

# MINUTES

## CONSERVATION, EDUCATION, & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**DATE:** Wednesday, May 6, 2026

**TIME:** 9:00 AM

**PLACE:** Courthouse – Room 302

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bill Leichtnam, Tom Buttke (arrived at 9:04 AM), Wayne Schulz, Russ Perlock, Tim Hovendick, George Gilbertson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Trent Miner, County Clerk; See attached sign-in list

1. Chairman Leichtnam called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and declared a quorum present.
2. There were no public comments.
3. Under Chair's remarks, Chair Leichtnam thanked the committee for their work over the past two years and expressed his desire to dig deeper into Economic Development as a committee. More details will follow.
4. The minutes of the April 1 & 28, 2026, meetings were presented. Motion by Buttke/Hovendick to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.
5. Motion by Schulz/Perlock to approve the vouchers, monthly department reports and committee reports. Motion carried unanimously.
6. Jason Sachs from the Aqua Skiers is requesting a release of REDI funds to fund a site plan development for additional permanent structures on Red Beach in the South Wood County Park. The committee reviewed the documentation presented in the packet. Motion by Schulz/Hovendick to approve the release of \$14,163.75 to fund the site plan as described above. Motion carried unanimously.
7. Dale Christensen from the Central Wisconsin State Fair provided an update on last year's fair and showed a video and the effect of the fair on the exhibitors. He requested the release of economic development grant funds in the amount of \$38,000 to the Junior Fair. Motion by Buttke/Hovendick to approve the release of \$38,000 of economic development grant funding to the Junior Fair. Motion carried unanimously.
8. Emily Oetzman from the Health Dept. provided the committee an update on the Catch-A-Ride startup program. She reviewed funding already received and shared they hope to have enough funding in place for an October 1, 2026 launch. She is requesting the release of \$20,000 of economic grant funding. Motion by Buttke/Schulz to approve the release of \$20,000 for the Catch-A Ride program. Motion carried unanimously.
9. Planning & Zoning Director Grueneberg provide the committee with a history and an update on the Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund and projects it has helped in Wood County. There is currently 9 loans in Wood County. CWED lowered their borrowing rate and this has spurred numerous additional loan requests.

10. Grueneberg updated the committee on the status of the state economic development grant received to update the Helen Connor Laird theater on the UWSP at Marshfield campus. They are hoping to have final state approval of the plans sometime in June.
11. There were no bids received again for the Gilbertson grassed waterway project. This will be bid one more time before going directly to a contractor and hiring the project done. This is a low dollar amount project.
12. Additional funding from the state was received for projects on Four Mile Creek as well as Nepco Lake, thereby needing a resolution to expend those funds. Motion by Buttke/Hovendick to approve the two budget amending resolutions and forward onto the county board for their consideration. Motion carried unanimously.
13. County Conservationist Wucherpfennig reported that the DNR is asking counties to ensure compliance with NR151 on numerous sites, some that have never had Land Conservation employees on before. For Wood County, this amounts to 16 sites. Wucherpfennig expressed concern about this approach stating that some farmers may not be open to a perceived intrusion on their property. The committee suggested calling the around 8 producers to see how this is perceived by property owners and report back to the committee.
14. Wucherpfennig reviewed the current status of the ARPA funds for ground water testing being conducted through UWSP. The spots to test have been determined and letters will be going out to those landowners shortly.
15. There will be committee training coming up June 9<sup>th</sup> for all Land Conservation Committee members sponsored by North Central Land + Water Conservation Association and will be held in Merrill.
16. Area Extension Director McNelly highlighted her departments' monthly activity report and what the educators are working on.
17. Extension Area Director McNelly reported that currently there are two half time positions for Natural Resources Educator. In order to ensure the position, since there were two halftime positions, McNelly is looking to make one full-time, county funded position. Since we were already paying the two half time positions, the full-time position will come at no cost. Motion by Buttke/Perlock to approve the hiring of one full-time position and amend the Extension contract to show the change. Motion carried unanimously.
18. McNelly received word that the cranberry specialist position was approved for rehire with anticipation it will be filled by the fall. The Associate 4H position open will be filled and will be taking a larger role in expanding 4H into South Wood County.
19. Ka Zoua Thao, Community Health worker received an outstanding programming award from the state for her work in the jail. This now goes to the national level competition. The committee expressed their congratulations.

20. Requests for per diems are as follows:

- Supervisor Hovendick for attendance at the Witter Field Lighting ceremony
- All Committee members to attend the Citizens Water Group meetings for this term.
- Supervisor Leichtnam to Golden Sands RC&D for this term.

Motion by Schulz/Hovendick to approve the per diems as requested. Motion carried unanimously.

21. The next regular meeting will be on Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:00 AM..

22. Chair Leichtnam adjourned the meeting at 11:21 AM.

Minutes taken by Trent Miner, County Clerk, and are in draft form until approved at the next meeting.

**Conservation, Education, & Economic Development Committee  
May 6, 2026**

NAME	REPRESENTING
Bill Cleland	WCB #15
Emily Oetzman	Wood County Health Dept.
Jason Sachs	Aqua Skiing
Dennis Polach	WCB-14
JFP Knzke	WCB #11
Shane Wachspfer	CWC
Jen McNelly	UWEX
Jason Grossberg	P+Z
Dale Christman	CWSF
Kayla Rombalski	Extension
Katie Kleyn (Web Ex)	County Clerk
Darr Pettus (Web Ex)	LWS
Ben Jeffrey (Web Ex)	Health Dept
Victoria Wilson	P-3
Lance Pliml	CB Chair