

2019

Dane County Board of Supervisors Annual Report



Dear Supervisors:

The past year has been productive and important for the County Board as we continue to shape policy to improve the lives of the residents of Dane County. Climate change, water quality, criminal justice reform, redevelopment of the Alliant Energy Center, community engagement, affordable housing, and land use regulation are some of the topics before the Board in 2019.

Clearly, the issues we tackle are broad-ranging and complex. Together we have been able to direct resources and develop policies for the benefit of the over 500,000 residents of Dane County.

The passion and intentionality of this Board is matched by our County Board staff. Over the past year we have added two full-time positions and have seen existing staff grow in their careers with the Board. Their drive to innovate and find new ways of improving systems, policies, and procedures enable us to lead change.

County government is a cornerstone of the extraordinary quality of life Dane County residents enjoy. I know the County Board will continue its work in 2020 and into the future to make sure all have access to the environmental, economic, and social goods this county has to offer.

Thank you all for your service and commitment to the people of Dane County.

Sincerely,

Sharon Corrigan, Chair



Smart Fund

The Sustainability Subcommittee of the Public Works and Transportation Committee is responsible for distributing grants to county departments from a SMART Fund * (Sustainable Management and Renewable Technologies) in the county's capital budget. This fund helps advance implementation of Dane County government's sustainability principles as well as the goals and objectives in the Dane County Government Sustainable Operations Plan. The strategic investment of capital dollars yields savings in operating dollars.

In 2019, the SMART Fund:

- 1) Awarded a total of 9 projects proposed by the Dane County Sheriff's Office, Alliant Energy Center, Department of Administration Facilities Management, and the Department of Waste and Renewables.
- 2) Awarded a total of \$522,143 to projects ranging from \$6,000 to \$153,000.
- 3) Projects awarded include: several exterior and interior LED lighting upgrades to reduce energy use and costs as well as greenhouse gas emissions; high-speed industrial garage doors for the Alliant Energy Center to improve energy conservation and reduce costs; a vegetative roof on a portion of the City-County Building to conserve water and energy and prevent runoff; replacement of fossil fuel-intensive Dane County Sheriff's Office vehicles with plug-in hybrids to reduce fuel costs, reduce fossil-fuel use, and lower greenhouse gas emissions; and high-efficiency water softeners with brine recovery to reduce salt use.

AEC high-speed door project

Energy savings =

~ 23,366 therms of natural gas

~ 20,261 kWh of electricity on an annual basis

Avoids annual emission of 138 metric tons CO₂e = 29 passenger vehicles driven for a year = 17 homes' annual energy use

Operational cost savings (annual)

◇ annual heating cost savings = \$11,683.14

◇ air conditioning cost savings = \$2,836.50

The total annual energy savings is estimated to be \$14,520. This results in a payback period of approximately 14 years.



Criminal Justice Reform

The County Board continued its work on criminal justice reform in 2019. In the summer, the County received the results of a [stress test](#) completed by the JFA Institute. The study indicated that while Dane County already incarcerates individuals at a lower rate than the national average, even greater reductions in the jail population could be achieved. The goal of the stress test was to see if changes in criminal justice policies, such as diversion of jail bookings or case processing modifications, would have a major impact on the current size of the jail population without endangering public safety.

The County also heard from the Pretrial Justice Institute, the State of Wisconsin Public Defender's Office, and local stakeholders on pretrial and bail reform at a well-attended community event in 2019.

PACE Wisconsin in Dane County: Financing Sustainable Progress

PACE, or Property Assessed Clean Energy, is a program that enables commercial property owners to obtain low-cost, long-term financing for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation improvements. It is intended to drive economic development by authorizing municipalities and counties to work with private sector lenders to provide upfront financing—usually for 100 percent of the cost of energy- or water-saving improvements—to property owners for qualified projects. Although Dane County government was the 19th county in the state (out of 45 currently) to join the PACE program in 2017, the very first PACE-financed project completed in the State of Wisconsin—Hotel Indigo—is located in Dane County. In addition, seven PACE projects have been completed since 2017, with total project costs of \$5.5 million, total annual savings of \$331,000, and a cumulative annual CO₂ equivalent reduction of almost 2,000 metric tons (that's the CO₂ equivalent of reducing 225,000 gallons of gasoline or the average annual energy use for 235 U.S. homes) from energy and water savings.

For more information: <https://www.pacewi.org/>

Alliant Energy Center

The County Board has led the work to maintain and grow the Alliant Energy Center to keep it competitive with other conference and event venues. This year, the Alliant Energy Center Redevelopment Subcommittee was convened to begin to consider approaches to financing, public and private investment, and pre-design work to expand the Exhibition Hall. This work follows a detailed master planning process completed in 2018.



Engage Dane

In an effort to educate residents about the county's budget process and increase engagement in the process, the County Board piloted *A Balancing Act*—an online budget simulation tool. This tool gave the public a new opportunity to explore all of Dane County's departments and learn about the variety of services they provide. In addition to the simulation, the County Board created a short video that illustrates the budget process. The budget timeline and high-level budget process information was also distributed to Dane County libraries for the public to be able to access.

104

views of budget video

1,040

page views of simulations

286

budget simulations submitted



Behavioral Health

In late 2019, the Board heard the results of the Behavioral Health Needs Assessment completed by Public Consulting Group. The assessment provided several recommendations to improve Dane County's behavioral health care system.

Throughout the last decade, the County Board has also had a deep interest in the nexus between behavioral health and the criminal justice system. The Board has invested in creating system improvements by bringing national experts, local leaders, and community champions to the table to reduce the use of criminal justice practices to respond to behavioral health crises.

<https://countyofdane.com/PressDetail/10411>

Lake Levels

Early in 2019, the Board heard from the Yahara Chain of Lakes Lake Level task force on recommendations to manage lake levels and prevent flooding in Dane County. In response to the task force's work, the County Board approved the largest conservation preservation purchase in Dane County's history: 160 acres of property in the Town of Springfield that will become a part of Pheasant Branch Conservancy. By acquiring this property, there will be 2.6 million fewer gallons of water each year flowing into Lake Mendota, which will help mitigate lake-level problems as the county faces the realities of a changing climate. Additionally, the 2020 budget implements an aggressive dredging initiative to enhance flow in the Yahara chain of lakes.

78

meetings staffed

2

new staff

3

new interns

4

staff lead trainings

- Front-end criminal justice
- Budget process
- Inclusive engagement
- Smart Fund 101

Equity

The Board launched the Dane County Equity Initiative five years ago and this year approved a resolution underscoring an expectation that every County Department have and implement an equity plan. Dane County departments have completed and made their plans available: <https://equity.countyofdane.com/plans>. The Board continues to stress the importance of making strides in equity throughout county operations, policies and practices.

Employee Handbook/Civil Service Ordinance

Dane County employs nearly 2,500 hardworking individuals to provide a wide variety of services to the residents of Dane County. Updates to the county's civil service ordinance and employee handbook were completed and approved by the County Board in 2019. Through a collaborative process including administrators, managers, employees, and representatives of the employee groups, the updates included accommodations for disabilities, acting class pay, probationary period leave, and recruitment processes, to name a few.



2019



Biogas

In May 2019, the County Board held its regular meeting at the East Highway Garage, and also toured the county's landfill. The tour of the Rodefild Landfill highlighted Dane County's work on converting trash and cow manure into renewable fuel that can be injected into the interstate transmission pipeline so it can be sold to fleets of vehicles locally and across the United States. Dane County's landfill biogas facility will displace 3 million gallons of fossil fuels in the first year of operation, with this amount growing to 4 million gallons in future years. Due to the lower carbon footprint of renewable natural gas (RNG), that's the equivalent of taking 4,800 cars off the road every year.

In addition to the facility's environmental benefits, it's estimated that Dane County will generate enough revenue from the facility to pay back the \$28 million cost of the project in just a few years.



Chapter 10 Comprehensive Rewrite

After three years of work, the Dane County Board adopted [updates to Chapter 10 of the Dane County Zoning Code](#) in 2019 – the first formally recognized revision in its history. The cooperative process involved County Board Supervisors, County staff, the Dane County Towns Association, real estate and other industry members, led by the Zoning & Land Regulation Subcommittee. The subcommittee and staff listened to those who will be most affected by the ordinance and adapted the specific regulations to best serve everyone.