

# Windsor explores structure options

By Lauren Anderson  
Associate Editor

In the first of what town supervisors call a "historic" series of meetings regarding Windsor's future governmental structure, town officials and residents recently considered the implications of Windsor becoming a village.

The July 9 meeting is one of four the town board is hosting throughout the month to discuss a potential change in how Windsor operates, with incorporation as a primary focus.

Fourteen years ago, Windsor conducted a consolidation/merger study and ultimately opted not to pursue either arrangement with DeForest.

**"[Incorporation] protects our borders, keeps our identity and gives us local control."**

**Bruce Stravinski,**  
Windsor town supervisor

This time around, Windsor officials say a merger is still among the options under consideration, but comments last Thursday indicate supervisors are more amenable to the incorporation idea.

In a presentation to about 30 peo-

ple, town attorney Connie Anderson said incorporation would allow the town to secure its boundaries, preserve its community identity and have local control over land use.

"There are many different legal rights that villages have that towns do not," Anderson said. "This could place the Village of DeForest with the 'Village of Windsor' on equal footing with respect to those rights."

Anderson reviewed maps showing a trend of Windsor losing land yet growing in population over the past 40 years. Between 1990 and 2010, Windsor's land area dropped from 21,030 acres to 18,333 acres. In 2010, two cooperative plans with DeForest

See **WINDSOR**, page 3

DeForest Times Tribune

7-17-14

## WINDSOR

From page 1

and one with Sun Prairie were enacted. The agreements phase out in the next 15 to 25 years.

Under state law, cities and villages have annexation authority by which they can add unincorporated areas to their own municipality's territory. Anderson cited examples of towns losing land to annexation in recent years.

"When you look at Burke, Blooming Grove, the Town of Madison, what is happening is they have become portions of neighboring villages or cities. They're shrinking. Their boundaries can't be protected. That's the nature of being a town under Wisconsin law unless you have a cooperative agreement in place," said Anderson.

Incorporation would also give Windsor zoning authority. The town currently relies on Dane County for final zoning and land use approval. Gaining zoning authority, Anderson said, would be "a huge change," and could help ensure the protection of the town's agricultural land.

That is one benefit that tips the scales for Sup. Bruce Stravinski, who expressed his support for incorporation. Stravinski said unless he is convinced otherwise by residents at the listening sessions, his mind is made up.

"[Incorporation] protects our borders, keeps our identity and gives us local control . . . the biggest thing is local control over our destiny. It wouldn't be with Dane County. It wouldn't be with ETZ [Extraterritorial Zoning] with the Village of DeForest or City of Sun Prairie," Stravinski said.

Sup. Don Madelung echoed those sentiments, saying a streamlined land use approval process could help encourage more development.

"We've probably had some good opportunities for people who have looked at us and said, 'I'm not sure that's the place I want to go through if I'm going to develop. There's probably easier processes with someone else,'" Madelung said.

Anderson also reviewed the potential effects on Windsor Utilities, saying they would likely be mini-



**Bob Wipperfurth,** Windsor board chair

**"Competition can do great things. It overall enhances the whole community."**

mal. Current utility districts would dissolve upon Windsor's incorporation. Anderson said two separate sanitary districts would form and be overseen by one Windsor Utility Commission.

Utility staff, consultants and customers would remain the same. Commissioners, however, would be appointed by the town board rather than elected. The duties of the commission would be to make policies, prepare budgets, prepare rates, approve contracts, oversee employees and retain professional consultants. Village hall staff would handle billing and other administrative tasks.

Anderson said the incorporation process would require approval from the state legislature or an alternative route through the Wisconsin Department of Administration. But Sup. Wipperfurth noted that even if the town board ultimately favored the idea, it wouldn't necessarily be "a done deal."

"This is a very hard process - the standards are very high," he said. "So just because we want to do it, it doesn't mean we will do it."

**PUBLIC INPUT LARGELY** favored incorporation, with many comments and questions revolving around the town's relationship with DeForest.

Asked how Windsor's incorporation would benefit DeForest, Wipperfurth said it could help grow Windsor's tax base which in turn could augment the communities' shared services, such as Fire/EMS and the DeForest Area Community and Senior Center. Both villages, he said, would operate as "equal players," eliminating any power imbalance.

While DeForest may view Windsor as "competition," Wipperfurth said that isn't necessarily a bad thing.

"Competition can do great things," Wipperfurth said. "It overall enhances the whole community."

### If you go . . .

The town board will host two more listening sessions at town hall on July 23 and 30 at 5:30 p.m. The first will focus on Windsor residents and the second on the town's agricultural community.

Although village officials have expressed support for a merger, Wipperfurth said he thinks they are "beginning to look at this [incorporation] more open-mindedly" in recent months.

A Windsor resident asked what the implications of merging with DeForest would be. The study 14 years ago indicated Windsor residents would see a "very significant" difference in mill rate, which proved to be a major deterrent to pursuing a merger or consolidation, Madelung said.

But beyond tax impacts, Wipperfurth said there are more ways in which the two municipalities are incompatible.

"I believe there is a philosophical difference in how we operate in government in Windsor and DeForest," Wipperfurth said. "I'm not criticizing the village. It's just different. They have a different process than what we do in Windsor. I think both processes are effective."

He added that if Windsor were to incorporate, it would continue to partner cooperatively with DeForest in areas such as the community and senior center and Fire/EMS services.

A few attendees commended the board on its fact-finding efforts. Among them was Don Tierney, developer of multiple Windsor and DeForest area projects.

"I want to say thank you because it seems like you're going in the right direction," said Tierney, whose response drew applause.