

ROCK COUNTY, WISCONSIN



COUNTY BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE MINUTES – NOVEMBER 3, 2021 – 5:00 P.M.

Call to Order. Chair Bostwick called the meeting for the County Board Staff Committee to order at 5:00 P.M. in the Jury Deliberation Room, Fourth Floor, Rock County Courthouse-East.

Committee Members Present: Supervisors Beaver, Richard Bostwick, Peer, Podzilni, Sweeney, Brien, Yeomans, and Davis.

Committee Members Absent: Supervisor Leavy.

Staff Members Present: Josh Smith, County Administrator; Randy Terronez, Assistant to County Administrator; Richard Greenlee, Corporation Counsel; and Lisa Tollefson, County Clerk.

Others Present: Supervisors Fox, Mawhinney, Schulz, and Williams.

Approval of Agenda. Supervisor Davis moved approval of the agenda as presented, second by Supervisor Yeomans. ADOPTED.

Public Comment

Una Williams public comment submission attached.

Supervisor Schulz expressed her support for this resolution. She added that this would allow people that are ill or working to be able to participate at County Board meetings.

Resolutions and Committee Action

Amending Rules I & IV of the Rock County Board of Supervisors Rules of Procedure

“**WHEREAS**, in a representative democracy, an informed electorate is essential for the workings of good government; and,

WHEREAS, providing for broad public access to channels of communication which allow the free flow of information from members of the public to elected officials and government administrators creates ~~and~~ a more responsive and well informed government body; and,

WHEREAS, modern technology provides many different avenues of modes of communication, allowing for many different communities to find access to information and ability to communicate in ways that have been previously difficult or impossible; and,

WHEREAS, for public agencies across the country, the public health pandemic resulting from COVID-19 required quick adaptation to a new way of interacting with community members. Organizations moved processes from in-person to digital formats and public meetings also had to make the leap, with many teams turning to conferencing tools, like Microsoft Teams, Webex, and Zoom, to support the change; and

WHEREAS, providing for remote access to meetings creates more flexibility for both Supervisors and the public to attend meetings and can increase participation in public meetings, thereby vindicating the goal of increased access and better flow of information for a more diverse set of communities; and

WHEREAS, it should be the policy of Rock County to continue to provide electronic access to meetings even after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides and it is safe to meet in-person again.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled this _____ day of _____, 20__ amends the Rock County Board Rules of Procedure as follows (added text appears as underlined; deleted text appears as ~~struck through~~):

...”

Supervisor Yeomans moved approval of the above resolution with the edits in red, second by Supervisor Brien.

Supervisor Williams spoke to the resolution. She thanked the committee for considering the resolution again. She stated that there are several County Board members that did not fully understand what they were voting for when this resolution initially came to the County Board. She added that by this resolution not passing, it is limiting the ability of residents to attend County Board meetings. She added that there are Supervisors that have work commitments, so they are unable to attend in-person. She then highlighted that some Supervisors go elsewhere during the winter, and they are unable to represent their constituents because they are unable to attend in-person.

Supervisor Beaver inquired how IT would handle a hybrid County Board meeting; how they would see all of the participants on Zoom and be able to interact with them. Josh Smith replied that he spoke with Jim Sandvig, IT Director, and he stated that if the Board wanted to go forward with this, IT would work to accommodate this. He stated that this would have a Zoom component and would be similar to other hybrid meetings that are held.

Supervisor Beaver inquired whether they would be required to be on video when they are on Zoom. Supervisor Williams stated that she cannot see everyone on YouTube when the meeting is broadcasted. She added that over Zoom, she can see that people are present versus in-person, she cannot see everyone. Supervisor Yeomans stated that when you are in-person, you have to be present during rollcall and if you leave, it will be noted in the minutes when you leave. He added that on Zoom, you can leave the Zoom meeting and there is the potential that someone might not notice. Supervisor Williams stated that if a roll call vote is called during a Zoom meeting, their vote would not be counted. Supervisor Williams asked for Corporation Counsel to expand upon how voting may be noted. Rich Greenlee pointed to Civic Plus. He added that there is nothing in the Rules of the Board that would require Supervisors to have their Zoom video turned on. Rich Greenlee stated that there would be some things that would need to be ironed out. Supervisor Beaver asked what the guidelines would be to be able to participate virtually at Board meetings. Supervisor Williams stated that there is a myriad of reasons why someone might participate virtually.

Supervisor Beaver asked which meetings this would apply to. Rich Greenlee stated that Rule I applies to all meetings of the County Board of Supervisors. Right now, due to the emergency rules that were passed, this allows for the Chair of each committee to decide how the committee will meet. Supervisor Beaver pointed to the Supervisors that do not have access to internet/broadband. Supervisor Yeomans added that he is concerned that this will encourage Supervisors to not participate and prepare for meetings. He asked how this would be discouraged.

Supervisor Davis asked what the cost implications might be on this; how much we spend on Zoom. Josh Smith answered that the money that is included in the budget right now to improve audio/visual system in the County Board room would include the ability to continue to have hybrid meetings. Supervisor

Williams stated that the County saves money when people appear over Zoom because they cannot be charged mileage. Supervisor Yeomans asked Josh why he expected per diem expenses to continue to be low. Randy Terronez stated that this is a combination of people attending less meetings, Supervisors not claiming mileage, meetings being cancelled, etc. Supervisor Yeomans asked what the value of meeting in person versus remotely – he added that maybe someone should get less per diem for attending virtually.

Supervisor Sweeney called the question, second by Supervisor Podzilni. Passed unanimously.

The committee then voted on the original motion to approve the resolution. YES – Supervisor Yeomans. NO – Beaver, Bostwick, Peer, Podzilni, Sweeney, Brien, Davis. ABSENT – Supervisor Leavy.

Review, Discussion and Possible Action

None.

Adjournment

Supervisor Beaver moved adjournment at 5:53 P.M., second by Supervisor Sweeney.

Respectfully submitted,

Haley Hoffman
Office Coordinator

NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY COMMITTEE