



2020
Annual
Report

Dane County
Board of
Supervisors





A letter from County Board Chair Eicher

The 2020 Annual Report has given me an opportunity to reflect on my almost first whole year as board chair, and while it was vastly different than anticipated I am grateful for the leadership and work of our board and staff.

I am proud of how the County Board moved quickly in response to the pandemic. Our quick adaptation to virtual meetings allowed us to work efficiently in approving much needed funds to help those in our community with rental assistance, childcare, help for small businesses, and food insecurity. The challenge in meeting remotely and continuing to provide assistance across the county will continue this year.

Adding new members and swearing in the board remotely in April was an additional challenge. While we recognize our colleagues on a computer screen, many of us have not yet met in person. We also faced the challenge of the unexpected death of our dear colleague and longtime Supervisor, Paul Rusk. I look forward to the days when we work together in person again.

While navigating the challenges of the pandemic, the County Board has continued its work in critical areas like preparing for the 2021 redistricting process, embracing recommendations on criminal justice reform and beginning to make them a reality, all while ensuring publicly accessible meetings. I'm proud of the work we have been able to accomplish this year, which is evidence of your commitment and passion to improving and supporting the lives of all Dane County residents. We are fortunate to have staff that are equally committed to improving processes and policies.

As we move into 2021, I remain hopeful and inspired to continue to make innovative changes, and round the corner on what has been a very difficult period of time for so many.

Thank you for everything you have done this past year, and for your commitment to Dane County, our communities and our residents.

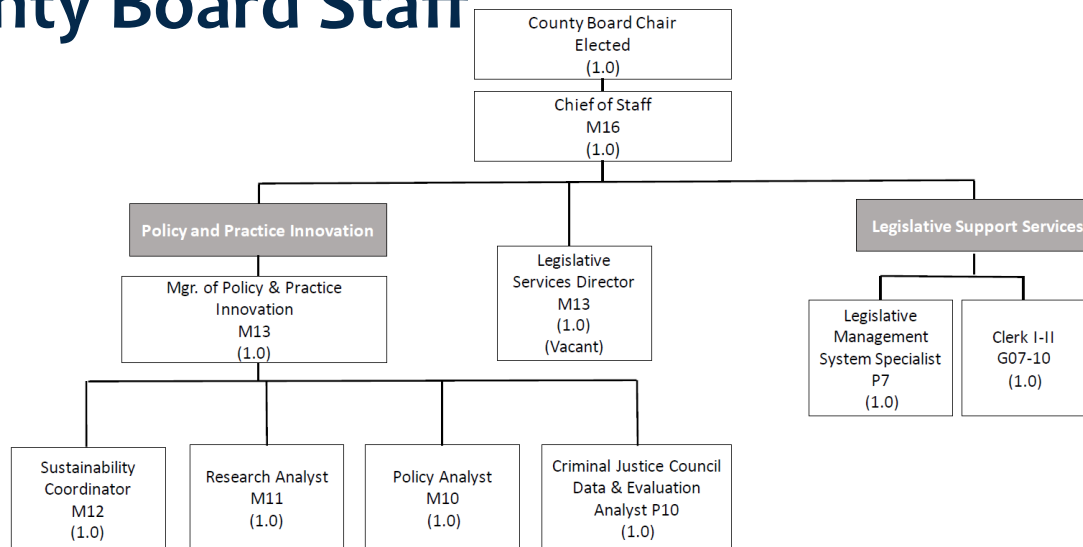
Chief of Staff Karin Peterson Thurlow

I am proud of how your County Board staff met the challenges of the past year. Throughout the year, working from their homes, staff provided technical and operational support to meetings, held innovative virtual public engagement events, and completed research and analysis on behalf of Board members. We are a small, smart, and strong team, even when isolated from one another. I feel fortunate to be working through a pandemic with my colleagues in the Board Office and throughout Dane County government.

The coming year can only get better. Perhaps this summer we can return to a county park for a Board meeting and, by fall, we can have the County Board Chili Cook-Off. I look forward to the days ahead when we can get to meet new Board members in person, renew relationships with long-standing members, and continue the important work of the legislative branch of county government together.

- Karin Peterson Thurlow

County Board Staff



Criminal Justice

The County Board continued its work on criminal justice throughout 2020. In the fall, the County Board approved 2020 RES-180: Endorsing Criminal Justice Reform and Developing Both a Triage and Restoration Center and a Community Justice Center. It enumerates reform in a number of different areas, including deflection and diversion, charging and sentencing, jail and Department of Corrections, and transparency.

In addition, the Board allocated funds towards a triage restoration center. It is intended to deflect individuals with behavioral health issues away from the law enforcement and jail, and the center will instead connect them with appropriate services and supports in the community.

The Board also funded a needs assessment for the future community justice center. The community justice center is intended to provide wraparound services with principles of racial equity and procedural justice embedded in the DNA of the program.

The Board and Criminal Justice Council are also engaged in a myriad of other policy and program reforms that will increase transparency, collaboration, and community trust while also decreasing the jail population.

September 1, 2020 Triage-Restoration Center Town Hall

98

Attendees

[Watch Here!](#)

October 29, 2020 Community Justice Center Town Hall

161

Attendees

[Watch Here!](#)

Sustainability

The County Board Office's Sustainability and Program Evaluation Coordinator, Lisa MacKinnon, has been collaborating with Kathy Kuntz, the Director of the Dane County Office of Energy & Climate Change, to launch that office's first round of grants from the Dane County Clean Energy Economic Development Fund. This effort has included a November review and comment on the draft Dane County Clean Energy Economic Development Fund Guidelines & Application Materials and participation on the scoring team for the funding applications, which were due on December 8th.

Dane County established the Clean Energy Economic Development Grant Fund in 2018 and assigned administration of the Fund to the Office of Energy & Climate Change. The Office of Energy & Climate Change's primary priority for this fund is to make progress on the outcomes identified in the Climate Action Plan (CAP) by seeking to fund grants that can accelerate progress on specific CAP priorities associated with those outcomes. A total of \$135,000 is available for grants at this time.

Engagement

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional in-person engagement was made even more difficult in 2020, however, with the increased use of technology, different modes of communication were made available. Throughout the last year, there have been several engagement events including:

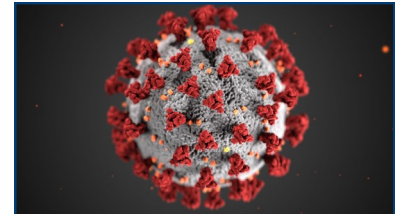
- District town hall for individual Supervisors
- Community justice center town hall
- Triage center town hall
- County Board size input
- Redistricting Commission appointment process
- A Balancing Act budget simulation

In addition to formal events and surveys, the Board continued to send weekly press releases and communications.

Looking into 2021, there will be heavy engagement around several issues including redistricting, criminal justice reform, the annual budget process, and other topics.

COVID-19 Response

The Board Office staff completed one of the first comprehensive departmental response plans for the pandemic. In May 2020, Lisa MacKinnon, County Board Office Sustainability and Program Evaluation Coordinator, conducted extensive research and wrote *Returning to the County Board Office during COVID-19: Considerations, Scenarios, and a Plan for Conducting the Business of the Dane County Board Office*.



The document includes: an outline of Public Health Madison Dane County policies (updated numerous times by PHMD since the completion of the report); an office space checklist; 5 key factors to consider in spread and prevention of the virus; how other local governments respond to the return-to-work challenge; considerations for reopening the Board Office and minimizing exposure risks for staff and the public; and a “day in the life of the County Board Office” step-by-step considerations for work.

The report also includes Board Office-specific policy sheets. As we learned more about the virus and its prevalence in our community, Dane County government decided that “non-essential” county workers should work from home, if possible, until further notice. In order to comply with that requirement, the Board Office worked to successfully develop and implement a number of new technological systems to accommodate working from home while still providing a high level of public service and continued opportunities for public participation in the work of the Board. Accordingly, a number of the plan provisions have not needed to be enacted but the report and plan will be useful when we return to the office as well as for future crisis situations.

Equity

The challenges the Board faced over the last year underscored the need to operate in an equitable way. When considering changes to meeting format and delivery of information, the Board kept equity in the forefront. The Board office had more written documents translated to Spanish and Hmong than ever before including press releases, survey questions, and the budget simulation tool. When pivoting the Board and committee meetings to a virtual format, the Board ensured that there was the broadest possible accessibility to the meetings which meant making sure that there was a toll-free number for the public to attend.

The County Board also updated their equity and inclusion plan, which can be found on the Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion website: <https://equity.countyofdane.com/>

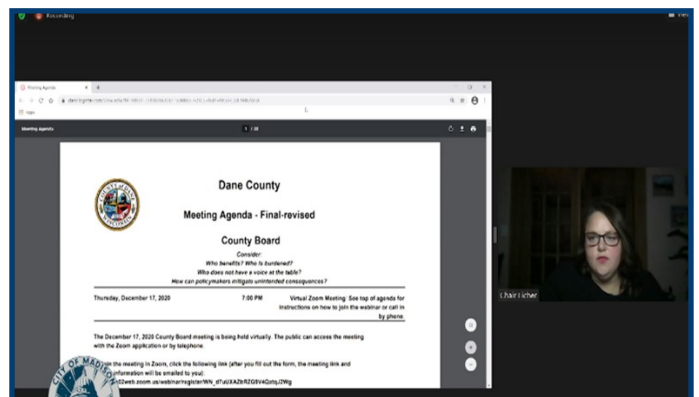
Transparency

ZOOM Virtual Public Meetings 2.0
Updated: 9/24/2020



In March, the Board began holding meetings remotely with the use of GoToMeeting. To ensure members of the public could attend public meetings with minimal barriers, agendas were updated to include language on how to attend meetings; toll-free numbers were provided to members of the community so they could attend meetings via telephone; a SurveyMonkey registration form was created to ensure public testimony; and, meeting etiquette guidelines were created and distributed to members of the body to ensure meeting effectiveness, clarity, and transparency.

Board Office staff created a remote meeting toolkit and shared it with county staff and local and national partners to assist others in moving to a virtual environment. A new process to conduct virtual meetings was created and implemented in September and October, which resulted in changing platforms from GoToMeeting to Zoom. This guaranteed meeting security, provided additional transparency, streamlined the registration process, and simplified the process of connecting members of the public to the meeting if they wished to testify.



Website Redesign

Dane County administration has been working through the last year to redesign the County's website, including department web pages. The County Board's website was updated in fall 2020 to include many improvements with a focus on ease-of-use for members of the public. The work for the Board's website redesign began many months before with research from staff and interns to review websites of other legislative bodies webpages to make navigating the Board's website as easy and helpful as possible. As websites continue to be redesigned, those updated pages, including the County Board's is able to be translated into multiple languages.

Kassel-Dane Sister County Task Force

In 2007 Dane County entered into a cooperative agreement with Landkreis Kassel, Hessen, Germany to form a sister county relationship. The purpose of the agreement is to exchange ideas and build economic partnerships in the areas of renewable energy, regional transportation systems, workforce training and continuing education, and cultural exchanges.

In 2020, communication with Kassel continued during the pandemic, using Zoom to meet with our Kassel contacts, Harald Kuehlborn and Christian Strube. We added more supervisors and citizen members to our newly constituted Task Force and look forward to sending two Dane County artists to the Kassel based documenta 15 art show in 2022. Additionally, we will be working on more cultural exchanges plus another visit to Dane County by the Edgar Knecht Trio.



board.countyofdane.com