



# WISCONSIN RAPIDS SUNRISE SCRIPT

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July 23 2020

District 6250 Wisconsin Rapids Rotary – Sunrise – Club No. 31198, Chartered 12/29/95  
Box 1181, Wisconsin Rapids WI 54495

## Today's Program

### Zoom Video Meeting

### Andy Francis, Rafters Update

With the "Safer at Home" state edict Sunrise Rotary is conducting its weekly meetings on Zoom.



Click on this link to Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/76631647715?pwd=RWVteU1aMzhXTmtGa3QyRmtTTi9HZz09>

Meeting ID: 766 3164 7715

Password: 4J7xBF

Dial in: 312 626 6799

#### Coming Programs:

- Community Outdoor Learning Center, July 30
- Other ideas...

#### Rotary News

- We had 19 on the video conference with one on the phone
- Next week Andy Francis will be providing a Rafters update
- July 30th we will be doing a blended meeting, Outdoor learning center, with mask and social distancing with the Zoom Meeting on line.
- We are continuing the un-isolation project by making connections with the Waterford, Wellington Place, Our House on Pepper, and Hilltop on Gaynor. Carrie is getting the resident counts, Kristopher is looking for card stock, and DaNita will be printing and engaging volunteers for the writing of the notes.
- The Chamber and other organizations are putting together a job fair in September primarily for the Verso and Casino employees that will be looking for work. It will include partners such as the Department of Workforce Development Job Centers, area employers, education partners, etc.
- We received two thank you notes. One from Edgewater thanking us for the gift baskets of goodies and the cards for the residents. The other was not identified but also thanked us for those gifts as well.
- Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners supplies were shipped to MSP for transport along with an ambulance and fire truck.
- Shoulder to shoulder is using small laptops for students who are also not going to school because of COVID.

#### OFFICERS 2020/2021

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Karen Kienert

Kristopher Gasch

Larry Schmick

Mary Jo Green (3)

Mary Wirtz

Nancy Mischnick

Tim Krueger

Tom Paul (4)

Tom Schneider (2)

#### Club Chairpersons

##### Vocational Service

Gus Mancuso, co-chair

Carol Davis, co-chair

##### Community Service

Dave Guse, chair

##### International Service

Nancy Mischnick, co-chair

Tom Schneider, co-chair

##### Club Service / Membership

Rick Merdan, chair

#### R.I. Foundation Liaison

Karen Kienert

#### Polio Plus Chairperson

Tom Schneider

#### Youth Exchange Officer

Felicia Gardner

#### Youth Exchange Counselor

Tom Schneider

#### Youth Protection Officer

TBD

# Scott Krug, Rapids Together Initiative

The news of a pending change came when a call was received from the executive assistant to Adam St. John, the Verso CEO. The hope was that it was about additional capital investments in the Rapids mill. Unfortunately it was news that the mill would be idled while they pursue several alternatives. The shock of the direct hit of over 900 employees along with the logarithmic impact to the community and forest products industry was devastating. Immediately both Scott and Pat Testin formed a task force “Rapids Together” to address the situation with two short-term goals and one long-term.

- Economic Development – seeking ways to keep the operation running either by sale or supportive state or federal programs such as enterprise zones. This included seeking alternative markets for the products from the mill.
- Community – this includes services to the disaffected employees, job training, reeducation, resume development, and linkage to available regional employment opportunities.
- Supporting the Wisconsin Forest Products Industry – this is the long-term goal. With this as the #2 industry in the state of over \$40 billion a year, the state needs to focus on what it can do to be supportive of this industry.

## **Economic Development:**

This task force includes Verso employees, union representatives, WEDC, as well as members of Baldwin, Johnson, and Kind’s staff. The mill will idle July 31 though the #16 papermachine is already down with all of the storage full already. There may be 100 or so employees in the converting operation that will continue to convert product from rolls into sheets for some time. Sonoco, another forest products company that primarily makes paper cores and packaging, actually owns the #12 papermachine in the facility and is fully committed to the continued operation of that product line. It is unknown what will happen to all of the raw material inventory at the mill; clay, calcium carbonate, latex, pulp, etc. The main economic driver to the mill idle is that Verso has 40% of the domestic sheet market but imported sheets from China, South Korea, and Europe are so much cheaper that it is very difficult to compete. As part of the supply chain Great Lakes Timber Products is assisting in the effort since the mill consumes 25% of the hardwood used in the state! There is a short list of potential buyers but Scott could not identify them for confidentiality.

## **Community:**

This is sometimes referred to as the “what-if” committee. In other words, what if we can’t find a way to keep the mill running? A number of organizations are participating to help through this uncertain period. This group includes the social services, educational, and Department of Workforce Development entities. As mentioned previously the Chamber is helping put together a job fair that will include all available resources including the rapid response team from the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (NCWWDB).

## **Industry Support:**

Long-term, the state needs to support the vital forest products industry that is the second largest industry in the state worth over \$40 billion a year. As stated previously, this is a bi-partisan effort that will be looking at what the state can do to help the industry remain viable for the long-term.

## **Overall:**

Scott has been very impressed and pleased with how bi-partisan this effort is with help from all area representation as well as the governor’s office.

Those interested in the progress or willing to help can stay abreast of developments from the new website in development. (Note: We will share that website when it becomes available).