

# Dane County Board of Supervisors



## 2021 Annual Report

# A Letter from County Board Chair Analiese Eicher

A year ago, I would never have imagined that the entire 2020-2022 term of the County Board would be held via remote meeting. Like you, I have missed the comradery of this body and the opportunity to exchange ideas in person.

Despite the continued challenges of the pandemic, the County Board can celebrate several successes from 2021, including:

- Funding a Crisis Triage Center, an initiative to the Board has enthusiastically supported, to provide mental health support to help deescalate situations, keep individuals out of jail, and provide links to other forms of support;
- Completion of a non-partisan redistricting process, even though the timeline was markedly compressed by delayed Census data; and
- Establishment of the Broadband Task Force to determine approaches to bring 21st century technology to the most rural areas of our county.

The coming year will bring a new County Board term. As we say good-bye to veteran supervisors and welcome new faces, the complex and sometimes challenging issues facing Dane County will continue. We will anticipate the completion of an equity and accessibility assessment of Dane County Parks and the Henry Vilas Zoo; make choices regarding criminal justice improvement and the consolidated jail project; and will implement hybrid public meetings, where the public and Board members are able to participate both in person and virtually.

The past year has been difficult, but the County Board has been resilient and productive. I am hopeful that 2022 will see a return of the more enjoyable aspects of our work – the opportunities to share a meal and build new friendships.



Dane County Board Chair  
Analiese Eicher  
District 3



# A note from Chief of Staff

## Karin Peterson Thurlow

While the City-County Building has been closed throughout 2021, Board Office staff have been working with our colleagues in the Division of Information Management and the Department of Public Works to make physical improvements to both the public meeting rooms and office space.

As you may recall, the sound system in the chambers had reached the end of its useful life by the start of 2020, and the Board had approved funding to replace the system and also upgrade the audio visual equipment in the third floor meeting rooms. We have been able to make technological changes that enhance our ability to hold meetings in remote or hybrid formats. Although there is no substitute for in-person meetings, the public has embraced the ability to participate remotely, and will be able to do so for most meetings in the future.

At the same time, we have worked on the remodel of third floor space in the City-County Building for the Board Office. Members of the County Board will have improved meeting and work areas. I am looking forward to being able to hold an open house by mid-year.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the hard work and general good humor of Board Office staff over the past year. We are all here to help you serve the people of Dane County.

## County Board 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

## New Staff



**Data & Evaluation Analyst**  
Isabel Anadon



**Research Assistant**  
Sarah Jensen



**Communications/  
Kassel Intern**  
Courtney Erdman

Isabel Anadon joined the County Board Office in August of 2021 as a Data and Evaluation Analyst. In this new and expanded role, Isabel will help advance research and support data and evaluations for the Criminal Justice Council (CJC). Previously Isabel was an LTE with the Board Office. Isabel's work moving forward will continue to ensure a high level of data integrity for all current and future CJC projects with its many outside collaborators. This work advances the CJC's collaborative work to address issues of equity and transparency in the Dane County criminal justice system. Isabel holds a Master's in Public Policy from the University of Chicago and Master of Science in Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Isabel is currently completing her doctoral thesis in the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is a doctoral fellow with the American Bar Foundation. Isabel is a proud parent of two young children who attend local elementary and middle schools in the Madison Metropolitan School District. Her puppy, adopted from the Dane County Human Society, absolutely loves the many Dane County parks they visit on a weekly basis.

# Crisis Triage Center

Dane County has made progress towards creating a Crisis Triage Center (CTC). The CTC will be a treatment center for people experiencing acute behavioral health crises. The CTC will offer a treatment-oriented, supportive alternative to temporarily housing people in the jail during a mental health crisis. The CTC will be open 24/7/365, and it will hold people for a maximum of 23-hours before connecting them to other resources, such as outpatient behavioral health and basic needs services or more intensive inpatient treatment. RI International was hired as the vendor to conduct the needs assessment by the Department of Human Services. The report is linked here:  
<https://cjc.countyofdane.com/documents/RI-Dane-County-CTC-Consultation-FINAL-Report-10252021.pdf>

# Fines and Fees in Criminal Justice

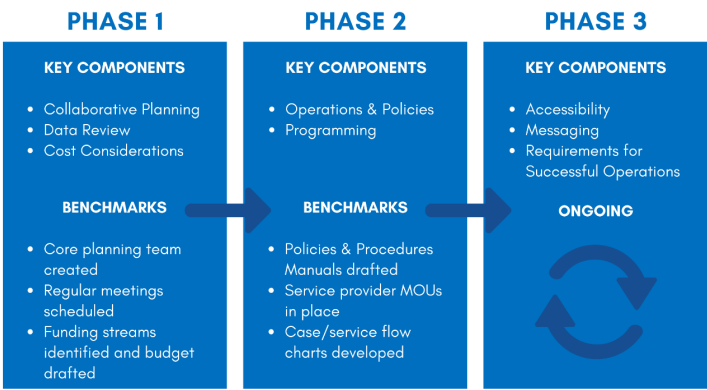
The Dane County Board led the effort to eliminate unnecessary and burdensome fines and fees in criminal justice systems. A collaborative subcommittee of the Public Protection and Judiciary Committee worked to learn about current fines and fees, reviewing all fees in civil/criminal system that keep individuals in debt. Budget action leveraged resources to reduce fines and fees.  
<https://dane.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9912814&GUID=CA56D25D-52EF-43ED-9D39-F9F3CBA70442>

# Criminal Justice Council

The Dane County Criminal Justice Council (CJC) has continued to innovate and improve transparency and outcomes through data-driven justice initiatives. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the CJC has collaborated to support new resources for people experiencing a behavioral health crisis, explore opportunities for restorative justice initiatives, implement evidence-based practices in pretrial justice, and “flatten the curve” of COVID-19 cases in the Dane County Jail. For additional information about the Criminal Justice Council’s exciting initiatives, please read the 2021 CJC Year in Review, available on the CJC website at [cjc.countyofdane.com](http://cjc.countyofdane.com).

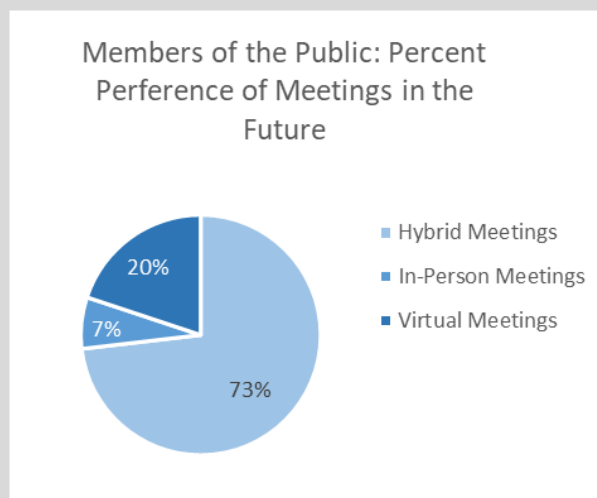
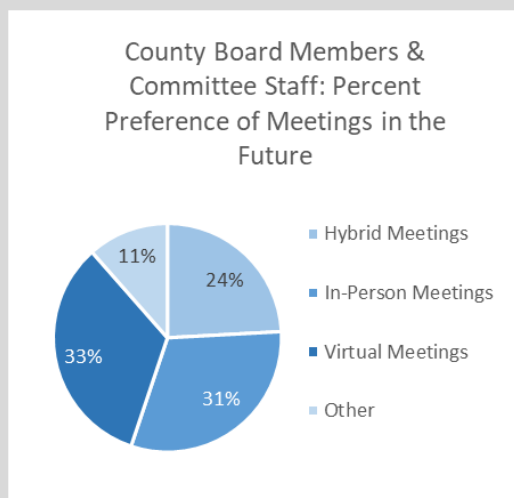
# Community Justice Center Initiative Needs Assessment

In May 2021, Dane County CJC engaged Center for Court Innovation (CCI) to conduct an assessment of whether a community justice center model might help the county to continue advancing its work toward criminal justice reform and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system. Priority action steps were then developed around each of those primary themes.



# Virtual and Hybrid Meetings

Dane County boards, commissions, and committees continued to meet virtually in 2021 after their implementation in 2020. Minimal changes were made to the virtual meeting process in 2021, and, for the most part, meetings went well with technical difficulties occurring rarely. In 2021, there were 607 virtual meetings of Dane County boards, commissions, and committees. In 2021, 5,397 people had registered to attend a board, commission, or committee meeting.



## The AV upgrade project and how it will allow for hybrid meetings:

In February of 2020, Board Office staff initiated the process of upgrading the audio visual equipment in rooms 201 (the chambers), 354, 357, 351, and 321 in the City-County Building. The conference rooms will be able to accommodate video conferencing and hybrid meetings. Users of the audio visual equipment in room 201 will be trained in mid-January 2022 and users of the audio visual equipment in the 3rd floor conference rooms will be trained during the spring of 2022. The project was a collaborative effort between County staff, City staff, and our contractors Henneman Engineering, and Marco Technologies; the remarkable collaboration between all was essential in completing the project successfully.

# Legislative Education and Process Week

A new process to provide legislative training and support to staff of boards, commissions, and committees was implemented in 2021. LEAP Week took place April 5-9 and August 30 – September 3. During LEAP Week, a daily tip for navigating the legislative process was emailed to committee staff. Both LEAP weeks were well received and the feedback from staff was positive. Looking to the New Year, Board Office staff is planning a more in-depth legislative process and procedure training, a Committee Academy, for board, commission, and committee staff in addition to continuing the LEAP Week initiative. Board Office staff hope to create a training for board, commission, and committee chairs as well as members.



# SMART Fund Converts to a Reserve Fund for Sustainability in 2022

In September 2021, the Sustainability Subcommittee of the Public Works, Highway, and Transportation Committee determined that the need for a regular, quarterly SMART Fund application and award process has diminished since departments and divisions now consistently incorporate a sustainability lens and understanding into their routine operations and budgeting for capital projects. Recognizing that the SMART Fund substantially achieved its original objective of normalizing county departmental planning and investing for sustainability—and that most departments now build sustainability, resource conservation, and climate resilience initiatives into their annual budget requests—the SMART Fund is now better suited to serve as an “emergency reserve” fund for unanticipated/unbudgeted emergent needs, with a smaller amount available for departments on an as-needed basis. Pursuant to this change, staff will no longer issue quarterly calls to departments for SMART Fund proposals and the Sustainability Subcommittee will meet during the year on an ad-hoc basis to advise on county sustainability issues (e.g., guidance on sustainability campus, sustainable projects, etc.), or if a grant is requested from the reserve.

## Equity and Access Evaluation of Dane County Parks and Henry Vilas Zoo Launched in December 2021

The County Board Office contracted with Keen Independent Research in the amount of \$99,990. This evaluation will deploy in-depth qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain a better understanding of who is currently using our Parks and Zoo, how these places are being used, and understand who is not visiting and why. The study will include recommendations to the County Board regarding approaches to remove identified barriers to racial and social equity and access, including access to people of all abilities, at our Parks and Zoo facilities, lands, properties, and programming.



# Outreach

Over the last five years, the Board has identified transparency and engagement as key initiatives. In 2021, Board Office staff continued to be creative in completing outreach as the world was still challenged by the pandemic. Despite challenges, the Board was able to increase and improve relationships with community organizations and the general public through outreach. Intentional outreach efforts were initiated for a number of topics, including criminal justice reform, redistricting, a potential community justice center, the budget process, the Broadband Task Force, and countless committee and Board meetings. In late 2021, the Board was awarded the Voice of People Award for excellence in online outreach.

## Broadband Task Force

The Broadband Task Force began meeting in mid-2021 with the goal of developing recommendations for broadband expansion in Dane County. The 15-member task force includes representatives that cover a wide variety of interests. Over the course of 2021, the Task Force heard presentations on specific topics related to broadband with the idea these presentations will help form future recommendations. The Task Force is also working on developing a survey to be sent as a random sample throughout the county to collect data on areas that are un- or underserved. Going into 2022, the Task Force will be holding two public hearings to hear from those impacted by a lack of reliable, affordable service, as well as to present the County Board with recommendations.

## 2021 Redistricting

The 2021 redistricting process used a new format the Board approved in 2016, which included creation of a non-partisan redistricting commission to solicit maps from members of the public and then submit three recommended maps for consideration by the Board. The 11-member commission, with support from the Office of the County Clerk and the Department of Planning and Development, met for several months to hear informational presentations, draft and implement a communication plan, and, once Census data was finally available, to develop three maps for County Board for consideration. The County Board considered the three maps in mid-October, and selected one. Subsequently, Dane County municipalities participated in the ward reconciliation process, and a final map was approved by the County Board in mid-November. Although the entire redistricting process took place in an extremely condensed timeline due to the severe delays of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the County Board successfully followed the non-partisan process.

