



Office of the County Executive
Josh Schoemann, County Executive

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For Immediate Release
Contact: Fran McLaughlin, 262-343-6846

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County Task Force on UW-Extension Issues Group's Results

West, Bend, WI – Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann commissioned a task force earlier this year to address the role of UW Extension programming in the county and review how best to meet the changing needs of our local community. The task force was chaired by Washington County Supervisor Carroll Merry and included representatives from the ag community, the non-profit community, and supervisors serving on the Washington County Land Use and Planning Committee.

After holding five meetings from February through April, this week the task force sent its findings and recommendations to County Executive Schoemann, including:

- UW Extension services historically provided in the community have changed and Extension educators are not being used as they once were;
- UW Extension programming has redundancy in the community;
- 4-H continues to hold great value in the community and should be enhanced and expanded by working with community clubs in STEM, and educational institutions;
- Current UW Extension educator vacancies should not be filled, yet Regional Crops Educator position should be retained and the vacant Dairy educator position should be discussed;
- The County must honor its contractual obligations with UW Extension which run through December 31, 2025.

Upon presenting these recommendations to the County Executive, task force Chair Carroll Merry said, “County Executive Schoemann tasked us with taking a hard look at UW Extension programming and ensuring the taxpayers, ag community and businesses are getting the best bang for their buck. I am particularly pleased with the consensus that we enhance 4-H. 4-H is something many of us grew up with and would like to see continue for our grandkids. It has played an integral part in the history of Washington County and I want to see it continue to provide the invaluable service more focused on the needs of our citizens.”

County Executive Schoemann commented, “I appreciate the work of this task force and especially the input from our community stakeholders. I see the many opportunities ahead of us – to grow 4-H; to connect with Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC) in educating through STEM programming; and to listen to the local community about their needs. There has been a concerning departure from *The Wisconsin Idea* with the UW more focused on itself, moving focus away from the real needs of our businesses and communities. Meanwhile, UW campuses are closing, staff are being laid off, programs are ending, and culture wars and antisemitism are undermining our values. Washington County has had enough. The recommendations from this task force offer a great start at reprioritizing UW funding and returning our focus to provide opportunities for our students, businesses, and community.”

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The members of the UW-Extension Task Force included:

Carroll Merry, County Supervisor – Task Force Chair
Bob Roden – Rob-N-Cin Dairy & Roden Echo Valley Farms – Task Force Vice-Chair
Rob Johnson – CEO/Executive Director Kettle Moraine YMCA
Brian Gallitz – Vice-Chair of Land Use & Planning Committee
Jim Burg – Land Use & Planning Committee
Ken Mikulec – Land Use & Planning Committee
Joe Vespalec – Land Use & Planning Committee

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