October 24, 2017

To: Dane County Board Supervisors

Statement in support of amendment to the 2018 Dane County Executive Budget calling for recording of all meetings of the County Board standing committees.

Meetings of the Dane County Board, the Madison City Council, and many meetings of city council committees and commissions are routinely recorded by Madison City Channel for viewing on demand. Citizens who cannot attend the live meetings of these government bodies can view all or part of the proceedings remotely, either live-streamed or on-demand on their computers. However, Dane County committee meetings are not generally recorded.

County Supervisor Heidi Wegleitner has submitted an amendment to the 2018 Dane County Budget that would fund routine recording of all the meetings of Dane County standing committees. These committees (Executive Committee; Personnel and Finance; Public Works and Transportation; Health and Human Needs; Public Protection and Judiciary; Environmental, Agricultural, and Natural Resources; and Zoning and Land Regulation) do most of the decision making for Dane County government at their meetings and frequently take up issues of interest to citizens.

The amendment would add $42,840 per year to the Dane County operating budget and $244,000 to the capital budget to outfit eight rooms, three in the CCB, three in the Lyman F. Anderson Building, and two in the Public Works and Transportation Building, with the necessary cameras and other equipment. Only meetings that take place in these rooms would be recorded; recording at other remote sites is not funded under this amendment.

The League of Women Voters of Dane County strongly supports this amendment. For government to be transparent, all citizens—even those whose circumstances (job schedule, transportation, family obligations, health) prevent them from attending committee meetings—must have the opportunity to learn about the choices and actions of county government. Using technology to preserve and disseminate the discussions in Dane County standing committee meetings would reinforce citizens’ rightful opportunities to be informed without requiring them to be physically present.

Sincerely,

Brook Chase Soltvedt
President