

## Zentner resigns as District 26 county supervisor

By Chris Welch County correspondent | Posted: Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:30 am

JEFFERSON — Jefferson County Supervisor Carl Zentner has resigned from his District 26 seat, it was announced Tuesday evening.

Jefferson County Board of Supervisors Chairperson Jim Schroeder told the board at its monthly meeting that Zentner resigned “for personal reasons.” He added that he received Zentner’s resignation on Saturday, Sept. 5.

Schroeder has appointed Gregg Patrick of Fort Atkinson to be the new District 26 supervisor. However, Patrick will not be confirmed to the seat until next month’s board meeting.

The reason for the delay, Schroeder explained, is that he received Zentner’s resignation on Saturday, and due to the three-day Labor Day weekend, there was not enough time legally to update the board’s agenda by Tuesday. State law requires at least 24 hours’ notice to alter the board’s agenda, which had been set on Friday.

Schroeder said he could have, theoretically, called in county staff members to amend the agenda and thus have Patrick formally appointed Tuesday night, but he felt it would have been inappropriate for them to have to work on Monday when the governmental offices were closed for Labor Day.

Also Tuesday, the county board took action on three related resolutions involving changes to the state’s 2015-17 biennium budget, which was passed earlier this summer by the state Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Scott Walker.

The subjects of the actions were shorelands, assistant district attorney pay and funding for roads and transportation.

The first resolution called for a “repeal of paragraph 23 of motion #520,” also called 2015 Wisconsin Act 55, relative to shoreland standards.”

Accordingly, Act 55 has “significant changes” to regulations — NR 115 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code — that initially were approved by the state, and adopted by the county, in 1969. The resolution states that the changes, which address structures built in shoreland areas and “take away local control of the county’s waterways with no input from the general public,” have created confusion for both local officials and residents, and thus led a “significant burden on property owners to be in compliance” due to “little or no guidance from the state.”

Those burdens include financial and construction delays, according to the resolution.

The resolution calls the changes “contrary to the adopted standards of NR 115,” and supports their repeal and replacement with new amendments managing shoreland development through the “normal legislative process.”

Robert Klotz, director of planning and zoning, noted that it took 12 years for stakeholders — property owners, real estate brokers, elected officials — throughout the state to agree upon, and pass, NR 115 as a law.

The resolution passed on a unanimous voice vote by the board.

The second resolution called for “the support of funding of pay progression for assistant district attorneys and creation of funding for additional assistant district positions.”

The resolution cited a 2011 report from the LaFollette School of Public Affairs that outlined the “significant turnover rate” of prosecutors in the states’ county-level district attorney offices. The turnover, according to the study, was due to “a lack of financial incentives” for attorneys to serve the public sector.

In 2014, the Legislature adopted a pay progression scale for assistant prosecutor positions and must be funded bi-annually in state budgets. The resolution calls for more funding in order to attract and retain more attorneys for the district attorneys’ offices.

The resolution passed on another unanimous voice vote.

The third resolution aimed at the state budget “urge(s) the governor and Legislature to implement a sustainable solution to fund Wisconsin’s transportation system.”

That solution, according to the resolution, “includes a reasonable level of bonding and adjusts user fees adequately to fund Wisconsin’s transportation system.”

The resolution cites the states inability to keep road-funding at an adequate level, and cites as study by the Local Government Institute that shows per-capita funding transportation funding has dropped from \$275 to \$227 between 2000 and 2012. It also reports only two other states in the country received less transportation aid than Wisconsin.

State-imposed levy limits have prevented Jefferson County from making up that loss of funding over those 12 years; therefore, a new funding mechanism is needed because county governments throughout the state are responsible for over 90 percent of the roads in Wisconsin, it was reported. Likewise, there were 347 fatal crashes statewide on rural roads in 2013.

This resolution also passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Copies of all three resolutions will be sent to all the elected officials representing the county in the state Assembly and State Senate.

After the meeting, Schroeder commented on why these resolutions were so important to the board and county residents.

“Our Administration and Rules Committee gets dozens of ordinances before us that other counties have adapted, and we really try to stick to ones that directly affect Jefferson County,” he said.

“Each of the three ordinances the board adopted tonight have direct effect.

“We do need more assistant district attorney positions — the district attorney can show you the data on that,” he said. “Shoreland preservation is also important; we have three major lakes within the county. Transportation funding is a big issue; if you look at the roads around the county, they need work. We are not keeping up. We do not have the same good road that we had in Wisconsin and Jefferson County that we did 20 years ago.”

In other matters, the board;

- Amended the employment agreement with County Administrator Ben Wehmeier to bring his salary and benefits closer to the level comparable to that of county administrators in the state. Wehmeier, who has been the administrator for more than two years, has been paid notably below those comparable levels.

Wehmeier was “extensively reviewed” by the Administration and Rules Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Human Resources Committee. Collectively, the committees found Wehmeier has “consistently exceeded his established goals and expectations” set by the board and unanimously recommended that his compensation package “be adjusted to a level which recognizes his performance.”

Wehmeier will receive a \$5,000 bonus; however, supervisors noted that even with that, the administrator remains significantly underpaid when looking at comparable counties.

Supervisors Jennifer Hanneman, Augie Tietz and Amy Rinard said prior to the vote that the county has benefited greatly from Wehmeier’s leadership and the county would be hard-pressed to replace him. Wehmeier thanked the board for their vote of confidence in his abilities, but he also noted graciously that county government is a team effort and that the county’s successes are shared successes.

- Referred two related resolutions on new funding for the Jefferson County Farmland Conservation Easement Commission back to the Finance Committee.
- Referred back to the Human Resources Committee a proposed amendment to the county’s military leave policy. The committee will make sure the changes are in line with military regulations before bringing it back the board.
- Approved changes in the county’s investment policies.

The county had contracted with DANA Investment Advisors, and part of its recommendation was to have the county form an “investment team” to provide oversight. That team will consist of the county administrator, county treasurer and the county finance director.

- Approved the purchase of new security video surveillance equipment for the sheriff’s office.

The county will purchase a system from Dallas, Texas-based 911 Security Cameras for \$143,700. It was the lowest “responsible bidder” of six bidders for the project.

- Approved joining the South Central Wisconsin Local Officials Workforce Development Board Consortium.

Along with Jefferson, the counties in the consortium are Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Marquette and Sauk.

The consortium will be an oversight body to “fulfill the intent” of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; the act provides funds for agencies like the consortium for workforce development.

- During the public comment period, heard two county residents who voiced concerns about the Enbridge oil pipeline, noting specifically a story in the Daily Union in August about the shortage of firefighters in the region and how that could make a potential leak even worse due to a lack of emergency responders.

They also said that Enbridge has not provided the county with a formal emergency plan in case there is a pipe leak.

- Also during a comment period, heard Supervisor Dwayne Morris urge both supervisors and county residents to thank, and appreciate, local police officers and deputies for their hard work since there appears to be an increase, culturally, in violence against law enforcement officials.

“There is no excuse for racism on the part of law enforcement, but equally, there is no excuse to attack an officer for no good reason at all other than he or she is an officer,” he said.

- Heard annual reports from the Land Information Office, Planning and Zoning Department and Historic Sites Preservation Commission.