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TOWN OF WINDSOR

Analyst again advises against consolidation

By Jake Kurtz
Managing Editor

For the second time in as many weeks, a financial analyst told the Windsor Town Board that it's not in the town's best interest financially to merge with the Village of DeForest.

James Mann, a senior municipal advisor with the public finance firm Ehlers, first appeared before town supervisors two weeks ago to present the findings after Mann's employer was hired to analyze the financial implications of a change in Windsor's governance struc-

ture.

Since last spring, Windsor officials have considered three options: remaining as a town, incorporating into a stand alone village, or merging with DeForest.

The report notes that in the last 25 years Windsor has lost more than 2,200 acres of property to neighboring DeForest and Sun Prairie worth a whopping \$290 million. Mann has emphasized that opting not to incorporate will only lead Windsor to suffer more losses as existing boundary agreements expire in the coming

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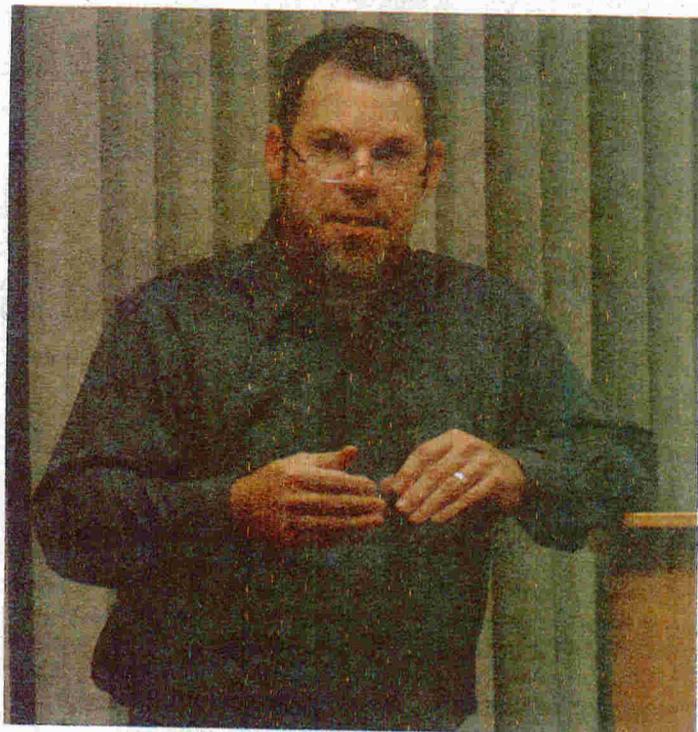


Photo by Jake Kurtz
Municipal financial advisor James Mann speaking at a Dec. 4 Windsor Town Board meeting.

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years.

Windsor's total equalized value, according to the latest figures, is \$614 million. DeForest's is north of \$762 million.

"The bottom line is that's a significant amount of territory that has been lost through annexation," Mann said, adding that waiting around "opens the town back up to annexation by the incorporated municipalities."

Using 2015 budget figures, Mann said Windsor's mil rate of \$5.12 translates to an annual cost of around \$1,280 on a home valued at \$250,000. DeForest's rate of \$7.24, he noted, equates to \$1,810 on a similar home.

When combining the total levy for Windsor and DeForest, Mann said it produces a mil rate of \$6.29 which totals \$1,573 for a \$250,000 residence.

"It's going to be a positive for DeForest and a negative for the town," Mann concluded.

Mann said in order for Windsor and DeForest to merge and Windsor's rate to remain flat, an estimated \$1.5 million in operation savings would need to be found.

"If DeForest can somehow come up with a significant amount of cost savings, that's wonderful," Mann said. "But it doesn't answer what's in it for the residents of the town."

Mann also pointed out that if a merger were to occur, residents of the existing town would only make up about 40 percent of the new entity's total voting block.

"You lose a majority vote in any decision that may occur," said Mann.

Town board Chair Bob Wipperfurth said he intends to meet with DeForest representatives on Dec. 17 to discuss the findings by Ehlers.