**UNDERSTANDING RURAL DANE COUNTY**

- I'm Nikole (Nikki) Jones, Dane County Supervisor for District 28. I serve on DC Executive Committee, Environmental Agriculture and Natural Resources, Chapter 19 of Dane County Zoning Rewrite, Healthy Farms, Healthy Lakes, Environmental Council, and UniverCity. I live in town of Cross Plains, & represent 6 town and 4 villages in western DC. Great balance on my part is placed on representing the needs of the local people of our districts, and the greater good of Dane County.

- There are 37 DC representatives, with greater responsibility placed on those representatives with a more rural focus, as in those areas the county is the dominant government authority. The Dane County Board does not have as much authority over villages and cities since they have their own local governments. Towns have representation and work hand in glove with Dane County on their issues.

- Most important issues effecting towns in Dane County are:
  - Health and human need (aging in place, rural services, broadband, JFF, schools)
  - Infrastructure (county roads)
  - Land use (zoning, sustainability, development, agriculture, natural resources)

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

- **Aging in Place**: Senior Centers in rural areas are essential to helping people who have been a part of the fabric of their rural community stay in their community. DC provides: access to doctor visits, meals, places to congregate, memory care, & social services.

- **Broadband access**: An emphasis is being placed on rural broadband expansion. Dane County has received some matching funds. This is necessary to assist in all other aspects of rural development: schools, adult learning, support for employment and industry, farming, inter-library access.

- **Schools**: While Dane County does not have any ruling authority over our school systems, we have creatively partnered with our school systems to help with their needs. Our rural school systems are the most economically stressed, requiring their dollars to stretch the furthest. We partner with JFF and scholarship funds to help with their needs, & fund child homeless support.

**COUNTY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT**

There has been a steady budget increase in spending in the county highway improvements (capital). Budget over the last 10 years: 

- Highway Construction Expense in 2008 were $2,800,000 and in 2017 they are $18,736,000.

- From the Executive letter in the 2017 budget: “It’s (equally) important we invest in the safety of our roads. I am adding to the budget request from the Department of Public Works and Highway to expedite road projects in areas long overdue for resurfacing and repair. These projects have been engineered at my direction to include paved bike lanes wherever possible, including County Highway Y adjacent to the “Rails to Trails” rail corridor project referenced above by Wisconsin and Southern Railroad. All told, my budget adds nearly 25 miles of on-road, newly paved bike lanes.

- The highway budget adds a total of five new positions to the Highway Department. This demonstrates commitment to safer, better maintained roads thru all seasons, which will pay dividends not only when the snow flies, but also when rapidly spreading invasive weeds like wild parsnip spread in roadside ditches next spring. The budget acquires six more clean fuel burning, compressed natural gas powered highway trucks to move snow in winter and extra mowers to accelerate timely work needed in early summer to knock out pervasive, toxic weeds.”

**RURAL SCHOOL HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

- An example of this partnership is the Middleton Cross Plains/Wisconsin Heights (Middleton/Cross Plains is the leading school district applicant)

  - **School Districts Need for the Program**
    - Seventy-two percent of Wisconsin Heights children receiving Special Education for Emotional/Behavioral Health Concerns were in grades K-8 (with younger children outpacing older ones: 10.5% vs 8.9%).
    - Southern Schools: More than 1% of students receiving Special Education for Emotional/Behavioral Health Concerns were in grades K-8 (with younger children outpacing older ones: 1.1% vs 1.0%).
    - Middleton Cross Plains School District has 1,197 students receiving free and reduced lunch.
    - Just over a third of Wisconsin Heights students receive free and reduced lunch.

  - **General Proposal Strengths**
    - Middleton/Cross Plains and Wisconsin Heights sought to build upon existing partnerships including Joining Forces for Families to aid in program referrals and implementation.
    - Both school districts wished to align Building Bridges staff training on children’s behavioral health needs with current school district and community efforts to address issues of equity.

  - **Other Areas of Interest Regarding Building Bridges**
    - A sixth month post service follow up showed that 76% of families that were connected to behavioral health services during Building Bridges programming were able to continue with these services.

**DANE COUNTY PARKS**

- Parks represent over 12,000 acres of land throughout Dane County. Most of our properties are located within the towns.

- Our parks system is guided by the Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan (POSP). We are currently updating the POSP and welcome input from everyone! Input from towns is a major component of the update process.

- The vision statement of the POSP is “Connect people to the land and water resources of Dane County.”

- The goal of the POSP update is to protect lakes, rivers and streams, including shorelines, wetlands, high infiltration areas and associated vegetative buffers to maintain high water quality, manage water quantity and sustain water-related recreation throughout Dane County.
EROSION CONTROL AND STORMWATER

- Dane County administers an erosion control and storm water management ordinance in Dane County Towns (many villages and cities also contract with the County to administer the ordinance in their jurisdictions).
- The ordinance was designed to protect Dane County’s lakes, streams, wetlands, and quality of life by reducing the negative impacts of sediment, rainfall, melting snow and other water runoff.
- The ordinance establishes countywide standards for the quantity and quality of water that runs off land under construction in urban and rural areas, including farms. It also provides flexibility in meeting those standards, recognizing the unique characteristics of each project and site.
- Dane County has some of the most innovative approaches to nutrient management, crop tilling and harvesting, and run off.

DANE COUNTY LAND USE SERVICES TO RURAL AREAS

- All aspects of administering and enforcing zoning, land division/subdivision, and related regulations in the towns
- Farmland preservation, shoreland/floodplain/wetland regulations
- All aspects of preparing, reviewing, amending, and implementing town comprehensive plans
- Extensive land records maintenance, including historical survey records, property listing for taxation purposes, and geographic information systems (GIS) and mapping
- Extensive coordination, communication, and cooperation with rural towns on all fronts
- Public information and assistance on broad range of land use interests
- Efficiently and cost-effectively provided by the Dane County Planning and Development Department

ACT 178

Initiated by the Dane County Towns Association (DCTA)

Signed by governor February 29, 2016

Enabled Dane County towns to withdraw from county zoning:

1. Affects ONLY Dane County
2. Requires affirmative vote of the town at its annual meeting
3. Opportunity once every three (3) years, starting 2017
4. Before Act 178, all 33 towns in Dane County participated in county zoning
5. Even with ACT 178, all towns in Dane County will still retain zoning and comprehensive plans

Six (6) towns voted to opt out effective January 1, 2018

“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Aristotle

1. Much less costly due to economies of scale
2. Extensive, integrated services from experienced staff
3. Dane County Corporation Counsel backing for enforcement
4. Historically, fewer than 1 percent of zoning petitions were denied
5. Greater intergovernmental communication, cooperation, and coordination
6. Greater economies of scale
7. Lower costs by responsibly leveraging limited public dollars to promote public objectives and address community challenges

For additional information, see Dane County Planning and Development Department position brochure:

FOCUSING ON CURRENT RURAL LIVING IN DANE COUNTY IN 2017/8

Rural Dane County is facing ongoing, and at times competing demands of supporting smart growth, preserving its agricultural heritage, developing economies of scale, & balancing environmentally-protected land use with many alternatives. These competing issues require DC to improve their tax base, modernize their systems, and reach forward in effective, forward planning to maximize our futures together.

These are just a sampling of the most pressing issues facing Rural Dane County. Thank you for your time.