

Dane County Towns Association Board of Directors

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Important Events

Wisconsin Towns Association meetings

District #1B – Friday, February 27, 2009,
Comfort Inn, 1345 Business Park Rd., Mineral
Point, WI 53565. Located on HWY 151,
between Dodgeville and Mineral Point, on the
north edge of Mineral Point.

District #1C – Saturday, March 7, 2009,
Voyageur Inn, 200 Viking Dr., Reedsburg, WI
53959. Located one block north of HWY
23/33 on CTH H.



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Farmland Preservation is topic of workshop Feb. 24

Kim Lamoreaux **Editor**

Local officials, farmers and other citizens interested in land use initiatives to help preserve farmland are invited to attend “Cultivating Collaboration for Farmland Protection in Dane County” on February 24, 2009 at the Alliant Energy Center. The workshop will discuss farmland loss and a number of tools and strategies to promote preservation of farmland in Dane County.

Anyone interested in attending should register by Friday, February 20, 2009 by contacting Bridgit Van Belleghem, planner for the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC) at 608-266-4637, or by e-mail at bridgitvb@capitalarearpc.org

Each year, more and more Dane County working farmland is decreasing. According to Van Belleghem, between 1980 and 2000, about 95,000 acres in Dane County went from crop and pasture land use to another land use category.

Van Belleghem said of the 95,000, about 37,000 (16,500 acres in Dane County towns) were lost due to some sort of development. But she also added that “lost” could simply mean some lands were

recategorized or rezoned by communities although not necessarily developed.

The Dane County workshop will focus on the status of farmland and agricultural trends in the county; local farmland protection initiatives and challenges; tools to effectively protect farmland and access grants; and intergovernmental cooperation.

Presentation topics at the workshop include the regional agricultural economy, farmland loss and land development, preservation and mitigation tools, funding opportunities, intergovernmental cooperation, land for housing versus land for

farming conflicts, and an update on the Working Lands Initiative, a replacement program of the Farmland Preservation Program.

There will be a presentation by Bob Wagner, Senior Director for Farmland Protection Programs for American Farmland Trust, on the basics of preserving

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Railroaded...

Mark Hazelbaker
DCTA legal counsel

All the rhetoric in the wake of Wall Street's financial scandals has been that there needs to be more accountability and transparency in public operations. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to see discussion leading to authorization of regional transit authorities in Wisconsin moving exactly the opposite direction. It's as if

someone in the rail yard switched the track from open to obscure

The issue legislation that would create a regional transit authority. It would have the ability to provide mass transit service across municipal and county lines. In order to have that capacity, this agency would have taxing power. The amount of tax revenue involved is substantial. Dane County could generate more than \$42 million with an additional half percent sales tax, the most original concept

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Working Lands continued from page 1

working lands and what other states are doing. This workshop is part of a series started in the fall of 2008 by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the American Farmland Trust (AFT). The Dane County Towns Association (DCTA) is among the sponsors of this workshop in an effort to help educate local officials in changes in land use and related programs. Jerry Derr, DCTA president and chair of the town of Bristol said, “We want towns to be at the forefront of this issue and well-informed about current programs and grant opportunities. The DCTA became a sponsor of this workshop to help engage local government officials, farmers and others interested in a discussion about farmland protection.”

Lauber signs on as DCTA land use consultant

Kim Lamoreaux
Editor

The Dane County Towns Association (DCTA) expanded its list of resources last month when land use expert Renee Lauber signed on as a consultant to the organization. Lauber brings a wealth of knowledge and urban planning experience, especially within the scope of town and county zoning ordinances. With almost 20 years working experience in land use and environmental policy, Lauber has worked with town governments in areas like the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR's), transportation and planning, and has assisted in rezone, conditional use and land division applications. Lauber is currently serving on an advisory body that may have the greatest impact of late on town government--she is vice chair of the Dane County Task Force for the Prioritized Revision of Chapter 10, the county's zoning code of ordinances. With all that background, Lauber was the choice of the directors of the DCTA to “sit in” on the establishment of the DCTA’s platform. The board of directors felt she is well equipped to advise members on some of the shapes of things to come. “Land use will remain at the forefront of the DCTA

DCTA press rolls again

It’s been over a year since this newsletter has been in circulation. Last year was an eventful year for town government legislatively and in the courts. Such events underscore the need for maintaining on-going and continuous communication among town leaders. To that end, the DCTA has rejuvenated its monthly newsletter.

The DCTA has hired Kim Lamoreaux, a reporter for eight years with the News-Sickle-Arrow in western Dane County covering governmental issues at the town, village, county and state levels.

Among the legislative activities affecting town government are the revisions to Chapter Ten of the Dane County code of ordinances regarding land use, the Working Lands Initiative which will virtually replace the Farmland Preservation Act, the potential impact of water body classification legislative changes affecting building permits in areas near any body of water, and the on-going proposal for a regional transit authority.

One of primary functions of the DCTA is to act as a resource for its members

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DCTA Editor
Kim Lamoreaux



Land use consultant
Renee Lauber

platform,” said DCTA president and chair of the Town of Bristol Jerry Derr.

“We feel Renee’s experience will really be beneficial to helping our members learn more about policy and legislative changes, and can help with specific issues facing town

government. We are pleased she has joined our organization in this capacity.”

Dane County town officials will be interested to know that Lauber can work directly with town governments on specific issues on a contract basis. She said among the topics for which she is asked for assistance the most is comprehensive planning.

Other topics on which Lauber is well versed is the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE), farmland protection initiatives such as the Working Lands Initiative, county Transfer of Development Rights program (TDR), county zoning ordinance revisions and Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC) developments.

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Lauber continued...

“I can help the DCTA with policy analysis on federal, state and local programs and initiatives,” said Lauber, “research and direction on federal, state and county grant opportunities, training on land use issues, and review of zoning proposals.”

Lauber remains on retainer with the DCTA and is available for consultation. Depending on the extent of need for such consultation, Lauber can work

directly with that town and establish a business relationship at that point.

Derr said retaining Lauber is a good fit and will help advance the DCTA platform.

“Bringing Ms. Lauber into our association’s staff represents an explicit attempt to bring the association squarely into the mainstream of Dane County policy development,” Derr said recently.

“Having Ms. Lauber on board

represents a conscious decision to have a spectrum of opinion available to our board and towns. We are confident Ms. Lauber will work with towns to advance the towns’ agenda, not her own. Her perspective and experience is useful. But if the association differs philosophically, she will appreciate that and work to implement the town’s goals”

RTA meetings

Monday, February 23, 6 pm
Council Chambers
Middleton City Hall
7426 Hubbard Ave, Middleton

Thursday, February 26, 6 pm
Fire Department Training Room
Stoughton City Hall
401 E. Main St, Stoughton

Monday, March 2, 6 pm
Community Room
DeForest Area Community and Senior Center
505 N Main St, DeForest

Wednesday, March 4, 6 pm
Community Room
Sun Prairie Library
1350 Linnerud Dr, Sun Prairie

Press rolls continued...

and give the fullest array of current information available on topics town leaders may be encountering. That is the goal of this newsletter, and the DCTA web site.

Railroaded continued...

floated to finance the authority. More recently, discussions have identified the possibility of authority to raise as much as one percent additional sales tax revenue, which would generate \$84 million in Dane County alone.

With such large sums of money at stake, it should be noted the funding comes from the electorate. For a time, it seemed that there would be support for requiring approval by referendum. Then, the discussion seems to drift to requiring referenda on a county by county level. Now, there is serious discussion about permitting creation of a regional transit authority by action of local governments, and imposition of the sales tax. Neither of these actions require a referendum.

For the DCTA, a referendum is essential. Without a referendum, we believe town residents’ interests will be ignored.

It does not have to be this way. Mass transit is essential. The DCTA certainly supports expanding mass transit. In fact, we would like to see an expanded bus system implemented immediately in the wake of high gas prices, and

to begin building ridership toward an expanded transit system in the future. Even at two dollars per gallon, gasoline is still unaffordable for a large number of working poor people. We owe it to people who cannot afford automobile transportation to make bus transportation readily available. Rail ultimately could be part of that mix. But it cannot be the only part.

A local study developing a Dane County transportation plan has also been working. This study group, which contains a single representative of the towns, has worked steadily to implement the current locally preferred alternative of a commuter rail line running from Middleton to the Burke town hall. After enormous and continuous pressure, this group has finally agreed to have public information meetings throughout the county. It is important for Dane County residents to be heard meaningfully in the formulation of a transportation program that is likely to cost more than \$1 billion.