

Town of Rock Elm

Elmwood, Pierce County, Wisconsin

PUBLIC HEARING ON CAFO ORDINANCE

MINUTES

Saturday, January 31, 2026

Meeting called to order at 11:07 a.m. by Chairman Tim Bates.

Others present: Matt Holcomb, Supervisor; Chris Thibado, Supervisor; Dave Bechel, Patrolman; Dawn Churchill, Clerk; Pam Reitz, Treasurer; and 45 residents and 40 non-residents.

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Chris Thibado, second by Matt Holcomb, motion carried.

Public Comments on CAFO Ordinance

Guidelines were gone over: comments would be limited to two minutes, there would be no questions answered, and there was a reminder to be respectful of opinions. Comments were as follows:

Resident: Opposed. We don't need extra government, we already have enough.

Resident: Supported. Believes in the legacy of Rock Elm.

Non-resident: Opposed. Feels there are other solutions, such as good communication and the open-door policy of Ridge Breeze Dairy.

Resident: Opposed. Feels that adopting the Livestock Facility Siting would address the issues better than the ordinance. Stated there are only 1 or 2 days that there is manure hauling, feels the CAFOs are vilified, and that CAFOs will do the right thing.

Resident: Supported. The ordinance protects the residents, addresses disease, animal population, air quality, property, roads, etc. Keeps us safe. What happens when rules are not followed?

Resident: Opposed. Would the town be prepared to review and process applications? Is this a scare tactic? Expecting CAFO to reimburse town for expenses seems excessive.

Resident: Supported. Opposed to expansion of CAFO. There is risk to air and water quality. Decrease in property value.

Resident: Supported. There are diverse farmers in Rock Elm; some are afraid of vilification if they support the ordinance. Board members took an oath to protect the citizens of Rock Elm.

Resident: Supported. Without a legal document, it would be hard to support claims in court.

Resident: Supported. The DNR has minimal oversight and are understaffed. There is no State oversight compared to what is covered in the ordinance.

Non-resident: Opposed. Everyone has to be on the same page, farmers should be consulted. Feels that this ordinance will put small farmers out of business.

Non-resident: Opposed. Feels that information in the ordinance is inaccurate; the Livestock Facility Siting would better address our needs.

Non-resident: Supported. There needs to be State legislation on this. The quality of life has been decimated by the farm crisis due to large farms.

Resident: Supported. Supports farmers and we must protect future farmers.

Resident: How are we going to fight farmers with deep pockets? Our taxes are high enough.

Non-resident: Supported. If there is no regulation on CAFOs, they will take up the smaller farms.

Resident: Supported. Other towns have adopted ordinances; it's time Rock Elm does. CAFO farmers have deep pockets. Once wells are contaminated, it's hard to fix.

Resident: Supported. Thinks the fees for the CAFO should be higher than they are.

Non-resident: Supported. The Maiden Rock ordinance passed. Feels that the Farm Bureau intimidates. They should be listening to farmers.

Resident: Supported. There are two big issues: manure management and water quality. We should be protecting the assets we have. Bigger is not always better.

Resident: Supported. We can't stop the CAFO. We need air, water, soil, etc., monitoring.

Resident: Supported. Believes in leaving the land better than we got it. Once damage is done it can't be undone.

Non-resident: Supported. The board was voted in to take care of citizens. Not against farmers, they're good neighbors until they're not.

Non-resident: Opposed. They're a small farmer and has worked together with CAFO farmers. They are there working every day just like the small farmer.

Non-resident: Supported. We need the farmers and everyone else in Rock Elm. Feels the farmer should live here and be accountable. He has witnessed manure trucks for weeks, not days.

Resident: Opposed. Feels that CAFOs are already the most regulated. Let the DNR do their job.

Non-resident: The ordinance has fact-based finding. Updates to state statues have been done. Feels that the board should listen to the residents.

Non-resident: Supported. The rain runoff into the Rush River is an enormous risk. What's the benefit of the CAFO to the community?

Non-resident: Opposed. If passed, will replace with division between farmers and residents. Sees it as an "anti-farmer" ordinance.

Resident: Opposed. They are a young farmer and wants a legacy for their children. Not sure if they could continue to farm under CAFO regulations.

Non-resident: Opposed. Do we want to regulate and put farmers out of business? We need to work together – the common-sense way.

Non-resident: Opposed. Feels that the info is biased.

Non-resident: Supported. Feels that CAFOs need oversight. What happens when their well goes bad? Water runoff from the CAFO will send millions of gallons of water through the dry runs.

Resident: Supported. Feels that the board should listen to residents trying to raise their families in Rock Elm.

Tim indicated that there is no vote today, but the Board will vote at the next monthly board meeting on February 10.

Motion to adjourn made by Matt Holcomb, second by Chris Thibado, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Dawn Churchill, Clerk

Approved 02/10/26