Intercounty Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 19, 2012 @ UW-Extension, Jefferson County, 864 Collins Road, Jefferson, WI

ICC Participants
Columbia County – Andy Ross; Vern Gove; Dodge County – Russell Kottke, Dave Frohling; Jeff Hoffman; Green Lake County – David Richter; Joanne Guden; Jefferson County - John Molinaro; Steve Grabow; Marquette County - Paul Wade; Dan Klawitter; Marty Havlovic; Sauk County – Jen Erickson; Joan Fordham; WCA – David Callender; Congressman – none; Media – None; Program Guest – Bill Rizzo, Dane County CNRED Agent. Also present – Kathy Eisenmann, Jefferson County Family Living Agent; Nancy Elsing, Columbia County Economic Development Corporation.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by ICC Chair Russell Kottke at 9:30 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Additions to Agenda

Certification of Wisconsin Open Meetings Law Notice
The Secretary confirmed the requirements of the WI Open Meetings Law were met.

Adoption of Agenda
Motion by Columbia County, second by Green Lake County to approve the agenda – Approved.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
Motion by Marquette County, second by Green Lake County, to approve the minutes of the October 2012 meeting of the Intercounty Coordinating Committee -- Approved.

Legislative Report – no legislators present

WCA: David Callender
- Republican control of both houses (18-15 Senate), (60-34 Assembly)
- Governor outlining intentions; looking at tax cuts
- No new money for counties
- Youth Aids will have a $600,000 cut instead of $3 million
- Legislative Committees are nearing recommendations
  - Have money for “911”
- Housekeeping WCA:
  - WCA Exchange is February 5th and 6th
  - Webinars by WCA (free); one hour; first one is December 17th on State/County role in budgeting
  - Started meeting with legislators and the Governor’s office
• Question and Answer
  o Q. – on levy limits and use-it-or-lose-it? A. – WCA is talking to the Governor’s office on this; not sure if policy will change.
  o Q. – take on new leadership and committees? A. – Robin Vos in former County Supervisor, but has not been sympathetic to some County issues; is looking to downsize government. We know Senator Fitzgerald and he will listen. Larson has served on a County Board.
  o Q. – Where are they going with downsizing? A. – Lower costs in government; limits may not be identified until citizens get involved.
  o Q. – County Ambassadors Program WCA? A. – First meeting is January 23rd; 10 priority items have been identified by WCA.
  o Q. – Health Exchanges? A. – WCA trying to pin down implications; WCA is monitoring; early webinar will be on Affordable Care Act.

Issues:
• Concern on Revolving Loan Funds; Columbia County still sorting out the Economic Development Loans; Jefferson County and other ICC counties are keeping a close eye on the implications.

Program:
“Civility in Public Discourse: An Investment in Governance” – see attached presentation.
Presenter: Bill Rizzo, Community Development Agent, UW-Extension, Dane County Office

✧ Professor Rizzo’s presentation included four sections:
  • Definitions
  • Transactions Costs
  • Principles
  • Other county Activities
✧ Examples of Transactional Costs/Opportunity Costs were provided by ICC members
✧ Examples of Principles were provided, including those from:
  • National Association of Counties (Jacqueline J. Byers, “In Search of Civility”)
  • Allegheny College
  • New Jersey League of Municipalities
  • Howard County
✧ Many units of government have passed resolutions about governing themselves by various principles of civility.

“Civility and Trust in Government: Principles and Practice” – see attached presentation.
Presenter: Steve Grabow, Community Development Agent, UW-Extension, Jefferson County Office

✧ Professor Grabow provided examples from practice on:
  • Foundational ideas for laying groundwork in creating an environment of civility and trust. (Many were developed through a County Government Strategic Plan – Core Values, Mission, Strategic Issues on communication and trust.)
  • A process for assessing trust in government. (An online survey was shared along with the findings.)
  • A process for governmental “Trust and Relationship Building” was shared. This Jefferson County process involved four strategy sessions by the Administration and Rules Committee and the County Department Heads. An agreed-upon set of action steps were developed.
The interactive workshop component of the Program (with the ideas and input from ICC members) is provided as a “Proceedings Report” as follows:

Meaning of Civility (ICC)
Participants identified several ways for defining the meaning of civility, and these are listed.

a. Tone of voice (respectful versus shouting).
b. Seek to understand.
c. Working together.
d. Use of language (avoid insults; degrading).
e. Not dominating discussion (welcome other ideas).

Transaction Costs/Opportunity Costs
Participants were asked to respond to this question: “Can you think of any transaction or opportunity costs created by lack of civility in your county?” Listed below are the responses.

a. Department Heads on the “defensive” (takes extra time).
b. Costs of more meetings since there is no agreement.
c. Supervisor Comment: Six months of time to “repair fences” with County workforce.
d. If people are not treated with respect, they are less likely to work with you in the future (plus retaliation).
e. If more polarized, people are less willing to donate and to give to government.
f. If don’t do a good job with public input/discourse, then plans and policies may not “stick” (costs associated with new policy formulation).
g. Highway shop issue: Consultants/others not treated well; lose creditability with professionals.
h. If difficult to work with, then bids may be higher (service provider not really interested in dealing with a difficult client/government unit).

Potential for County Civility Initiatives
Participants responded to this question: “Can you think of an example of when civil discourse added value to a county decision or activity?” Listed below are the responses.

a. Sauk County came up with rules for civility; voted down by the County Board.
b. There are changes pointing to a need for this and some direction toward this.
c. Jefferson County: Had a “civility” dialogue session with a County committee chair (convened by UW-Extension/Jeff Hoffman/Steve Grabow).
d. Bring up “civility” during an actual incident.

ICC Observations: Ideas Around Civility
Participants from the ICC counties discussed the implications of civility, and the following observations and ideas for follow-up action are listed (both individually and by representatives from each county).

a. Initiative: How do we get started without people being defensive?
   – Ideas to “do better”.
   – “Appreciative Approach” – What is good and what can we build on?
   – Talk about opportunity costs (could be good timing now; do things cheaper).
   – Orientation Programs – “The Culture of Government”.
   – Provide “forums” on civility, responsibilities.

b. Need skills to deal with challenging individuals. This is difficult.
c. Challenge: “Letters to Editor” in newspaper with misrepresentations. (This contributes to a lack of trust with County Supervisor.)
d. Periodic letter/articles in newspapers by County Board Chair.
e. Green Lake County:
   − Importance of lists of principles on civility; 9 – 10 points.
   − Use at a County Board meeting.
f. Sauk County:
   − Need to understand “real costs”
   − Deal with issues as they come up.
g. Marquette County:
   − Use County Clerk as a liaison to employees.
   − Avoid “stifling” of employees.
   − Empower Department Heads.
h. Dodge County:
   − Focus on communication with Department Heads.
   − County Board Chair/Administrator communicate uniquely with each Department (recognizing personality).
i. Jefferson County:
   − County Board chair sharing ideas directly with Department Heads, occasionally at Department Head meetings.
   − Clarification on policy versus management with committee chairs.
j. Columbia County
   − Rotation of committee chairs is important for communication.

Next Meeting
Next meeting: December 17, 2012 – Topic: “Workforce Development Update from South Central Workforce Development” in Dodge County.

Adjournment
Meeting adjourned by the Chair at 11:34 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Grabow
UW-Extension, Jefferson County
Civility in Public Discourse: 
An Investment in Governance

Intercounty Coordinating Committee

November 19, 2012

Presented by Bill Rizzo 
Professor and Community Resource Development Educator 
Dane County UW-Extension

Taken, in part, from: 
“In Search of Civility” 
by Jacqueline J. Byers

Director of Research, National Association of Counties
A Publication of the Research Division of NACO’s County Services Department
“Every action done in company, ought to be with some sign of respect, to those that are present,“

George Washington (at age 16)
- Rule #1, 110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior

What is civility, anyway?

“Civility is claiming and caring for one’s identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process.”

- Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010
**Proposition**

The erosion of civil discourse makes an effective governance and public policy environment very difficult. It creates real transaction and opportunity costs for local government, and it reduces the return on the investment citizens make in their local government. Value is removed, not added.

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**Transaction & Opportunity Costs**

*Transaction Costs* are the costs other than the money price of something purchased.

*Opportunity Costs* are the valuable alternatives that must be sacrificed to attain something or satisfy a want.
**Transaction Costs**  
Example: Buying a car from a friend

- The money you paid for Carfax reports on the cars you were interested in;
- The money you paid to repair the problems on the car you eventually bought but that didn’t show up on the Carfax report;
- The interest you paid on the loan you had to take out to buy the car because the car was a LOT more than you could afford to pay in cash, and your friend was very good salesperson.

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**Opportunity Costs**  
Example: Buying a car from a friend

- The vacation to Tahiti for you and your spouse you can’t afford to take now because you spent all that money on the car;
- The weekend camping trip you didn’t take your kids on because you spent the last five weekends looking at cars;
- The loss of the friendship you had with the person from whom you bought the car when you discovered just how many problems it had that didn’t show up on the Carfax report.
Can you think of any transaction or opportunity costs created by a lack of civility in your county?

Proposition

When elected officials practice civil discourse, they make possible an environment in which discussion and the exchange of ideas adds value to government by improving the quality of ideas. The result is more informed, and more sustainable, public policy decisions.
Can you think of an example of when civil discourse added value to a county decision or action?

Allegheny College at the Center for Political Participation, Pathway to Civility
http://sites.allegheny.edu/cpp/

1. Listen to opposing views
2. Seek shared values
3. Acknowledge the legitimacy of opposing positions
4. Identify the problem at-hand, focusing on it rather than on larger conflicts
5. Avoid political caricatures, labels and generalizations that may not truly present the views of your adversaries
6. Accept that disagreement will exist without giving up your own convictions
7. Clarify what is being said before attacking and/or responding
8. Recognize the value of solutions beyond those offered by traditional political platforms
9. Consider the consequences of what you say and do
10. Hold yourself personally accountable for your own political actions

“The Need for Civility in Local Government Dialogue”
John C. Gillespie, Esq.
New Jersey State League of Municipalities
http://www.njslom.org/need_for_civility.html

1. Thou shalt not rudely interrupt a colleague midsentence; nor “speak over” a colleague while she/he is speaking;
2. Thou shalt not assume that shrillness of tone is a substitute for substantive dialogue;
3. Thou shalt not resort to “zingers” designed solely to embarrass your target;
4. Thou shalt not allow legitimate critique of policy and practice to become a personal attack aimed at the person who devised the policy or implements the practice;

5. Thou shalt always recognize that your colleagues were also elected, just as your were, and deserve the same level of respect for having run and won;

6. Thou shalt not ridicule or belittle a colleague, or a member of the public, simply because he or she disagrees with you on an issue.

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Howard County, MD Public Library
Community–wide Civility Initiative
http://www.choosecivility.org/

- Pay attention
- Listen
- Speak kindly
- Assume the best
- Respect others’ opinions
- Be inclusive
- Acknowledge others
- Respect other people’s time and space
- Apologize earnestly
- Assert yourself
- Accept and give praise
- Take responsibility
- Accept and give constructive criticism
- Refrain from idle complaints
- Be a considerate guest
The Florida League of Cities, Civility in Government Resources

Dunedin, FL Code of Core Values for Civility and Ethics

The Institute for Local Government in Sacramento, CA
http://www.ca-ilg.org/find/results/civility

Ware County, GA has established rules that govern public meetings, and included a section on decorum.
http://www.warecounty.com/CommissionAgendas.aspx#decorum

Smith County, TX “Rules of Procedure, Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the Smith County Commissioners’ Court”
What's the potential for some kind of civility initiative within your county?
Foundations for Civility and Trust

- Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan

Core Values:

The Steering Committee generated a list of 37 "core values" in responding to these questions:

- What do we really care about in relating to key stakeholders?
- What is our philosophy as to how we would like to be viewed?
- What are the values that we should have that help indicate how Jefferson County wants to operate?

The Steering Committee identified three broad value categories and seven individual values that they would like to emphasize. These County government values are:
Foundations for Civility and Trust

Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan

**Service:**

*Respect*: We respect others and people we come in contact with (including future generations); the “Golden Rule” extended over time.

*Transparency*: We need to abide by open meetings laws, welcome public input and be as open as possible.

*Honesty*: We will assess cost and value accurately, holistically and honestly.

*Responsibility*: We have equal and binding responsibility for our many rights. We are responsible for ourselves, our nation, our world and future generations.

Foundations for Civility and Trust

Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan

**Stewardship:**

*Trust and Stewardship*: We need to be wise stewards of what has been entrusted to us; (financial, timeliness, people resources, natural resources, etc.). We are stewards of things that are entrusted to us (such as buildings, facilities, equipment, land, vehicles, etc.)

*Accountability*: We have to be accountable for what we are striving to do; we should have explanations but not excuses.

**Skills:**

*Competence*: Exercise responsibility in doing my job and having the necessary skill-set.

*Professionalism and Efficiency*: When we deal with the public we handle it in both a professional and quick manner. We will get the answer right away or get them to the right place.

*Innovation*: We are willing to approach things differently than they have been done before; get beyond “that’s the way we have always done it.”
Foundations for Civility and Trust

- Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan

**Jefferson County Mission Statement:**

"To fulfill County government’s responsibilities to its citizens and advance the quality of life in Jefferson County."

There was interest in developing a shorter version of the mission for use in various County communication pieces. A Motto for Jefferson County government was approved.

**Jefferson County Motto:**

"Jefferson County: Responsible government advancing quality of life."

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Foundations for Civility and Trust

- Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan

**Strategic Issue 1. Education and Communication:**

How can County government educate both the public and its own internal stakeholders about its mission and services?

**MAJOR STRATEGY INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION:**

1. **Staff/Resources** - Commit staff and resources to education and communication about County Government.

2. **Education/Schools** - Integrate County Government matters into existing school curriculum.

3. **County Government Strategic Plan** - Communicate and educate about the content and direction of County Government based on the County Strategic Plan.
Assessment/Survey

Questions About Relationships and Trust

Department Head
Board Member

In terms of working relationships on the County Board, to what extent do you feel that:

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>Board members trust each other</td>
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<td>Board members avoid conflicts of interest</td>
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<td>Board member’s talents are utilized effectively</td>
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<td>Personality differences on the Board are minimized</td>
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Assessment/Survey

Questions About Relationships and Trust

Department Head
Board Member
Employee

In terms of overall relations between the County Board and County Departmental offices, to what extent do you agree that:

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<td>The Board respects county employees</td>
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<td>County employees respect Board members</td>
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<td>The Board treats county employees fairly</td>
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<td>County employees treat Board members fairly</td>
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<td>There is an effective flow of information between the Board and county offices</td>
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<td>The Board avoids micromanagement of county offices</td>
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<td>County employees are politically neutral with respect to county politics</td>
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<td>The Board supports training needs of county employees</td>
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Findings

The Jefferson County Government Strategic Plan (Approved 2010) identified the topic of communication/education/trust as the most strategic issue facing Jefferson County Government. A follow-up online survey and report entitled, “Jefferson County Governance Report” by the UW-River Falls Survey Research Center concluded that “...overall results from this survey suggest a need for on-going efforts to improve communications and trust on the County Board and throughout the government structure.”

The County Board Chair and County Administrator have supported this workshop series as a way of beginning the dialogue around ideas and options for addressing the issue of trust and relationship building.

Trust and Relationship Building

✦ Strategies Underway in Jefferson County Government

Orientation/Visit of Departments/Training/Education

Orientation
Orientation Team: Gary, Phil, Barb and Steve G. will look into what we could do this year to be responsive to ideas. Mission Review/Strategic Plan Summary/ Major Issues in the County. Touch on education pieces suggested.

Department Visits
Stress the importance of individual appointments with departments. Each department should provide a one or two-page summary of what it does.

The handout being worked on by John and the intern is a good start (summary of each department). Gary to send out a draft of these department summaries.
Trust and Relationship Building

- Strategies Underway in Jefferson County Government

Committees/Relationships/Department Head Interaction with Supervisors

Department Head Interaction with Supervisors
Invite Department Heads to orientation training. This will provide (interaction) opportunities among County Board and Department Heads.
Other Ideas: After election (wait for now). Suggest a “Committee Chair-Department Heads Joint Meeting.” This would be a “forum” for Department Head questions and dialogue with Committee Chairs.

Workforce/Relationships

Council on “giving voice”/“new mechanism” is being discussed at UW as a way to provide input by the “workforce.” Something like this could be adapted for Jefferson County.

Other Civility Resources

- Douglas County Board Resolution – Nine Tools of Civility
Other Civility Resources

Season of Civility in Wisconsin Website:  
http://www.wichurches.org/programs-and-ministries/season-of-civility/

Excerpt of Parker Palmer’s publication on Healing the Heart of Democracy:  

Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project (Duluth Superior Community Foundation)  
http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/events/2011/04/21/speak-your-peace-the-civility-project

Douglas County Board Resolution-Nine Tools of Civility:  