



MARATHON COUNTY EXTENSION, EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Tuesday, February 18, 2020, at 4:00 p.m.

Courthouse Assembly Room, 500 Forest Street, Wausau WI

Attendance:	Present	Absent
Sara Guild, Chair	X	
Romey Wagner, Vice Chair		EX
Gary Beastro	X	
Alyson Leahy	X	
Ka Lo	X	
Rick Seefeldt	X	
Loren White	X	

Others Present: Mary Palmer, Lance Leonhard, Jason Hausler, Vicki Resech, Lee Webster, Media

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

The Extension, Education & Economic Development Committee meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chair Guild.

2. **Public Comment:** Lee Webster, 155617 Pine Bluff Road, Wausau – representing Wausau School Board. Gave an update on the last Wausau School Board meeting.

3. **Approval of the Minutes** of December 11, 2019, Extension, Education & Economic Development Committee (EEEC) Meetings and the December 17, 2019, Joint meeting with Infrastructure.

Action:

MOTION BY WHITE, SECOND BY LEAHY, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 11, AND DECEMBER 17, 2019 MEETINGS. MOTION CARRIED.

4. **Policy Issues Discussion and Potential Committee Determination:** None

5. **Operational Functions required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution:** None

6. **Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion**

A. Discussion on the work of the committee during this session relative to the 2018 – 2022 Marathon County Strategic Plan

Discussion:

This committee has worked on the following portions of the strategic plan this committee was leading:

Objective 8.7 Strive to provide affordable, reliable, high-speed internet access throughout the county.

- Discussed broadband expansion and/or plan development at majority of meetings
- Created criteria for defining “countywide-coverage” in broadband RFP
- Participated in joint meetings with Infrastructure to oversee progression of broadband plan development, which was finalized and released to the public by the end of 2019
- Supported and funded hiring of Extension employee for broadband initiative
- Individual members attended community, town, and organization meetings to share information about broadband expansion efforts and obtain feedback
 - By end of session, there has been a noticeable positive increase in both awareness of, and support for, broadband expansion in rural areas of the county
- Supported policy change for branch libraries to offer free wi-fi access in parking lots after hours

Objective 10.6 Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.

- Provided funding for:
 - Greater Wausau workforce attraction website

- WIPPS Family-Friendly Workplace study
- Chamber regional economic development study
- Passed resolutions showing support for specific workforce demographics, including:
 - Indigenous Peoples Day
 - Hmong Veterans Day
 - Hmong New Year
 - Lunar (Chinese) New Year
 - Pride Month
- Supported UWSP Wausau with efforts to attract and retain more students, including:
 - Publicly supported transition from UW-Marathon County to UWSP Wausau
 - Supported funding infrastructure improvements to facilities, including pool, ice rinks, and furnace.

Objective 10.8 – Encourage development and redevelopment of key employment centers in areas that possess strong market potential, provide good transportation access for workers, and promote the efficient movement of goods.

- Provided funding for:
 - Greater Wausau Chamber’s regional economic development study
 - Regional sports complex development study
 - Gap funding

Objective 10.10 – 10.10 – Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurial-supportive environment.

This objective ties directly into 10.6.

- Provided funding for:
 - Wisconsin Valley Fair (2018)
 - Ginseng festival (2018)
- Toured MCDEVCO’s new GEARS center and obtained information regarding their efforts to support entrepreneurs and businesses in the county

Wisconsin Valley Fair update by Supervisor Seubert – we are losing money. In 2019 down about \$50,000. This year they have tightened the budget and are not going with top name entertainment. The 4-H end is going strong.

Suggestions for the future committee:

Broadband/Infrastructure: (8.7)

- In former budgets this committee had about \$45,000 to use for various projects. In the 2019 budget the funding for this committee was transferred to fund 50% of the UW-Madison Division of Extension position on Broadband. The future EEEEC will want to make sure there is a position funded to work on broadband to make sure we have a seat at the table for these discussions. This committee designed a broad plan of Marathon County’s needs. We need to make sure there is communication with the citizens on what is happening. This committee should make itself available.
- Stay involved with facilities and roadway maintenance/transfer to affect policy decisions on how much money to allocate to infrastructure in the budget.

Workforce: (10.6)

- UW-Stevens Point Marathon County will be asking for the dormitory to be remodeled or rebuilt. This committee remains involved, as it has been explained that this is a barrier to get students to come to UWSP-Wausau because of lack of housing.
- Work with North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and look at their data to see if we can use it to make policy.

Development and Redevelopment of employment center (10.8)

- Public and Private Prosperity Partnership – Look at the Master Plan of Rib Mountain State Park and linking it with 9-Mile to make a year-round attraction. Encourage the committee to continue monitoring the results of the economic survey and the report and recommendations of our private/public partnership.

Entrepreneurial– (10.10)

- Work with the Fair Board to make the Wisconsin Valley Fair more viable and economically sound. Perhaps advertise more on the 4-H end of it, not just the entertainment. The Fair is both educational and economical and should it be more of a community wide effort?
- MCDEVCO needs to be kept viable. Create an atmosphere for entrepreneurial support. Look at doing it contractually. There is growth potential.

Follow Through:

The above information will be shared with the next Extension, Education & Economic Development Committee

B. Update from MCDEVCO on recent economic development activities

Discussion:

Vicki Resech, Director of Marathon County Development Corporation (MCDEVCO), handed out a copy of their next two year Strategic Plan, explaining who they are, what their values are and how they do what they do. She also handed out a document that showed how MCDEVCO works with Marathon County's Strategic Plan Objectives.

POWTS is up and running and they already have applicants.

Follow Through:

No follow through needed.

C. UW Madison Division of Extension Update – discussion of work of educators, including efforts relative to Broadband Feasibility Study and Lunar New Year activities

Discussion:

Jason Hausler – The reports from the educators are in the packet. Janelle Wehr is our new Horticulture Educator. Lunar New Year activities were a success with over 750 attendees. When the annual report is complete he would like to have the opportunity to present to the Board. Data on Agriculture will be included in the report this year, including ginseng.

Chair Guild gave a short update on broadband. There was a meeting with staff and John Robinson and her to discuss what should be accomplished before April and after the new Board is seated. Current proposal is to have Melinda coordinate a conversation with potential private sector broadband partners to find out what they are willing to do and how can we get them engaged? They have to apply for the grants, get it in the ground and Marathon County can't make them do anything. Use what they say along with the report to determine next best steps whether it's a taskforce or something else.

Some providers (primarily wireless providers) are interested and want to talk, but we don't know what that means. A meeting with staff and committee Chairs Guild and Robinson to come up with questions to ask when they have the first meeting.

Follow Through:

None at this time.

7. Announcements, Next Meeting Date and Time:

A. Future committee calendar

The next meeting will be March 17th at 4:00 p.m. (Leahy will not be in attendance on 3/17)
No announcements.

8. Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, **MOTION BY SEEFELDT, SECOND BY BEASTROM TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. Meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m. MOTION CARRIED.**