniel Foth, Phil Freeburg and Paul Roback to discuss recent efforts to change the size of county boards or their committee. Paul Roback provided information relating to the process followed in Washington County including an overview of the 2019 Washington County Board Structure Advisory Committee Summary Report: and the 2015 Washington County Structure Advisory Committee findings. In addition, the county had prepared a report: A snapshot of Committee Structure Wisconsin Counties' – November 2019 which provided an overview of the number of and size of committees in each county. Washington County determined that the size the board should be based on organizational efficiencies and decided to create five standing committee with five members each plus the board chair as the justification for having a 26-member board.

In the past Marathon County has looked to Washington County for comparative purposes. They are the closest in [population to Marathon County 137,637 to 136,517. Both counties have used Priority Based

Budgeting and we have looked to them for guidance in developing our long-term capital plan for addressing funding for our highways.

Comparisons to Other Counties

Early in the process the Task Force began looking at other counties to do a comparative analysis. While information for all counties in Wisconsin was considered for some comparisons the Task Force looked at 19 other counties in more detail. Those counties, which are listed below, were counties that were over 100,000 in population, neighboring counties (Portage), or select counties that had modified their board size (Wood and St. Croix).

Peer Group Comparison Table

County	Expenditures per Capita	Levy per Capita	Highway Miles	2019 Population	Board size	Population per District	Admin. Type	Sq Miles	Sq. Miles per District
Brown	\$755	\$347	975.3	252,452	26	10,100	Exec	529.71	20.37
Chippewa	\$980	\$301	721.4	64,881	15	4,300	Admin	1,008.37	67.22
Dane	\$919	\$359	1,049.40	537,328	37	14,500	Exec	1,197.24	32.36
Eau Claire	\$1,016	\$349	835	103,159	29	3,600	Admin	637.98	22.00
Fond du Lac	\$1,112	\$440	767.9	104,423	25	4,200	Exec	719.55	28.78
Kenosha	\$1,143	\$413	505.6	170,0671	23	7,400	Exec	271.99	11.83
La Crosse	\$870	\$300	564.3	119,484	29	4,100	Admin	451.69	15.58
Marathon	\$737	\$371	1,228.80	136,517	38	3,600	Admin	1,544.98	40.66
Milwaukee	\$1,048	\$319	169.2	946,296	18	52,600	Exec	241.4	13.41
Outagamie	\$753	\$332	685.4	187,092	36	5,200	Exec	637.52	17.71
Ozaukee	\$639	\$246	309.5	89,905	26	3,500	Admin	233.08	8.96
Portage	\$957	\$435	868	71,680	25	2,900	Exec	800.68	32.03
Racine	\$1,154	\$286	305.7	196,487	21	9,400	Exec	332.5	15.83
Rock	\$852	\$439	426.2	160,444	29	5,500	Admin	718.14	24.76
St Croix	\$972	\$406	655.8	89,692	19	4,700	Admin	722.33	38.02
Sheboygan	\$877	\$434	898.3	116,547	25	4,700	Admin	511.27	20.45
Washington	\$611	\$276	363.9	137,637	26	5,300	Exec	430.7	16.57
Waukesha	\$560	\$270	812.6	405,991	25	16,200	Exec	549.57	21.98
Winnebago	\$701	\$406	439.1	170,580	36	4,700	Exec	434.49	12.07
Wood	\$891	\$366	648.7	75,450	19	4,000	Coord PT	793.12	41.74
Average	\$955	\$390	548.4	206,806*	26.45*	8,525*		638.32*	24.13*
Median All Counties	\$1,064	\$496	549.4	41,588					

* Average of the 20 Counties

One of the concerns that has been raised by Task Force members was that not only does Marathon County have the largest board in the state it is the largest county geographically with 1,545 square miles compared to a peer group average of 638 square miles. That translates into each supervisor representing an average of 40.66 square miles in Marathon County compared to a range of 9 sq. mi. in Ozaukee County to 67 sq. mi. in Chippewa County. While these numbers reflect the average square miles per supervisor there are wide variations in district size with very compact districts in the metropolitan areas and much larger districts in the rural, portion of the county.

Except for Wood County, which has a part time administrative coordinator, all the peer counties have either an appointed administrator or an elected executive. Having an administrator or executive reduces the operational oversight role for the county board and shifts their focus to be one on developing policy.

Interviews with Other Counties

In addition to the information obtained from Washington County the Task Force wanted to obtain information on the process used and the impacts associated with downsizing their boards. They focused on Chippewa, Fond du Lac, St. Croix, and Wood Counties.

Fond Du Lac County: Lisa Frieberg the County Clerk indicated that the Board was reduced from 36 to 18 through a referendum in 2006. One of the issues that arose was with the smaller even numbered board the potential for a tie vote did arise. They reduced their standing committees to 5 with 5 members each. In 2010 the redistricting discussed increasing the number to 19, 23 or 25 and recommended 25. They did not experience any issues with quorums with the smaller committees. With the downsizing of the board the compensation changed from per diem (per meeting) to salaries. The reduced number of committees has lengthened some of the committee meetings. Typically, there are few contested elections, in the last election cycle two supervisors were opposed and lost while one retired. While Lisa indicated that diversity has not changed since downsizing there are fewer farmers on the board. She attributed them having other commitments.

St. Croix County: In 2008 St Croix citizens passed a referendum to downsize the board from 31 to 19. Before the downsize they had 24 males, 6 female 1 vacancy and no minorities. The present membership is 13 males, 6 females no minorities. The number of standing committees were reduced from 10 to 5 and the size of the committees ranged from 5 to 7 members. But before the 2012 spring elections the board changed all committees to 5 members.

Chippewa County: Reduced the size of their board after a successful referendum cut the board size in one-half. The referendum was led by a former county board supervisor who felt that the need for a larger board was reduced when the county approved the hiring of an administrator. The county has seven standing committees with five members each. The current county board chair indicated that they do have issues with quorums at some of the committee meeting. Their current board is comprised of 11 men and four women. During the referendum process Rick Stadelman from the Wisconsin Towns Association opposed it due to the potential for loss of rural influence and representation. There have been several contested elections over the past 10 years typically based on issues.

Wood County: In an interview with Trent Miner the County Clerk and for County Board member he indicated that their board size was reduced from 38 to 18 members through a referendum in 2008 impacted the 2010 election. The measure was approved overwhelmingly by the public with little opposition although the issue of loss rural power was raised. As a result of the referendum the number of committees was reduced from 20 to 6 and a new committee IT and Maintenance added. Membership was typically 5 board members. Committee meetings became more streamlined which required members to come to meetings prepared. Trent indicated that when the board was downsized several members did not run for reelection. There is not typically a lot of turnover and that currently there two women on the board.

Leadership Survey/ Self-Assessment

The Task Force decided to gather information from current members of the Board on their perceptions of how much time was required, and the functioning of the board and its committees. The initial efforts were focused on board leadership.

During the Task Force deliberations Deb Hager agreed to conduct interviews of county board leadership specifically the board and committee chairs and vice-chairs. The questions were developed to help identify how each board member functioned as a supervisor and how the committee structure was functioning based on the members perspective. She contacted and interviewed each of the 14 members of the leadership team and asked them to discuss the following:

Time Commitment

1. Thinking about the time you spend in County Board meetings, committee meetings, preparation for meetings, constituent work, local government communications, and other County activities, what is the average amount of time you spend in a month on County Board related activities?
2. If given the opportunity would you spend more or less time on County activities? Why?

County Board

1. From your perspective, thinking about County Board, what works well?
2. In the spirit of continuous improvement from your perspective, thinking about County Board, what would you suggest to improve the effectiveness of County Board?

Committee

1. From your perspective, thinking about the Committee(s) you serve on, what works well?
2. In the spirit of continuous improvement from your perspective, thinking about your Committee work, what would you suggest to improve the effectiveness of Committees?
3. How satisfied are you with your current Committee appointments? Why?

Supervisor

1. In your time as a Supervisor what is your most significant contribution to County Board?
2. In your time as a Supervisor what is your most significant contribution to Committee work?
3. What talents do you have that we are not currently tapping into?
4. What one change to County Board/Committee would you suggest that would help you be more effective?

Interviews were conducted in late August and early September. All individual responses are confidential. The following are some of the results generated by the interviews:

Demographics

- Nine supervisors are employed full time. Two of the nine are self-employed. Four are not currently employed.
- Four hold other elected offices (3-local municipal government, 1-school board)
- The average number of years on County Board is over seven years. The range is from less than a year to 22 years.
- The average number of years in Board leadership is a little over 4 years with the range being from less than a year to ten years.

Time Commitment

- The average member reported spending a little over 40 hours per month on county board business. The range is from ten to 100+ hours per month. The most frequently reported was 10 to 15 hours per month (four responses) 3 supervisors reporting 20 to 25 hours per month and 3 more 35 to 40 hours per month.
- Nine of thirteen reported that they would like to spend more time on County Board activity. Most cited work-life balance as the reason why they can't do more at present.
- 28% of the reasons for wanting to spend more time was the desire to have more time to research issues that are in more need of attention.
- 25% of responses would like to spend more time on education of supervisors and the Board.
- 8% would spend more time in preparation.

Three were themes that emerged during the interviews, including:

- Collegial versus political approach to County Board/Committee work
- Investment in County Board supervisor education and development
- Better understanding of policy governance versus operations
- Increased transparency and accessibility to Committee discussion and deliberation
- Improved communication with supervisors and the public about issues, status of policy development, hot button issues, etc.
- Respect and trust in committee process

The other responses focused on the operation of the county board and committees. The Task Force believes that the interviews yielded valuable information on ways to improve the functioning of the county board and that a similar effort should be undertaken with the full board. The full report is included in the Appendix.

Establishment of Evaluation Criteria

The Task Force spent a considerable amount of time trying to develop objective criteria to evaluate the various options on board size. The decision was made to develop the criteria before the Task Force began discussing any specific number to avoid any bias in the criteria. The Task Force developed four functional categories and determined that each should represent 25% of the score, therefore responses were weighted based on the number of questions in each category. The categories and questions are:

- **Efficiencies/Costs**
 - How will the change impact the cost to conduct county board operations?

- How will the change impact staff resources dedicated to support the board and committees?
- Will the end product result in better accountability or improve the responsiveness to the residents of Marathon County?
- **Representation**
 - How does the change impact the ability to represent their constituents, interact with local units of government and other groups?
 - Will the change lead to an increase in diversity among members?
 - Will the change lead to increased public interest in county board activities?
 - Will the change lead to increased participation in county board activities?
- **Time Commitment**
 - Will the change impact the amount of time required to fulfill the job duties?
 - How many committees will the average supervisor be on based on the change?
- **Organizational Issues**
 - Will the change require any modifications to committee structure?
 - Will the change create potential problems relating to obtaining quorums?
 - What is the potential for open meeting law issues because of the change?
 - Will the change increase or decrease the efficiency of the board?

To ensure that we had a consistent understanding of terms the Task Force developed the following definitions:

- Service: Responsiveness and accountability
- Diversity: Inclusion of different types of people with demographic and experiential differences.
- Efficiency: Timeliness, Responsiveness, cost effective

Development of Options of Board Size

Each member on the Task Force was asked to identify up to three options for consideration relating to the potential size of the board and their rationale for supporting it. This discussion took place after the Task Force had reviewed information from other counties and developed evaluation criteria to eliminate any bias in the criteria. The Task Force decided to present three options to the public and to evaluate using the criteria that it had developed. The options presented by Task Force members ranged from 19 to 41 members with a consensus form around 27, 32 and 38 members.

The 27-member option was based on the work done in Washington County evaluating the number of standing committees needed with 5 members each plus the Chair and vice chair of the county board (5 committees at 5 members plus 2 leadership). It was based on concerns that the board should be

reduced to become more efficient. The size is also close to the average size of the peer group 26.25 members

The 32-member option was also based on the work done in Washington County as well as other with the assumption that 6 standing committees were appropriate (6 standing committees at 5 members plus 2 in leadership). It was also based on concerns that the board should be reduced to become more efficient.

The 38-member option was based on retaining the current size of the county board and was advanced to maximize representation and diversity on the board.

Public Participation and Engagement

The Charter creating the Task Force identified a need to gain the public's input on the issue of changing the board size. These questions began the discussion regarding who should be involved in the public engagement process and how it should be done:

- How will we engage the public and the specifically identified groups?
- How to engage the Wisconsin Town's and Village's Association?
- How to engage the Business Community? Should that be through the Greater Wausau Area Chamber of Commerce?
- How to engage other Community stakeholders?
- How to engage the General public?

With all those questions, the staff and Task Force went to work finding information that could guide the conversation and answer those questions for the Task Force deliberations on what the size of the County Board should be.

The charter creating the Task Force specifically to reach out to the Towns and Village Associations, Chamber of Commerce and other business groups.

On July 28, 2020 a presentation to the Eastern Western Towns Association meeting providing an overview of the Task Force, why it was created, its membership, timelines and the process that it was using to develop recommendations.

The Task Force was planning on making presentations to the Eastern and Western Towns Associations in October however both meetings were cancelled due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the county.

The Task Force had also planned on having three informational meetings one in the Hatley area, Edgar and in Wausau metro area. Due to COVID numbers the Task Force could not gain access to any schools. Based on concerns over the health of residents a decision was made to have a single listening session on November 12, 2020 and provide the public with the ability to attend in person, watch it through WebEx and streaming on Public Access channel or listen over the phone. The Task Force also established a public comment period for receiving comments between November 12th and the 27th. The presentation was made available on the County's website and individuals were encouraged to either complete a

survey on the web site, call a dedicated phone and leave a voicemail message, send an email or letter to the Conservation Planning and Zoning staff.

Evaluation Criteria		38 Members			32 Members			27 members		
		Ranking High =3, Medium=2, Low=1	Weight Factor	Score	Ranking High =3, Medium=2, Low=1	Weight Factor	Score	Ranking High =3, Medium=2, Low=1	Weight Factor	Score
Efficiencies/Costs 25%	How will the change impact the cost to conduct county board operations? less cost = 3, same/unknown = 2, more cost = 1	2			3			3		
	How will the change impact staff resources dedicated to support the board and committees? less needed = 3, sam/unknown = 2, more needed = 1	2			2			2		
	Will the end product result in better accountability or improve the responsiveness to the residents of Marathon County? better service = 3, same/unknown = 2, worse = 1	2			2			2		
	Sub Total	6	2.78	16.68	7	2.78	19.46	7	2.78	19.46
Representation 25%	How does the change impact the ability to represent their constituents, interact with local units of government and other groups? easier = 3, same/unknown = 2, harder = 1	2			2			2		
	Will the change lead to an increase in diversity among members? More diverse = 3, same/unknown = 2, less diverse = 1	2			1			1		
	Will the change lead to increased public interest in county board activities? more interest = 3, same/unknown = 2, less interest = 1	2			2			2		
	Will the change lead to increased participation in county board activities? more interest = 3, same/unknown = 2, less interest = 1	2			2			2		
Sub Total	8	2.78	22.24	7	2.78	19.46	7	2.78	19.46	
Time Commitment 25%	Will the change impact the amount of time required to fulfill the job duties? more time = 1, same/unknown = 2, less time = 3	2			1			1		
	How many committees will the average supervisor be on based on the change? more committees = 1, same/unknown = 2, less committees = 3	2			1			1		
	Sub Total	4	4.16	16.64	2	4.16	8.32	2	4.16	8.32
Organizational Issues 25%	Will the change require any modifications to committee structure? decrease # of committees = 3, same/unknown = 2, increase # of committees = 1	2			3			3		
	Will the change create potential problems relating to obtaining quorums? less problems =3, same/unknown = 2, more problems = 1	2			2			2		
	What is the potential for open meeting law issues because of the change? less problems =3, same/unknown = 2, more problems = 1	2			2			2		
	Will the change increase or decrease the efficiency of the board? increase efficiency = 3, same/unknown = 2, decrease efficiency = 1	2			2			2		
Sub Total	8	2.08	16.64	9	2.08	18.72	9	2.08	18.72	
Total			72.20			65.96			65.96	

Definitions:

Service: Responsiveness and accountability
Diversity: Inclusion of different types of people with demographic and experiential differences.
Efficiency: Timeliness, Responsiveness, cost effective,

The Task Force received 118 responses including 5 letters; 18 emails; 44 surveys on the website; 43 voice mail messages; and 8 comments at the listening session. The responses were as follows:

Board Size	# Supporting	%
27 members	22	19%
32 members	3	3%
38 members	92	78%

One comment was received without a preference on size.

The web-based survey also requested that the respondent identify which criteria was most important in determining the size of the board. The results were:

Efficiency Cost	3
Organizational Effectiveness	11
Representation/Diversity	26
Time Commitment	1

Task Force Deliberations

At the meeting November 30, 2020 the Task Force met and evaluated the information obtained from other counties and sources, the comments received from the public and reviewed each of the proposal options utilizing the evaluation criteria developed at earlier meetings. Each of the members was asked to identify their preference based upon that information. The following reflects the consensus of the Task Force.

The charter creating the Task Force charged it with evaluating the expected impact of the proposed board size on:

- The ability to attract well qualified candidates and to foster competitive elections.
- The efficient functioning of county governance.
- The cost of County Government.

Candidates/Contested Seats

It is difficult to determine the number of contested seats in a given election cycle, so we relied on information provided by the Wisconsin Counties Association. Based on their data there was a 20.17% turnover rate during each election between 2012 and 2020. The 20-county peer group had a turnover rate of 20.83% while Marathon turned over an average of 10.2 members each election or 26.84%. There may be several reasons for Marathon County’s higher turnover rate including retirements, supervisors moving and contested elections. Based on the information obtained from other counties it appears that outside of the initial election after downsizing that it would be unlikely that we would see an increase in contested seats. In a democracy there is no guarantee that a change in the size of the board would attract more well-qualified candidates.

County	Size	2012		2014		2016		2018		2020		Average	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Marathon	38	11	28.95%	9	23.68%	11	28.95%	8	21.05%	12	31.58%	10.2	26.84%
Peer Group	26.5	6.5	24.43%	4.6	17.65%	4.5	17.58%	5.2	19.57%	6.45	24.94%	5.45	20.83%
All Counties	22.5*	327	22.65%	286	18.10%	291	18.89%	316	19.51%	345	21.72%	313	20.17%

*There were a total of 1,620 supervisors in 2012, 1,612 in 2014 and 1,612 in 2016-2020.

The efficient functioning of county governance.

The Task Force was unable to make any determinations relating to whether reducing the size of the county board impacted the efficiency of the operations. Typically downsizing was accompanied by an evaluation of the structure and number of committees which in many cases resulted in increased efficiency. However, Chippewa County experienced issues with obtaining quorums at committee meetings after downsizing the board and is considering increasing the size in 2022. The form of government such as whether there is an elected executive, appointed administrator or administrative coordinator also impact the efficiency of the boards. When there are elected officials or administrators the role of the board is more focus on policy with limited involvement in operational issues which leads to more efficiency.

Diversity

One of the issues that the Task Force was asked to evaluate was how would the size affect representation and diversity. Diversity is reflected in many ways including gender, orientation, age, ethnicity, occupation. While there was limited data available to the Task Force WCA did track the number of women on county boards. There is an increasing trend in female participation with significant differences on a county-to-county basis. However, having larger board does offer additional opportunities for groups to be represented.

Female Supervisors:	2014	2018	2020
Statewide	286	316	345
Peer Group (20 counties)	102	128	129
Marathon County (38)	6	10	12

During our discussions with other counties there were concerns that reducing the size of the board did have an impact on reducing the number of farmers and rural viewpoints on the board.

Costs

The County Board’s 2021 budget is \$432,979 of which salaries and social security represents \$258,647. The entire 2021 County budget is \$180,862,834 of which \$49,625,195 is generate through the property tax levy. The salary portion of the budget for the county board is 0.14% of the total county budget. The entire budget for the county board represents 0.24% of budget and 0.8% of property tax levy. If the board size is reduced to 32 members and the salaries stay the same the cost would be \$223,181 versus \$192,980 for 27 members. The assumption was that salaries would remain the same with a smaller board. While there are saving associated with the reduction in size of the board, they are relatively small in the context of the overall budget.

Title	Annual Salary	#	Total 38	Total 32	Total 27
Chair	\$30,000	1	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Vice Chair	\$8,991	1	\$8,991	\$8,991	\$8,991
Committee Chairs	\$6,091	5-6	\$36,546	\$36,546	\$30,455
Members	\$5,491	20-30	\$164,730	\$131,784	\$109,820
			\$240,267	\$207,321	\$179,266
Social Security/Medicare 7.65%			\$18,380	\$15,860	\$13,714
Total			\$258,647	\$223,181	\$192,980

Task Force Decision

Each of the members was asked to identify their preference based upon that information. The Task Force members were unanimous in their conclusion that retaining the current board size was in the best interest of the county at this time.

Listed below is some of the rationale given by the members for their position.

- Farm Bureau Letter and Town's letters in opposition represented a significant portion of the county.
- Even though the public input was more difficult than desired, a good response was obtained supporting the current size
- The County's Comprehensive Plan calls for good relationships with local Governments and this would be keeping those relationships in good order.
- There is no political appetite for making a change
- A larger board can have more diverse groups represented.
- After talking to other counties doesn't think there is a need for a change.
- The committees are working well
- Strong public support for leaving the board size at 38.
- the supervisors should be attending their town board meetings
- "What are we trying to solve, what isn't working with the 38-member board?"
- There is strong local government support for 38 members and that the towns are engaged with the county actions.
- The political will to change is not worth the political cost of doing so.
- The larger board results in more diversity. Having different opinions makes the board better.
- There is not a sense of community acceptance for change and that a change will not be received well by the public
- Downsizing does not improve the ability to attract new people to the board.
- Currently the lack of political will and the desire for more diversity on the board are opportunities and someday things may push the other way.
- We should celebrate the size of the board as being truly representative
- Questioned the timing right now we are unique and diverse times where change may not be accepted.

- With the current political environment and public apprehension, making changes could have been volatile

Recommendations:

While the results of the interviews of county board leadership were of limited value to the Task Force in evaluating the size of the board the members felt as if the exercise was of significant value to improving the functioning of the board. The Task Force will convey the results of the interviews to the Executive Committee and recommends that they review the results and consider surveying or interviewing all members of the board to look for way to improve the effectiveness of the board and fully utilize the talents and expertise of members.

One of the duties that the Task Force was charged with was to consider whether the county’s current governance structure needs to be updated through committee consolidation or new committees being established. While the Task Force did look at what other counties had done and reviewed the report prepared by Washington County on the size and number of standing committees, they did not make a recommendation. The Task Force does encourage the Rules Review Committee to review the report A Snapshot of Committee Structures Wisconsin Counties’ – November 2019 and evaluate the number of standing committees, the responsibilities of the committees to balance workload as well as evaluating the need for and responsibilities for all other committees, commissions, and boards. Diversity can be reflected not only in the membership of the county board but also through the appointments to the various committees.

Based on the findings, a review of the evaluation criteria and public input the Task Force recommends that the County Board membership remain at 38 members at this time.

Next Steps

The Task Force will be presenting its recommendations to the Executive Committee and the full board in January with the intent that the County Board will make a decision on the size at the February 2021 meeting. That vote and the creation of a redistricting committee will begin the process of redrawing the supervisory district boundaries to incorporate the information generated through the decennial census. Based on the WCA Redistricting Handbook the following is a schedule for reviewing the Task Force report and updating supervisory district based on the 2020 census information.

January 14, 2021	Presentation of Task Force Report to the Executive Committee
January 21, 2021	Presentation of Task Force Report to the County Board
February 23, 2021	County Board action on Board Size
February-March 2021	Appoint Redistricting Committee (per State statutes)
March 2021	Establish Guidelines for Redistricting
April-May 2021	Develop a Tentative Redistricting Plan (1)
May 2021	Public Hearing on Tentative Plan

May 2021	County Board Adopts Tentative Redistricting Plan
June-July 2021	Create Municipal Wards
August-September 2021	Finalize and Adopt Redistricting Plan
November 15, 2021	Redistricting Plan in Effect
December 2021	Nomination Papers Circulated
April 2022	Election of County Board

Acknowledgements

There was a significant amount of work that went into supporting the Task Force and the development of this report. While numerous staff were involved in the process the Task Force was appreciative of the efforts of Dave Mack, Becky Frisch, and Cindy Kraeger from the County's Conservation, Zoning and Planning Department were critical in helping organize and staff meeting prepare background information and support material. Staff at the City County Information Technology Department led by Gerry Klein and Jean Kopplin were helpful in helping to design opportunities for the public to provide input on the options.

Individual members of the Task Force all contributed to efforts we would like to thank Deb Hager, sharing her expertise in organizational effectiveness and conducting the interviews of the county leadership and Supervisor Jacob Langenhahn for sharing his research on board changes.

Resources

- The Green Book, 2020 Published by Forward Analytics
- Washington County Board Structure Advisory Committee Summary Report :2019
- 2015 Washington County Structure Advisory Committee
- A Snapshot of Committee Structures Wisconsin Counties' – November 2019
- 2020-21 Directory County Officials Directory, Wisconsin Counties Association
- County Government Authority, Administrative Structure Options, and the Roles And Responsibilities Of County Board Members PowerPoint presentation prepared by Wisconsin Association for Marathon County Board Meeting July 19, 2018
- Marathon County Executive Committee Minutes Tuesday October 8, 2019
- WCA COUNTY DECENNIAL REDISTRICTING HANDBOOK 2021 Redistricting Cycle
<https://files.constantcontact.com/77ea05ac001/9ce2c80f-31da-4424-b016-2f61bcc0c7f4.pdf>
- Forms of County Government A plain language discussion of the different forms of county government in Wisconsin University of Wisconsin Extension Local Government Center
- County Board Size Reduction Legislative Briefs from the Legislative Reference Bureau Legislative Brief 06-1 January 2006
- Ss. 59.10 of Wisconsin Statutes County Board of Supervisors, Boards: composition; election; terms; compensation; compatibility.
- County Government Organization in New York State, February 2015 A publication of NYSAC and the Dennis A. Pelletier Government Institute, Inc.
- County Government In Wisconsin An Overview of Organization, Responsibilities, and Funding Wisconsin TAXPAYER Vol. 84, Number 8 | August 2016 https://wispolicyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/1608_counties.pdf
- County Government in Wisconsin History & Background, The Local Government Center
<https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/files/2016/04/fs19CountyGovernmentWisconsin.pdf>
- How County Administration and Finances Stack Up The Wisconsin Taxpayer August 2010 Vol. 78 No. 8 https://wispolicyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/1008_County-Admin.-and-Finances.pdf
- Minutes from the November 14, 2019 Marathon County Board of Supervisors Adjourned Annual Meeting Resolution #R-60-19 Adopting a Redistricting Plan that Reduces the Number of Marathon County Supervisor Districts From 38 to 19, Effective as of Spring Election April 2020
- Board Size Options and Rationale Spreadsheet (Task Force Document)
- November 6, 2020 Press Release: Marathon County Task Force Reviewing The Size of The County Board Listening Session
- County Board Leadership Interview Responses 9/8/20, prepared by Deb Hager (Task Force Document)
- A Snapshot of Committee Structures Wisconsin Counties' – November 2019