

Town and Country RC&D Vision Team Meeting, First Quarter 2010
Tuesday, March 9, 2010, 8:30 – 11:00 a.m.
Waukesha State Bank – Oconomowoc Community Center
1227 Corporate Center Drive, Oconomowoc

The meeting was called to order at 8:50 a.m.

Members Present: Dan Treloar, Dwayne Sperber, Heather Ryan, John Hall, Margot Mazur, Bill Dovi, John Hall, Dennis Grzezinski, Carlton Zentner, Mike Gehl, Sue Marx, Tracy Carey, Jason Dare, Kurt Calkins, Dave Kozlowski, Weenonah Brattset, Earlene Ronk, Greg David, Beth Gehred, Diane Herman,

Members Teleconferencing: Autumn Sabo and Ruth Johnson

Staff Present: Craig Ficenech (NRCS), Beth Gehred, Luke Saunders, Peter Pitts

Craig briefly described the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program and the USDA agency that administers the program, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) . Nationwide there are over 300 RC&Ds. In the traditional structure, each RC&D is governed by a council, and each county within the RC&D area is represented on the council. However, each RC&D is different and county participation varies by RC&D. RC&D's must be 501c3, non-profit organizations, and work in partnership with NRCS. In order to receive NRCS support, each RC&D must submit an Annual Plan of Work to NRCS for approval and every 5 years each RC&D must submit an Area Plan (Strategic Plan) for approval. Town and Country RC&D's Area Plan expires in 2011.

Margot explained the Vision Team functions, roles and expectations.

In Town and Country, the Vision Team is charged with developing its 5-year Area Plan, oversight of the Issue Teams, and hosting of the Annual Membership Meeting. The Vision team chooses the most important issues of our area, and which Town and Country is best suited to address. The Vision team also help bring partners, volunteers, funding and their collective interests and talents to the organization. Vision team members must be members of Town and Country and sign a conflict of interest policy.

Update from the Board

Diane: The Board is described as the Business head of the organization; the Vision Team is the Heart, and the Issue Teams are the arms and legs. The Board is a volunteer working board until we can raise funds for additional staff. Future priorities include the 2011 plan of work and review of our By-Laws and Structure.

The Board recently approved a motion that Board members should attend at least 75% of the Board meetings and 50% of of the attendance at Board meetings should be in person.

NRCS Coordinator Craig Ficinec is employed by NRCS to assist us in meeting our goals. NRCS support is not guaranteed to continue at the present level, and the entire organization must engage in fundraising activities, increase membership, develop diverse income sources.

Board Election

The following members were nominated to the Board.

President-Elect – Margaret Franzen

Secretary – Ruth Johnson

Vision Team Co-Leader – Heather Ryan

Director 4 – Bill Dovi

Director 5 – Sue Marx

Diane suggested that since two Vision Team members were participating by teleconferencing, that they should email their ballots to Greg David (Emeritus Board Member) and that Diane and Greg would announce the results upon receiving the email ballots.

Nona raised strong concerns that Town and Country Bylaws are not like those of other RC&D bylaws that she has seen.

Dennis Grzezinski moved, Greg David seconded, to close the nominations and proceed with the paper vote. The slate of candidates was elected as proposed.

Dennis Grzezinski suggested that the By-Laws and Structure document are confusing . Diane asked Dennis, since he is an attorney and since he has served on other Boards, if he would be willing to help with the review and resulting recommendations. He agreed to do so.

Process Review of New Project Proposals

Heather reviewed the Town and Country RC&D Project Approval Process, and the indirect cost rate. Projects usually come to us from the issue teams, but can also come from NRCS, the Vision team, or the Board.

- The 2010 Plan of Work guides our priorities for the year. Projects may be added during the year.
- Town and Country determines its indirect cost rate by comparing its administrative expensed to direct project expenses for the previous year. While every attempt is made to keep administrative costs low, administrative expenses are real costs the organization incurs.

Nona asked how the Economic Development conference was being funded - Is there a basic reservoir of money that things are funded from? It was explained that the project was approved by the Board after the Board reviewed the proposal and budget.

Overall, of Town and Country's approximately \$200,000 budget, about \$20,000 comes from NRCS.

Diane said that all budgets are available for review

Margot suggested that broadening the inclusion on the Project Approval Work Team would be a healthy thing. Sue Marx, Bill Dovi & Nona Brattset volunteered to be added to the Project Approval Workgroup.

Progress on 2010 Projects

- Greg David discussed **Sustainability Issue Team** projects as outlined from Progress report – projects from Town & Country RC&D 2010 Plan of Work, Quarter 1 Update
- Autumn Sabo reviewed the **Invasive Species Issue Team** activities
- Luke described the **Wood Utilization and Emerald Ash Borer** –This two-pronged approach includes outreach efforts and technical, foresting efforts. Dwayne Sperber described a new local wood movement in which wood resources from trees grown in local communities are best utilized as boards local buildings. Dwayne is a wood advocate and custom designs and builds furniture, one piece at a time. He asked if Town and Country would want to promote local use of local wood. Discussion followed about which issue team the effort fit: Invasive Species, Food and Farming or Economic Development. Sperber said that EAB only accounts for 10% of the wastewood stream. Heather suggests that Dwayne and Bill Dovi (Economic Development Issue Team, speak after the meeting.
- Bill Dovi spoke as leader of **Economic Development Issue Team** and invited others to join the Team. He asked how can Town and Country could start evolving small businesses within our region. He noted development of cooperatives and said there is a movement now, for small contractors, to look for ways to add sustainability to their practices. They are looking for "consultants" willing to help them. Partners could include Wisconsin American Planners Association, Slow Money. He note that he was contacting organization to sponsor the Town and Country Upcoming Economic Development conference.

Heather spoke for the **Food and Farming Issue Team** and outlined projects and asked for a co-leader for the Food and Farming Issue Team. Nona Brattset was nominated and elected as co-leader.

Beth spoke for **Water Issue Team**. Projects include mycofiltration, Water Star, and Water policy advocacy.

Craig noted NRCS is very interested in how many jobs we create, and how many businesses we have supported.

Margaret Franzen moved that the Vision Team allocate to the Economic Development Issue Team (EDIT) and Invasive Species Issue Team (ISIT) \$1000 each with the balance of the Issue Team funds to remain for future allocation. Dennis seconded. Motion passed after discussion outlined below.

Greg did not feel that frugality should be penalized, and that money paid out of pocket or raised in other ways ought not result in no money being allocated for an issue team.

Margo asked that a clearer budget be developed so that pertinent information be more available for decision-making. Diane asked Margo and Craig if they would assist with developing the budget and they agreed to do so.

Diane noted that in addition to NRCS funding, donations are used to fund issue team projects. One donor has contributed \$500.00 per team for several years.

Dwayne Sperber asked about membership recruitment and requested a membership brochure to give to people that outlined what Town and Country RC&D does and how to join. Diane said it is being developed with our new logo. Dennis asked that he receive what is being used until such time as the other piece is developed.

Future meetings will be scheduled by contacting all members via email/internet.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.