

DANE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



Goodland County Park
Photo: Dane County Land and Water Resources

Letter from County Board Chair Patrick Miles



This has been a year of transitions. We began the 2022-24 County Board term in April with 11 new members, and I assumed the Chair along with a new, diverse leadership team. Along with the rest of the world, we moved into a post-pandemic mode, characterized by hybrid meetings supported by new technology. And we sought new solutions to ongoing challenges facing the county.

Inclusion, equity, and accessibility have been hallmarks of the Board's policy initiatives and legislative successes in 2022.

- With leadership from Supervisors including Castillo, Wegleitner, and Bare, the Board has taken several actions that demonstrate its recognition of and advocacy for abortion care as health care and a fundamental right. In the budget, the Board invested in resources that include health care navigation and provision of travel reimbursement for county employees to travel out of the state for abortion services.
- In June, the Board approved Supv. Ratcliff's resolution establishing a policy requiring gender-inclusive restrooms in county facilities.
- In August, the almost year-long independent assessment of the current state of equity and inclusion across the facilities and programs of Dane County Parks and the Henry Vilas Zoo was completed.
- In September, the Board approved Supv. Collin's resolution regarding universal changing stations in county facilities.
- In December, the Personnel and Finance Committee approved Supv. Doyle's motion to create a subcommittee, initially included in the 2022 budget, to evaluate concerns regarding equity, recruitment, and retention in county government employment. The subcommittee is set to begin its work in January 2023.

The use of technology to enhance public engagement is a positive ramification of two years of remote meetings. While I anticipate further modifications in the coming year as our experience with hybrid meetings deepens, I know that we are a leader in local government in both our approach and in the public participation we support.

The Board continues to grapple with big issues; criminal justice reform and jail consolidation chief among them. After the county successfully competed for a federal Community Court grant and included significant financial resources in the 2023 budget, the Board is committed to move forward on reforms. New voices on the Board have provided new perspectives to the debate. The coming year will require choices on prioritizing an array of reforms, as well as a path forward on the jail. I look forward to informed and civil discourse as we weigh options and make decisions in the best interest of our constituents.

We will also continue or revisit other important topics. The Broadband Task Force continues, with greater resources available to guide their work. The Alliant Energy Center Redevelopment Committee will also begin to meet again early next year, after a two year hiatus as a result of the pandemic.

In summary, looking back at 2022, the Board can be proud of its varied accomplishments. Looking forward, we are well-positioned to address the challenges ahead. I want to thank each of you for your passion and dedication. Together, we can make a truly positive difference in the lives of Dane County residents.

A note from the Chief of Staff

It has been a productive year in the Board Office. We opened the new office suite early in the year; completed technology upgrades in the chambers and committee rooms; and provided training to staff throughout county government on how to use the AV equipment and manage hybrid meetings. Tamarine Cornelius joined the staff as the CJC Data Analyst, and Adam Riley is the new Kassel and Social Media Intern. We worked with consultants to complete three evaluations. Office staff provided support to supervisors by researching topics, arranging discussions with key department staff, and drafting resolutions. We provided staff support to committees, subcommittees, councils, and task forces. Our efforts have been in response to both ongoing and new interests of members of the Board.

Additionally, in the past year, more than ever before, Board Office staff spent time considering how best to encourage and embrace community engagement while providing a safe forum for everyone – Board members, staff, and registrants alike – who attend public meetings in person. We enter 2023 with eyes open to safety and security challenges, but also hopeful that together we can strive for continued robust support for a meaningful democratic process.

Karin Peterson Thurlow

County Board Office Staff



Chief of Staff

Karin Peterson Thurlow



**Manager, Division of Policy
& Practice Innovation**

Colleen Clark - Bernhardt



**Sustainability & Program
Evaluation Coordinator**

Lisa MacKinnon



Policy Analyst

Lauren Kuhl



**Legislative Management
Specialist/Policy Analyst**

Lindsay Menard



Clerk I-II

Josh Schroeder



Research Assistant

Sarah Jensen



Data and Evaluation Analyst

Isabel Anadon

New Staff



Community Justice Council Research Analyst
Tamarine Cornelius

Tamarine Cornelius is the Research Analyst supporting the Criminal Justice Council, in the Office of the County Board. She most recently comes from Kids Forward, and has extensive experience working in government and non-profit organizations in data management, racial equity, justice, and policy. She has a master's degree in public policy and will finish another master's degree in data science in May 2023. The 2023 budget transfers Tamarine's position to the Office for Criminal Justice Reform and Equity.



Kassel-Dane Sister County Task Force/Communications Intern
Adam Riley

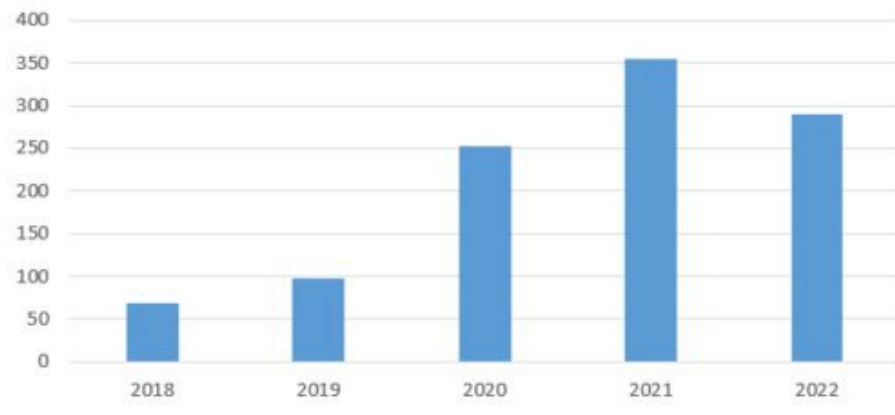
Adam Riley is the Communication and Kassel-Dane Sister County Task Force Intern for the County Board. He is a graduate student at UW-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs. Adam will graduate with a master's in international public affairs in May 2023 and looks forward to a career in public policy or public diplomacy.

Hybrid Meetings

After two years of planning, the first hybrid meeting of the Dane County Board of Supervisors took place on June 16, 2022. Shortly thereafter, standing committees started holding hybrid meetings. In September, a weekly hybrid meeting training was offered to staff of boards, commissions, and committees – 40 staff members attended the training. From June through December 2022, Dane County held 110 hybrid meetings.



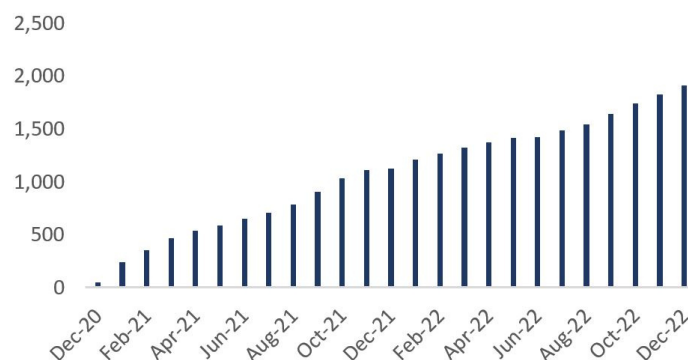
Dane County Board of Supervisors Public Registrations to Speak at Board Meetings 2018-2022



Send Agenda Feature

In late 2020, the Board Office implemented a new feature on Insite, the Dane County Legislative Information Center, called "Send Agenda". Send Agenda enables residents to easily subscribe to board, commission, and committee meeting agendas. Once agendas have been published, a notification is sent directly to subscribers, allowing residents to better monitor and participate in the legislative process. Throughout 2022, the number of residents subscribing to agendas steadily increased; as of December 2022, almost 2,000 residents were subscribed to Send Agenda. The County's engagement rate (the percentage of recipients who open an email or click on a link) is high compared to other jurisdictions with an average rate of 46% each month. Send Agenda is another tool to help the Board Office monitor and increase engagement with the residents of Dane County.

Total Subscribers by Month



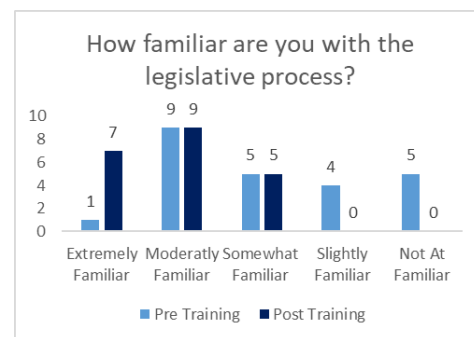
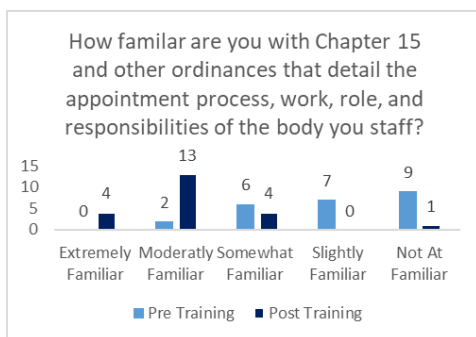
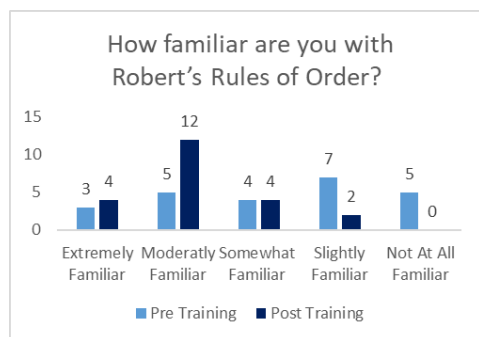
Committee Academy

On December 13th and 14th, Board Office staff held the first annual Committee Academy training for employees who provide staff support to board, commission, and committee meetings. Over the course of two days, staff learned about the legislative process, Legistar, hybrid meetings, how to onboard new committee members, quorum, open meeting laws, and other key information necessary to support the work of county committees, boards, and commissions. Chair Miles kicked off Committee Academy with opening remarks.



Approximately 50 staff members attended the training. A Committee Academy evaluation indicated that 100% of survey respondents found the training material to be helpful for them. Overall, attendees indicated that their knowledge increased substantially over the course of the two days – see results below.

Committee Academy Impact



Dane County Broadband Task Force

The Dane County Broadband Task Force was created in 2021 as a 15-member body. In 2022, the Broadband Task Force prepared a report with more than 30 recommendations to expand broadband in Dane County, as well as address affordability issues. A full list of recommendations and summary of the initial work of the task force can be found in the 2021-2022 Dane County Broadband Task Force Report. The report is available here: <https://board.countyofdane.com/documents/Dane-County-Broadband-Task-Force-Report---2021-2022---5.pdf>

Following the release of the report, the Task Force was extended through 2024. Dane County has contracted with AECOM to complete a broadband engineering assessment, which is expected to continue through spring 2023. Additionally, the 2023 Dane County budget included an amendment to add a broadband coordinator position in the department of Planning and Development in the coming months.

More information about the Broadband Task Force can be found on the Task Force's website: <https://board.countyofdane.com/initiatives/Broadband-Task-Force>

Relationship with University of Wisconsin

The County Board has worked with the University of Wisconsin-Madison on various policy topics over the last several years, including the UniverCity Alliance initiatives, a UW program that connects students and classes with local communities to work on real-world projects. In an effort to continue to build the relationship between the UW and the Board Office, as well as to expand research capacity, the Board Office worked with UW on two policy research projects during the fall semester. One of the topics included a review of non-partisan redistricting throughout the country as well as the 2021 Dane County process in an effort to find any opportunities for improvement or best practices for the next cycle. The second project included working with MadREP and Kassel, Germany's economic development agency - Wirtschaftsförderung, to explore commonalities between Dane County and Kassel Germany in regards to economic development. In 2023, the Board has allocated \$10,000 a year to continue work on policy projects with students. This opportunity introduces students to county government, especially as they consider future employment.

The Board Office was also approached in fall 2022 to submit ideas for the UW's Lafollette School capstone project. The school looks for real world issues grounded in both qualitative and quantitative analysis to provide the students with a strong analytical, writing, and presentation assignment. The goal is a win-win - with the project client receiving a work product without out-of-pocket expense and the students building a resume. Additionally, the project introduces master's level students to the role of local government. The project submitted and selected includes a demographic analysis of the Dane County workforce by department and by classification, as well as national best practices in diversity in recruitment and retention, as well as managing an aging workforce. The project also includes an update of the Equity Assessment Recruitment and Hiring report that was completed in 2016 by a workgroup that was an outgrowth of the Racial Equity and Social Justice team. The students will be working on this project during the spring, 2023 semester.

Secure Elections Facility

In 2022, the Election Security Task Force was created. In the Task Force's report, one of the recommendations included the establishment of a secure elections facility. In mid-2022, the Board approved a resolution to provide funds for the design and planning of a security elections facility. Subsequently, the funds to build this facility were included in the 2023 budget. The election facility will insure future elections and election staff are safe. Work on the facility will take place over the coming months.

Kassel-Dane Sister County Relationship

The Dane County-Kassel relationship dates to 2007 when the two counties entered into a formal sister county partnership. The agreement is designed to exchange ideas and build both economic and cultural partnerships. With a population of approximately 200,000, Kassel is smaller than Dane County (population 560,000) but shares many of the same characteristics, including a university and a thriving high-tech sector.

The Kassel-Dane Sister County relationship continued to flourish in 2022 through initiatives including:

- Two artists from Dane County applied for and were invited to participate in the EUARCA+ 2022 arts camp in Kassel, Germany. Following an application process managed by the Dane County Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission, artists Helen Hawley and Angelica Contreras were selected to participate in the arts camp. EUARCA+ is held every five years and coincides with documenta, a world-renowned contemporary art exhibition in Kassel. The artists participated in the two week art camp along with artists from several other countries.
- Working with the University of Wisconsin, an undergraduate student completed an internship in the fall to explore economic development partnerships and commonalities between MadREP and Wirtschaftsförderung - the economic development agencies in Dane County and Kassel, Germany, respectively. This work is anticipated to continue in 2023.



Comprehensive Dane County Parks and Zoo Access and Equity Program Evaluation Completed

In fall 2021, the Office of the Dane County Board, in collaboration with Dane County Parks and the Henry Vilas Zoo, engaged Keen Independent Research to conduct a program evaluation to assess current policies and practices and provide recommendations for strategies and actions to advance racial and social equity and access at Dane County Parks and the Henry Vilas Zoo. The objective of this comprehensive evaluation—the first of its kind for Dane County Parks and Henry Vilas Zoo—was to help guide the County to enhance diverse community participation and enjoyment of its facilities, lands, and programs, ultimately becoming a more inclusive, equitable, and racially just place for all.

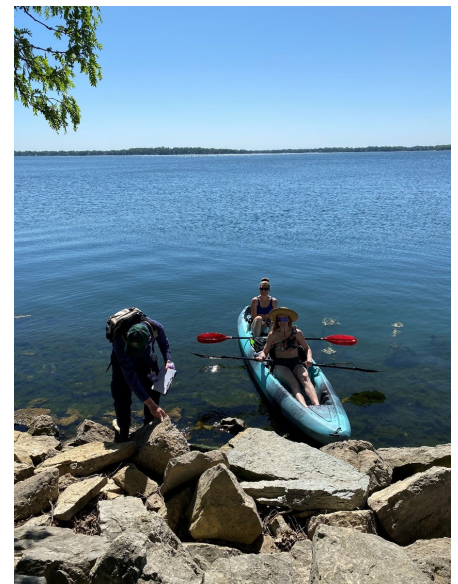
Keen, a national equity consulting firm, led an in-depth qualitative and quantitative study to help Dane County form a better understanding of the demographics of both who is and is not utilizing its public spaces, as well as the reasons behind people's choices. Keen endeavored to engage a variety of people and ensure that many voices were heard on the subjects of race, gender, language access, disabilities, and other aspects of social equity by taking a comprehensive approach, which included:

- Frank discussions with internal stakeholders, including Dane County Board of Supervisors and Parks and Zoo staff (30 participants)
- Creating and meeting with an Ad-hoc Advisory Group and presentation to the Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion Advisory Board
- Conducting a survey of visitors and non-visitors offered in English, Spanish and Hmong via:
 - Dissemination by 90 community partners, faith-based leaders, others
 - On-site intercept surveys at Dane County Parks, Henry Vilas Zoo, Madison Parks in June* 600 survey responses were received
- Comparative research with 30 parks and 45 zoos, nationally and internationally
- Analysis of equity plans from professional associations relevant to parks and zoos

Keen Independent provided the following nine recommendations based on the results of their study:

1. Embed “top-down” equity plan
2. Offer information and signage in multiple languages
3. Improve experience for persons with disabilities
4. Strengthen inclusion for the LGBTQIA+ community
5. Expand targeted outreach and partnerships
6. Strengthen family and youth programming
7. Embrace unique dietary choices
8. Celebrate diversity
9. Develop mechanisms to gather and respond to feedback and measure outcomes

Building upon the work they have already done and that was recognized by Keen in its findings, staff at Dane County Parks and the Henry Vilas Zoo are already undertaking efforts to implement a number of the study recommendations as well as continuing to collaborate and engage with community members who advised Keen during the study. The evaluation was completed in August 2022 and the full report and recommendations can be found here: <https://board.countyofdane.com/documents/KeenIndependent-DaneCountyParksZooEvaluation-Final-08102022.pdf>



Survey staff for parks and zoo evaluation surveying kayakers in action.
Photo: Susan Sandford

Criminal Justice Reform Focus

The past year has seen continued focus on reform to the criminal justice system. County initiatives include:

- Establishment of a new Office for Criminal Justice Reform and Equity as part of the 2023 budget.
- Renaming the Criminal Justice Council to the Community Justice Council and expansion of membership to include community members on both the Council itself and its subcommittees.
- Approved 2021 RES-320, Amending the 2022 budget and Authorizing Borrowing to Increase Funding for the Dane County Jail Consolidation Project, which included funding to retained JFA Institute to produce a report that recommends specific policy, practice and program reforms that would result in reductions of the jail population and minimize the use of incarceration.

Criminal Justice Reform National Relationships

Dane County expanded partnerships regarding criminal justice better practices with NACo and the Council for State Governments over the course of 2022. Initiatives included:

- Dane County Board is represented in a small national cohort as Supervisor Pellebon joins NACo County Officials advancing Racial Equity (CORE) in Justice Network. The Network aims to strengthen the capacity of county leaders to identify and assess their community's current barriers to identifying and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal legal system and share scalable and transferable policies and programs.
- Dane County continues a partnership with The Council of State Governments (CSG) and Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) will assist in strategies to reduce serious mental illness prevalence and racial disparities in jails and in the justice system more broadly via practice and policy improvements.
- NACO-Peer Learning Network. Dane County continues work with a dozen jurisdictions around the country analyzing best practice in policy and practice for the familiar faces initiative (frequent utilizers of multiple systems). More information here: <https://familiarfaces.naco.org/>
- Dane County joins a MacArthur funded racial equity cohort with counties including Durham County , NC; Franklin County, OH; Mecklenberg County, NC; and St. Louis, MO.