

**ADJOURNED SESSION  
COUNTY BOARD MEETING  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2001**

Chairman Joseph Maehl called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the County Board Room, Fourth Floor, Courthouse, 415 Jackson Street, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, and an invocation by Supervisor Rankin.

The following Supervisors were present: Kollath, Griesbach, Karras, Savas, Maehl, Koziczkowski, Klitzke, Widener, Lauson, Albrecht, Pech, Leschke, Green, Madison, Zamzow, Sundquist, Wingren, King, Norton, Hert, Nielsen, Robl, Eichman, Kline, Kramer, Schaidler, Finch, Spanbauer, Sievert, Arne, Diakoff, Brennand, Egan, Rankin, Rengstorf and Metzger. Excused: 1 - Barker. Absent: 1 - Crowley.

Motion by Supervisor Robl and seconded to adopt the agenda. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

**COMMUNICATIONS, PETITIONS, ETC.**

A letter was read from Stewart Rieckman, Executive Editor of the Oshkosh Northwestern, regarding responses they received from the county ½ cent sales tax poll that they ran in their paper. Of the 512 responses the Oshkosh Northwestern received, only 6 were in favor of a county sales tax. Included with Mr. Rieckman's letter were copies of all of the responses, which are on file in the County Clerk's Office.

Letters from Fred and Theo Grupe of Neenah, and John Casper, President/CEO of the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, opposing a ½ cent county sales tax were also noted and filed in the County Clerk's Office.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

Kevin McGee, 1244 Wisconsin Street, Oshkosh, an economics professor at UW-Oshkosh, distributed comparative sales vs. property tax figures and discussed the same.

John Allen, Neenah, expressed his opposition to a county ½ cent sales tax.

John Grupe, 530 Surrey Lane, Neenah, expressed his opposition to a county ½ cent sales tax.

Jim Clapper, 1573 Cowling Bay Road, Neenah, expressed his opposition to a county ½ cent sales tax.

Gordon Doule, 1225 Summit Avenue, Oshkosh, expressed his opposition to imposing a county ½ cent sales tax without an advisory referendum.

Thom Ciske, Vice President of Governmental Affairs for the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce, spoke in opposition to a county ½ cent sales tax.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Chairman Maehl reported that Executive Van De Hey will present her five year capital improvements plan at the September 18 County Board meeting.

**TODD BERRY, PRESIDENT – WISCONSIN TAXPAYERS ALLIANCE**

Mr. Berry explained that the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance is a non-profit, non-partisan research organization that has been in existence for approximately 70 years. Mr. Berry stated that the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance's goal is to inform people about state and local government.

Mr. Berry distributed information to the Board re:

- the history of county sales tax in Wisconsin
- counties that do not have a county sales tax – Calumet, Florence, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Menominee, Outagamie, Sheboygan, Winnebago, Clark, Wood, Racine, Waukesha, Grant, Green and Rock
- state laws that govern county sales tax

- tax rankings
- collection figures – University of Wisconsin Extension estimates that in 2002, Winnebago County could collect \$10.8 Million
- who pays this tax and the percentages
- related issues

Mr. Berry also presented figures indicating that 23 of the 46 counties with a county sales tax in effect for two or more years are “realizing tax relief compared with the period before the sales tax started.”

Mr. Berry also reported that 12 of the remaining 23 counties with the county sales tax are seeing their property taxes rise slower than before their sales tax was implemented. However, the rate of “increases in the combined sales/property taxes is higher than earlier.” He also reported that the remaining 11 counties has seen both their property and combined sales/property taxes increase at a higher rate than before.

### **MARK O’CONNELL & CRAIG THOMPSON – WISCONSIN COUNTIES ASSOCIATE**

Mark O’Connell, Chief of Staff, and Craig Thompson, Legislative Director, of the Wisconsin Counties Association, addressed the board on the issue of county sales tax. Mr. O’Connell stated that the WCA doesn’t support or oppose county sales taxes--that it is a decision that must be made by each individual county. He explained that the WCA did support the legislation that allowed counties to enact a county sales tax.

Other things that Mr. O’Connell pointed out were:

- The state withholds 1.75% of county sales taxes collected for administrative fees. The actual cost for the state’s administrative services is 1.4%. That additional \$1 million goes directly into the state’s general fund. This has been a source of contention between the counties and the state.
- Each year there are numerous proposals to make items exempt from sales and property tax. Even though this is a “touchy issue”, the WCA does oppose any tax exemptions.
- Barron County has asked for other counties’ support to raise the county sales tax limit to .7%. Few counties have agreed to this increase.
- WCA tries to preserve the counties’ options regarding a county sales tax.
- After vetoing over \$60 Million, Governor McCallum signed the budget.

Craig Thompson presented information on the state budget.

- 1% increase in shared revenue for counties and municipalities
- Because of the decrease in property values and the subsequent reduction in property taxes in Lafayette County due to the state’s use value assessment, they will receive an additional \$1.2 Million above their maximum shared revenue amount.
- This \$1.2 Million will be provided by reducing the amount of shared revenue to 19 other counties. WCA asked Governor McCallum not to compensate Lafayette County by reducing other counties shared revenue, but that they find the money somewhere else in the state budget. This reduction to the 19 counties will not go into affect until 2002.
- 8% (or \$8 Million) increase in the rate counties’ pay to the state for the housing of juveniles.
- Governor vetoed W2 provision that would not have allowed counties to transfer funds from the benefits allocation account to the direct services and administration account.
- Additional \$40 Million has been placed in the budget for county nursing homes. Money from the federal intergovernmental trust fund that is deposited in the Medicaid trust account will be protected and only used for nursing home rate increases and for supplemental payments to counties.
- Child support payments have been charged from a percentage of income to a fixed amount.
- Funding for assistant district attorney positions was vetoed. WCA supported this veto because the money to fund these state positions were going to be coming from the counties (fines & court fees) instead of from the state.

## **CHUCK ORENSTEIN – ½% COUNTY SALES TAX ANALYSIS**

Chuck Orenstein presented a power point presentation entitled, “The County Sales Tax Option for Winnebago County.” Mr. Orenstein explained that Winnebago County is facing several issues that necessitates looking at alternate funding sources such as a county sales tax. Some of these issues are:

- Increase in demand for services
- Pending capital improvements
- Unfunded state and federal mandates
- Reluctance to increase property taxes

Mr. Orenstein’s presented the following information:

- Background of Winnebago County and why a county sales tax may be an option
- Authority that allows counties to implement a county sales tax
- Implementation and administration of county sales tax – projected that Winnebago County could receive \$11 Million in revenue from a county sales tax
- Other counties experiences with a county sales tax
- Advantages and disadvantages of a county sales
- Fiscal analysis of sales vs. property tax
- Fiscal analysis – projected sales vs. property tax to pay for the new Sheriff’s facility and jail

Based on his presentation, Mr. Orenstein made the following conclusions:

- Cheaper for citizens who itemize to pay property taxes, rather than a county sales tax
- Sales tax does not benefit taxpayers who itemize—shifts the burden from the federal government to non-county residents. No credit on your tax return and the cost of local government is shifted to non-county residents

A copy of Mr. Orenstein’s power point presentation is on file in the County Clerk’s Office.

### **DUANE BROWN, CHAIRMAN, WAUPACA COUNTY BOARD WAUPACA COUNTY SALES TAX**

Chairman Brown explained that because of their size and the impact of tourism on their county, Waupaca County implemented a county sales tax in 1988 to pay for a courthouse. The Waupaca County Board reasoned that a sales tax is based more on the ability to pay than are property taxes, which makes it more fair to the residents of their county.

Chairman Brown reported that in 1990, Waupaca County collected \$1.4 Million in sales taxes. In 2002, they will receive approximately \$2.7 Million. Chairman Brown stated that after the courthouse is paid for in 2002, county sales taxes that are collected will be used to pay for their new jail, Sheriff’s center and 911 center.

Chairman Brown reported that Waupaca County is very satisfied with their county sales tax program.

### **JAMES EHRSAM, CHAIRMAN, LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD ROGER PLESHA, SUPERVISOR, LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD LA CROSSE COUNTY SALES TAX**

Chairman Ehram reported that in 1986 La Crosse County’s sales tax referendum failed. Then, in 1989, the County Board presented a county sales tax resolution that included a 1992 sunset clause and the resolution passed the board 18-14. Chairman Ehram reported that because of the success of the sales tax, in 1992 a resolution extending the tax passed the board 30-2.

Chairman Ehram stated that he feels a county sales tax is a very fair tax and that it takes some of the burden off property tax payers.

Supervisor Plesha reported that La Crosse County collected \$8 Million in county sales taxes in 2000 and they are expecting to collect an even higher amount in 2001. Supervisor Plesha also stated that their sales tax has made it easier for them to cover the expenses of their unfunded mandates, without putting more of a burden on the property tax payer.

Motion by Supervisor Robl and seconded to adjourn until 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 18, 2001.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan T. Ertmer  
Winnebago County Clerk

State of Wisconsin)  
County of Winnebago) ss

I, Susan T. Ertmer, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Journal of the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors for their regular meeting held September 4, 2001.

Susan T. Ertmer  
Winnebago County Clerk