

Attendees voice support for incorporation path

Financial report says Windsor has lost roughly \$290 million worth of territory in last 25 years

By Jake Kurtz
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Attendees at a special town electors meeting on Nov. 25 and multiple supervisors voiced support for Windsor to continue exploring the possibility of incorporation.

Since last spring, Windsor officials have kicked the tires about the possibility of moving forward with a change in governance

structure. Specifically, they have considered whether to remain a town, create a new entity by merging with the Village of DeForest, or incorporating into a standalone village.

In August, the financial advisory firm Ehlers was hired to analyze the financial impact of the incorporation plan. That led to Senior Advisor James Mann last week providing answers to many of the

monetary questions that have lingered on for months about a governance change.

According to Mann, the town of Windsor has lost approximately \$290 million worth of territory via annexation to DeForest (2,100 acres) and the City of Sun Prairie (109 acres). The financial whiz added that standing pat would likely result in more losses as existing boundary agreements with neighboring entities "only last for so long."

"When you look at what the Village of DeForest has gobbled up over time, that's a significant

amount," Mann said.

Town Board President Bob Wipperfurth echoed that stance and said Windsor will "be at risk again" when those agreements sunset.

Mann noted that taxes would "probably" be lower for residents should Windsor ultimately remain as a town. He provided data from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance that placed per-capita total operating spending for the town at \$380 in 2011, which trailed both DeForest (\$750) and Sun Prairie (\$732).

"The town is providing govern-

ment to its citizenry at a very affordable rate," said Mann.

Mann said Windsor would not lose any revenue sources by incorporating — state and transportation aid and school revenue sharing — because such funds are calculated the same regardless of status as a town or village.

Should Windsor incorporate, Mann said the new village would be obligated to repay all outstanding debt held by the town. Windsor has an equalized value of \$614 million, putting its debt limit

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capacity at \$30.7 million. But the town is only using 32 percent of that allowable amount (around \$9.9 million).

"The town is in good fiscal position," Mann noted.

In the end, Mann concluded that a merger "is likely going to be more expensive" than the town's other two options.

Whatever route Windsor ultimately goes, Wipperfurth said he and other supervisors hope DeForest officials

will be supportive.

"They are more open to us exploring incorporation," Wipperfurth said. "And if at the end of the day that is what we decide to do, they will hopefully respect us for that decision and support us."

Sup. Bruce Stravinski said he has believed for years that incorporation is the best option for Windsor and nothing to date has convinced him otherwise.

"We haven't officially made a decision yet, but I really think that is the route we should go," Stravinski added.