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September 30th, 2018

Wisconsin Chapter American Public Works Association
300 E. Main Street
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

RE: APWA PWX 2018 Kansas City, MO Experience

Dear Members of the Executive Committee:

I want to start by saying thank you for the opportunity to attend the American Public Works Association National conference in Kansas City, Mo. Opportunities like this are very helpful in getting the younger workforce involved in national organizations where we might otherwise feel there is no place for us as emerging leaders who don't have the breadth of knowledge to share at these conferences. Attending the conference I was able to see that not only is it somewhere I belong, but a valuable resource to learn what others are doing around the country and even the world. Through all the evening events I was also able to make some great networking connections.

Networking Opportunities:

New members breakfast may have been the most beneficial networking event of the week. This gave me the opportunity to be in a room with individuals in the same position I am in, in that they are either new to public works, new to the American Public Works Association, or both. Encouraging everyone get up and move about the room to swap business cards and learn a little bit about the other members in the room was a great icebreaker and helped make a few connections for the week. Whether it was just having someone to sit by at a session or a group to grab dinner with. It helped create those instant connections right at the beginning of the conference. Another great aspect of this event was having the leaders of APWA present. Hearing a few encouraging words from the incoming president was a very nice touch.

The Wisconsin Chapter dinner was another great networking event. Seeing as I am rather new to the Public Works field of local government it was a great opportunity to meet others from



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surrounding communities facing many of the same issues that my community is facing. The venue was a quaint laid back restaurant that allowed for general dinner conversation and not

the shouting that is sometimes required at the social events that take place later in the night. It was great to meet one of last years Wisconsin Emerging leaders, Kameron Nash of Janesville as well as other such as Paul Woodward who was recognized for his award as a top ten public works leader. I look forward to continuing to grow my local network at the Wisconsin Fall Conference in Sturgeon Bay at the end of October.

General Sessions:

As someone rather new to the Public Works profession I attended sessions that included; waste management best practices, aspiring public works Leadership, innovation trends, active shooter preparation, if it ain't broke, break it, promoting the public works profession, creating a dynamic workplace by integrating young professionals, what does it cost to do public Works, a practical guide to dealing with poorly performing employees, and finally, the APWA emerging leaders presentation.

It was great to be able to attend sessions that touched on so many different aspects of public works as most of us in the profession, here in Wisconsin especially where many of the organizations are too small to have staff specialized in one aspect of the work. A lot of these sessions are fun to imagine how you might present the project or issue to their council and community and or how you might pull the project off. For example, in the solid waste management best practices session was a presentation about an underground vacuum waste collection system. Projects like this really open your mind to the possibilities that other regions have made happen.

Another session I enjoyed was, promoting the public works profession. I'm an advocate of promoting local government at a professional altogether but can speak a little more specifically to public works as I am a great example of someone who didn't have a plan to work in public works much less knew a lot about the profession. Especially because I am someone who works in public works who does not have an engineering background. This session helped emphasize that you don't need a P.E. to help move the world of public works forward.

My favorite session may have been " A Practical Guide to Dealing with Poorly Performing Employees." As someone who works in management but doesn't manage anyone I often find myself in an interesting situation where field staff come to me with concerns and complaints both legitimate and not. I often know the back story of their concern because of my role in the department and have to use best judgement to help steer field staff in the right direction. I never want to see anyone fail and I enjoy the fact that field staff feel comfortable discussing



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issues with me. So this session was helpful for me to learn tactics to deal with these sometimes difficult situations.

Keynote Speakers:

Keynote speakers can make a huge impact on a conference. Committees hope that they will help inspire attendees and give them the energy to go back to their community and make a real impact. That was indeed the case at PWX 2018. Thom Singer was the emcee for PWX and did a fantastic job in building that excitement in attendees to help get them engaged each day.

Roy Spence was my favorite keynote speaker. Roy spoke about the importance of purpose, driving home that no matter what you're doing in your life, work related or not, it is important that you do it with a purpose and don't just go through the motions. I think this is a great message that is important to remember in your everyday life whether it's what you're doing at work or at home. Roy also spoke of the Promise Land Project he is working on. The Promise Land Project aims to maximize the power of purpose to enlighten, inspire, engage, and motivate Americans to bridge the cultural divide. The project uses the power of positive, non-partisan, solution-driven and purpose inspired communications to lead the way in building a high performing, job creating, mutual-respect culture of the United States. Projects like this are, in my opinion, exactly the type of projects communities need to get involved in to help solve some of our own issues. Projects I can get behind as a community leader.

Jake Wood, the Co-Founder & CEO of Team Rubicon was the closing speaker. Jake discussed the importance of building an effective leadership team and how you can become the one others look to in a time of need. He also discussed Team Rubicon's mission and how they are helping in disaster relief efforts around the world. Jake's message was inspiring and also encouraging to get involved with a organization such as Team Rubicon. Whether it's getting your agency involved or just signing yourself up to volunteer with Team Rubicon during times of need in your community or surrounding communities, Jake helped move people to want to help others in a time of need and gave them an outlet to do so.

Vendor Hall:

Finally, the vendor hall. This was a well laid out space and never felt overly packed. I was able to speak with some vendors in which my municipality will no doubt be working with in the future as well as vendors who we already use and we were able to discuss the products and how they are working for us which was a nice added perk of having vendors on site for this conference. One part of this experience that separated it from other conferences I've attended was having



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the Roadeo during the conference. I thought this was a great way to get field staff involved in the conference in a way that would excite and benefit them, versus dragging them along to sessions

they might not find much interest in. This way field staff from across the Midwest were able to showcase their skills operating heavy equipment.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the opportunity presented to me to attend the American Public Works Associations annual conference. I was able to make new connections, pick up new approaches to projects, and learn about new technology in the profession. In the month that has passed since the conference I have already made contact with vendors that my municipality is interested in using to help us improve efficiencies and I have used PWX 2018 as the first stepping stone to getting more involved in the Wisconsin chapter and look forward to doing so next month in Sturgeon Bay.

This conference is one I won't forget and has truly increased my interest in the profession and the avenues I can take to have a successful career in Public Works. I look forward to attending this conference in the future as well as getting more involved with the Wisconsin chapter's committees and conferences. Thank you again for this spectacular opportunity.

Sincerely,

Zach Navin
City of Wauwatosa
Public Works Management Analyst