

MINUTES

CONSERVATION, EDUCATION, & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, April 1, 2026

TIME: 9:00 AM

PLACE: Courthouse – Room 302

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Leichtnam, Tom Buttke, 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. The minutes of the March 4, 2026, meeting were presented. Motion by Hovendick/Perlock to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.
4. Motion by Buttke/Schulz to approve the vouchers, monthly department reports and committee reports. Motion carried unanimously.
5. The term of office for the Producer Member of the committee is expiring. Motion by Schulz/Hovendick to recommend to the County Board Chair that George Gilbertson be reappointed for the next 2-year term. Motion carried unanimously.
6. The economic development grant request for Stemperosa Estates Garages in the Village of Vesper has been mostly completed with information given to the committee showing the progress. Motion by Buttke/Perlock to approve the release of \$25,000 in economic grant funding for this project. Motion carried unanimously.
7. The City of Wisconsin Rapids has completed the lighting at Witter Field for which there were economic development grant funds applied for. The City is requesting release of those funds. Motion by Buttke/Hovendick to approve the release of \$20,000 to the City of Wisconsin Rapids for this project. Motion carried unanimously. A ribbon cutting will be held on Tuesday, April 7th at 7:30 PM at Witter Field.
8. Melissa Haack, the regional farmers market coordinator, updated the committee on the use of REDI funds that were released by the committee last fall. She highlighted the improvements to the Wisconsin Rapids market as well as the incorporation of the Marshfield Farmers Market Cooperative. She discussed work on the websites as well. More information will be forthcoming as the rest of the funds are expended.
9. Conservation Administrative Specialist Peeters reported that no bids were received for the Gilbertson grassed waterway project on the second try so this will be rebid for a third time so this will again be on the agenda for next month.

10. Peeters reviewed the current status of the ARPA funds for ground water remediation and will now be looking at expanding this out from the original footprint to hot spots within the Towns of Grand Rapids and Port Edwards with additional testing being conducted through UWSP. More information will follow.
11. There will be committee training coming up in June for all Land Conservation Committee members sponsored by North Central Land + Water Conservation Association. If interested, let Peeters know.
12. The 2025 Wood County Land & Water Conservation Dept. Annual Report was included in the committee packet. Questions in this regard can be directed at Peeters or County Conservationist Wucherpfennig.
13. Extension Area Director McNelly reported that the Cranberry Outreach Educator has resigned. The growers are currently discussing future needs of this position at this time. In addition, the funding for the Natural Resources Educator is unknown so this empty position will remain until the funding mechanism is finalized.
14. The 4H Educator was able to acquire an AmeriCorps person for the to help out the 4H during the summer months. McNelly is recommending that unused funding from vacant positions be used to fund the \$2,000 match needed to pay for this temporary position. Motion by Schulz/Hovendick to approve the reallocation of \$2,000 from unfilled/vacant positions to fund the AmeriCorps 4H position. Motion carried unanimously.
15. The next regular meeting will be determined at a later date.
16. Motion by Buttke/Schulz to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously at 9:39 AM.

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

**Conservation, Education, & Economic Development Committee
April 1, 2026**

NAME	REPRESENTING
Jason Grueneberg	P+Z
Bill Elendening	WCB #15
Dennis Polach	WCB - 14
Victoria Wilson	PE 2
Ben McWelly	UW EXT.
Jake Klingfish	City of Wis Rapids
Barbara Peeters	LWCD
Sergey Kibutson	LWCD Rep
Melissa Thack	Regional Farmers Market Coordinator
SCOTT BREHM	DISTRICT #9
Rachel Ford	Marshfield Farmers Market
Lance Pimpl	County Board Chair
Katie DeKlyn (Web Ex)	County Clerk
Darrin Steinbach (Web Ex)	Finance
Julie Manel (Web Ex)	P+3
Ben Jeffrey (Web Ex)	Health Dept