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Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity to meet Aug. 14 *Panel seeks sustainable future for rural Wisconsin*

MADISON, AUG. 13, 2020 –The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity will hold its first virtual meeting on Friday, Aug. 14 from 1 to 3 p.m. to begin finding solutions to the challenges facing rural communities in Wisconsin.

Governor Tony Evers, who created the commission in his State of the State speech in January, will welcome commission members to the online gathering, which will be open to the public.

The commission's goals for this first session are to:

- provide the context and purpose for the creation of the Commission;
- introduce the commissioners to each other and to the public;
- outline the charge for the commission, the roles and responsibilities of the commissioners, upcoming opportunities for public discussion and input with the commission, and the commission's timeline for recommendations; and
- share perspectives and generate ideas about the most critical issues in rural Wisconsin, commission priorities, and how best to reach key rural constituencies through the commission's work.

In his State of the State message, Governor Evers asked the Commission to engage and learn from residents throughout the state in order to develop long-term strategies that will "best support the needs of rural Wisconsinites and rural communities."

As part of his State of the State speech, the governor also directed the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to establish the Office of Rural Prosperity to create a "one-stop shop" for residents to access state programs and resources tailored to rural communities, businesses and workers.

Kelliann Blazek, WEDC's first director of rural prosperity, will serve as staff to the commission and help coordinate its activities. The commission will also be assisted in its deliberations by the Aspen Institute's Community Strategies Group.

Commission members want to hear what Wisconsin residents believe their communities need most for success, and are offering a variety of ways for citizens to provide that information, including virtual public forums, online comments through the WEDC Office of Rural Prosperity

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website, and direct contact between commission members and rural residents or rural community organizations.

The commission's three virtual public forums will be held on Aug. 31 from 12 to 2 p.m.; on Sept. 8 from 7 to 9 p.m.; and on Sept. 16 from 3 to 5 p.m. Details of how citizens can address the forums are coming soon.

Residents can also submit comments to the commission online between Aug. 31 and Sept. 30 through the WEDC website (with exact details forthcoming). Finally, individual or groups of commission members are available for virtual meetings with rural organizations, businesses and other stakeholders.

The commission aims to collect public input early this fall and then present Governor Evers with a report by Oct. 31 that will help shape the governor's state budget proposal next year.

Citizens can view or listen to the commission's first meeting with Microsoft Teams or by phone:

[Join Microsoft Teams.](#)

Madison-area local phone: 608.210.6800

Toll-free phone: 888.315.9920

Conference ID: 269 827 88# (English)

Spanish Conference ID: 919 859 924#

Hmong Conference ID: 358 332 138#

More information about the commission, its members and its activities is available on WEDC's website at: wedc.org/rural-prosperity.

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit wedc.org or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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