

## AAC Quarterly Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2018

**Attendees:** Keshia Mashak, Christine Vorpapel, Jay Tlusty, Stacy Stevens, Laurie Olhoff, Ken Maule, Heather Young, Nancy Schmidt, Dave Johnson, Kyle Gulke, Erik Pfantz, Katie Breitenmoser, Renea Frederick, Tyler Frederick, Jean Greenwood, Debbe Kinsie, John Sample, and John Greenwood

**Introduction(s):** Chris Vorpapel introduced Nancy Schmidt from the ARC; Renea Frederick introduced Tyler Frederick, Manager of Cumberland Golf Course.

**MAPS Referendum -** Dr. Sample reported on the recent January 31, 2018 Community Conversation information night which provided background and purpose of the upcoming April 3 referendum, and laid out the plan and guidelines for advocacy to meeting attendees who can help serve as “key communicators.” The meeting also addressed strategies of how to get voters to the polls. Sample reminded the AAC that his role is educational and his mission is distributing information. He opened the floor to questions from members of the AAC (the library provides hand-outs for those who are interested).

- Maule asked how the referendum would be worded so that the choice being asked is clear to voters. He noted that language is key to obtaining informed votes. A hand-out was made available (see wording below):

*BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of the Merrill Area Common Public School District, Lincoln, Langlade and Marathon Counties, Wisconsin that the revenues included in the School District budget be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$2,500,000 per year beginning with the 2018-2019 school year and ending with the 2021-2022 school year for non-recurring purposes to fund District operations, including enhancing the K -12 industrial/technical education programs, addressing facilities maintenance, and retaining and hiring staff.*

Sample explained that the estimated cost to taxpayers, if the referendum passes, will be an additional \$6 per year for a house valued at 100,000. If the referendum is not approved, reduction and consolidation would occur, including redistricting, beginning after April 3. This would include closing Maple Grove and Jefferson Elementary Schools. Kate Goodrich would accommodate grades K-3, PRMS would house grades 4-7, and the High School would house grades 8-12. Currently, with declining enrollments (a situation expected to continue for the foreseeable future), MAPS manages on a budget from the state of \$9,300 per student. MAPS has always been frugal, especially when compared to its immediate neighbors. Rhinelander is a smaller district but gets \$300 more per student. Wausau gets significantly more per student, even factoring in its greater size and population.

- Chris Vorpapel asked if someone on the MAPS staff will monitor social media to ensure that commentary on the referendum, by the public, remains civil. Keshia Mashak will continue to do this. Any comments that are problematic are removed, and Dr. Sample attempts to contact the commentator to address their concerns. Hand-outs have been distributed to “district representatives” (and are available to the public through MAPS or TB Scott) that outline permitted communications and delineate approved activities regarding dissemination of information about the referendum.
- Sample added that even if the referendum passes, MAPS may still be looking at redistricting down the line.
- Questions came into the district administrative office regarding the status of the Fromm Scholarships. Dr. Sample assured the callers that students who reside in Hamburg are eligible, whether Maple Grove is in existence or not.
- Jay Tlusty asked when/if declining enrollment is projected to moderate. Sample said the future does not look bright on this front: it is expected to continue for at least 4-5 yrs. Perhaps the repurposing of Lincoln Hills Schools will bring more employees, and therefore families, and therefore students into the district, but that is yet to be seen. He noted that the referendum is non-recurring, so if the trend of declining enrollment continues, it is possible that MAPS will go back to referendum after another 4 years.
- Erik Pfantz suggested that if the community was encouraged to use the MAPS facilities more, that might build support for yes-votes on the upcoming referendum. Dr. Sample appreciated this idea and said that the upcoming Great Speakers Forum featuring Sharon Robinson (March 13) and the MAPS alumni Bill Cortright event (February 12) should help with this effort (both events are open to the public). The District also plans on making donations to River Bend Trail from some of its revenue producing events: these kinds of collaborative gestures also help to build community buy-in and good will.
- Dr. Sample concluded by noting that Bill Foster School Perceptions (the consultancy group retained by the district to advise on the referendum effort) has observed that most of the PR launched in support of referendum initiatives is carried by social media now, and MAPS has jumped on this opportunity. There is a specific email site established for queries in that format, but Sample and various School Board members (Proulx and Blake) also are conducting parts of the campaign the “old-fashioned” way, as they have been present and available for open door information sessions held at the administrative offices every Friday from 4-5 pm. Additionally, Board members will be getting out to 1<sup>st</sup> Street Station and elsewhere to mingle with voters and answer any questions as the vote grows near.

## **AAC Action Team Reports**

Entrepreneur and Business Action Team - Renea Frederick reported:

- Pending the draft and acceptance of a letter of agreement, the AAC can be an entity that operates under the Merrill Area Community Foundation (MACF). Frederick indicated that the AAC would need a structure - a board and officers - so decision making can be systematic. With this structure, we would be keeping control of our own funds and determine how to spend or distribute them. Maule asked where the funds would come from. Frederick said though fundraising and seed money from her

family business, plus she will ask MACF for some startup funding as well. With a 501c3 status, the AAC will be able to apply for grants. The MACF will need an information sheet about the AAC's vision, mission, purpose, and structure in order to take the AAC under wing. Tlusty asked if the MACF itself is organized under the "umbrella" of the North Central Community Foundation. The answer is yes, and the NCCF holds the 501c3. John Greenwood called for members interested in serving as AAC Board members. Mike Ravn suggested that board members could be the chair-people of the committees because they are knowledgeable about their committee's work and its goals and needs. The group then engaged in a lot of discussion about possible issues further down the line: adding new committees and the consequent expansion of the board, potential conflicts of interest especially regarding requests for funding committee projects, etc. The group's consensus was to start out flexible, not be too restrictive to begin with, and see what issues evolve. Let it be organic, to some extent. Tlusty asked if the AAC Board would have to get final approval from the MACF Board in order to spend funds the way the AAC Board had determined. Frederick said no. The suggestion was made that a board member representing a particular committee could abstain from voting on any funding request that arose from that committee. Jean Greenwood asked if outside groups would be allowed to request funds. Frederick said that would be a decision for the AAC Board later on down the line. Stacy Stevens and John Greenwood will begin the work of drafting "articles of incorporation" and contacting potential Board members.

- Inventor's Club Champions – Frederick reported that although a lot of worthy ideas have been generated, action is on hold for right now in the face of her other commitments. This committee wants to work with the Merrill High School to create the Merrill Inventors Club there. They will need a champion, someone like Terry Whipple, the Executive Director of the Juneau County Economic Development Corp. (JCEDC) and founder of the "Inventors & Entrepreneurs Club," whom Frederick hosted at a committee meeting with MAPS last fall. This initiative will also involve a MAPS "champion" but is on hold until after the referendum is decided in April. Dr. Sample and Aaron Svcek (Fab Lab teacher) are already on-board and share Frederick's vision, noting that the project has potential Fab Lab connections as well. The recent referendum survey indicates that the community has high interest in technical education, and a "Maker's Place," the Inventors Club and the Fab Lab connection can all address that need. Sample added that 8<sup>th</sup> grade registration in technical education classes among females has increased significantly in the district.

#### Communication and Technology Action Team

- The Communication and Technology (CT) Action Team met on February 2, 2018 with Sarah Keshia Mashak (MAPS Technology Director) Stacy Stevens, Laurie Olhoff, Erik Pfantz and Joh Greenwood in attendance.

The CT committee is working on these goals:

- Developing the mission statement and goals of the committee
- Coordinating the generation, release, and distribution of information and notices for the AAC
- Developing a strong and effective Action Team Internet Presence (for all action teams of the AAC) - Keshia explained that TB Scott has been responsible so far for these goals, but the Communication and Technology Action Committee now needs to get information out to people beyond the members on the current email list in order to build the AAC's base and reach. At the meeting, it was determined that the website and social media presence should be managed by one person on the Communication and Technology Action Team. That person will get the word out about upcoming dates and activities, and function both as "answer desk" and "help desk" (referral services.)

Young People Action Committee (YPAC) – Erik Pfantz reported:

- The Merrill Mentors initiative is moving towards a Big Brothers/Big Sisters model in order to focus on and support Merrill youth. Dave Vachavake has set the next meeting for February 15, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the T. B. Scott Community Room; he hopes to start recruiting for the program in September of 2018.
- YPAC meetings are now held every 2 weeks (instead of every 3 weeks, as before); locations and times vary – check Face Book for notifications.
- The YPAC project list has narrowed its focus to the top 3 ideas: slogan T shirt idea; raise awareness for repurposing the Livingston building owned currently by the Merrill Historical Society so it can avoid being demolished; participation in "Earth Hour" on March 24 @ 8:30 pm (this will be done via a "turn off the lights" observation at that time so this global organization can track power usage world-wide, to raise awareness).

Comments/questions/ideas: Ravn suggested perhaps coupling the Earth Hour observance with April 22, which is Earth Day; Laurie Ollhoff suggested contacting WPS, which may have speakers available. Ken Maule will get the name of the WPS representative for Erik to contact. Frederick noted that Earth Day was originated in Wisconsin by Gaylord Nelson. Ravn suggested coupling these environmental commemorations with a local effort, perhaps youth volunteering for River Bend Trail maintenance. Pfantz thought this would be a good fit with the mission of the YPAC. Vorpapel said efforts like these would build good will about the YPAC and gain recognition for the work of the AAC in leading the charge; she noted that many of the Baby Boomer generation were involved in the early days of such environmental initiatives and the YPAC's lead this spring might catch up not only the interest but also the participation of Merrill's older citizens, who may have done such activities

in their youth. Sample advised that if the volunteerism spirit of Make a Difference Day is applied to this initiative – making sure to keep it as its own distinctive event - that students still in High School may very well get caught up in this idea and make it as successful as that model has been to date.

- Next YPAC meeting will be Feb 8, 2018 at 5 p.m. at Ballyhoos.

Transition Lincoln Action Team - Heather Young reported:

- The committee met at Treehaven in Tomahawk. The Community ShareFair idea was still in the discussion phase, mostly regarding whether it should be conceived of as a one or two day event, or as a library discussion forum. During the second meeting (at Susanna Gilk's), the committee started at option "0" – do nothing, start again, and look into the Transition Town (international) movement instead. Rich and Becky Flatau attended the second meeting and explained their Cordwood Construction business.
- The next meeting is Feb 15, 2018 at Susanna Gilk's house from 9-11 am. Heather Young has created a FB page called Transition Lincoln (sprung from her research on the Transition Town international movement.) John Greenwood noted that sustainability ideas are complex and it is clear that this committee will need more prep and thought time before planning activities.
- The suggestion was made that the upcoming May 3, 2018 Building Merrill Together Event that will focus on sustainable practices and understanding our natural resources could splice together a report-out of Ravn's ideas for Earth Day activities in April and possible trail clean-up by YPAC in the spring, if such activities are implemented in the spring.

Merrill Community Campus Action Team - John Greenwood reported:

- Mobile Makers Place with TB Scott and MAPS (see minutes above under Entrepreneur and Business Action Team: "Inventor's Club")
- Demonstration Mural Project –Jean Greenwood reported that a mural art project has been in development and has moved into the demonstration stage by retaining a professional artist to draw sketches of historic Merrill scenes. The sketches could become murals on either the backs of downtown buildings flanking the River Bend Trail, or stand-alone art on the trail, or murals on high-visibility sites throughout Merrill, or other locations as requested by mural sponsors. To date, presentations of sketches were made to The Friends of the River Bend Trail and other potentially interested parties. Contact Jean or John Greenwood for more information.
- John Greenwood canvassed the AAC membership for their thoughts on a Merrill Civics 101 Seminar as part of the Building Merrill Together Program Series. The consensus was that this would be a worthy endeavor.

**The T. B. Scott Building Merrill Together Program Series** - John Greenwood gave a recap of activities so far:

- Speakers from the Wisconsin Humanities Council were well-received at the past two events: Attorney Rachel Monaco-Wilcox gave a presentation on the needs of the elderly in January, and UWGB Professor John Shelton spoke on business, labor history, entrepreneurship, and the new economy in February. Greenwood mentioned the Civics 101 and “Visioning Merrill” as possible ideas for BMT programs in the fall semester and called for other possible program suggestions.
- Pfantz said that although this was not really a BMT program, he would like to see a weekly current events discussion group. Tlusty asked if this had been done in the past. Pfantz said when he first came back to the community, he set it up and attendees met at the library. Jean Greenwood liked the idea and felt it might get more traction if it met at a more public location. Others suggested Johnson Pharmacy or Checkered Churn – the thought being that the group would gain more visibility and possibly attract more members.

**Upcoming BMT events:**

- March 6, 2018 Coming to America: Who Should We Welcome, What Should We Do? TBS Community Room
- April 5, 2018 Opioids and Methamphetamine in Lincoln County – Lincoln County Drug Free Coalition – Lincoln County Community Services Center
- May 3, 2018 Sustainable Practices – TBS Community Room

**Upcoming AAC Quarterly Meetings**

- May 10, 2018 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- August 9, 2018 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- November 27, 2018 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- February 6, 2019 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.