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SUNPRAIRIES

WINDSOR

Windsor takes first steps towards village

BY CHRIS MERTEZ
Managing Editor

Sun Prairie's neighbor to the west is taking the first steps towards incorporating as a village.

On Aug. 20, 2015, the Windsor Town Board voted unanimously to allow residents to decide whether the town should incorporate as a village. The board's action clears the way for a referendum on the question, which is to be held on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2015, according to Bob Wipperfurth, Town of Windsor chair.

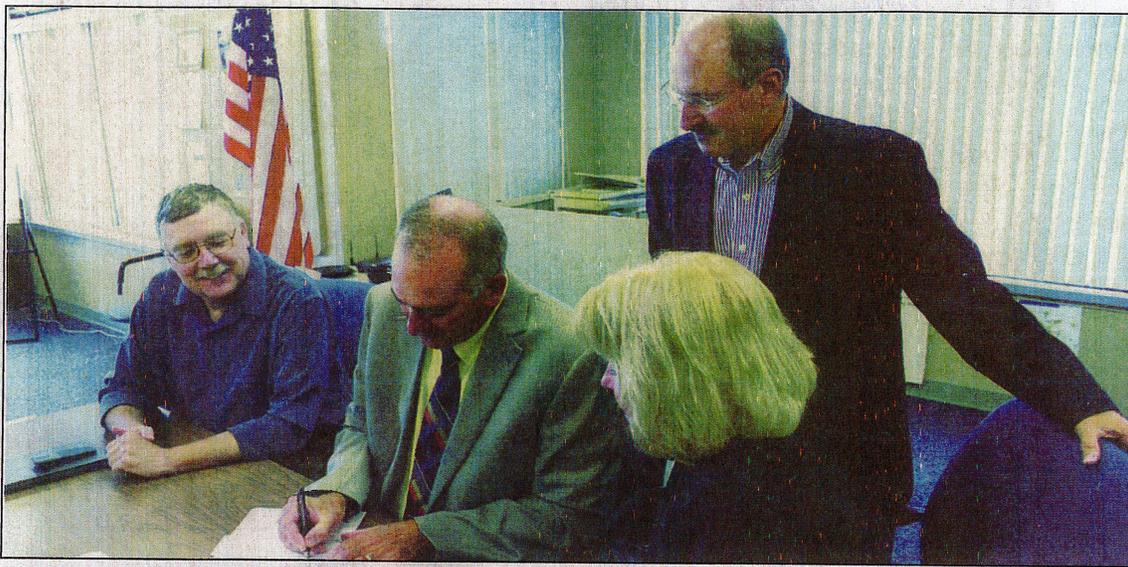
The board's action was a direct response to citizen calls

to preserve Windsor's unique rural and agricultural identity, according to Wipperfurth.

"Windsor residents value the unique diversity we have. We enjoy our mix of agricultural, local businesses, residential and conservancy areas and want to protect these areas for generations to come," the town chair added.

"We can preserve the tax base we have, and welcome responsible growth within our existing borders. To do so, we need the tools that villages have under the current laws. Incorporating as a village gives us the legal tools we need to

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Windsor Town Board Chair Bob Wipperfurth (center, with pen) and fellow supervisors Bruce Stravinski, Monica Smith, and Don Madelung each signed resolution 2015-69 on Aug. 20, making official the town of Windsor's intentions to incorporate as a village by way of referendum Nov. 3.

JOE PRUSKI PHOTO

WINDSOR: Town takes first steps to become a village

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achieve our goals and maintain an exceptional quality of life throughout the Windsor community."

If it remains a town, Windsor's agricultural and rural identity could be jeopardized because of the continued urbanization of the region. In addition, the town would remain subject to annexations and an erosion of its equalized value.

Not only would annexations threaten Windsor's character and identity, it would result in increased costs to its residents for services because of the lost tax base. If the town incorporates as a village, it would be possible to maintain the same services and staff at no additional cost to residents.

"Incorporation gives Windsor the ability to control its future by protecting its boundaries and its tax base," said Wipperfurth. "It allows Windsor to manage growth and development by reducing redundancies and overlap in governmental services and by

unifying land use and zoning regulations. Without incorporating as a village, these efficiencies cannot be achieved."

Public meetings held last summer revealed strong citizen support for protecting Windsor's rural character, while engaging in well-planned growth and development.

Becoming a village will allow Windsor to do both. Residents interested in preserving Windsor's unique character and identity should vote in the referendum on Nov. 3.

"A number of open houses will be held over the next few months in order to provide information and answer questions about incorporation in advance of the November 3rd referendum vote," explained Wipperfurth.

"Due to its proximity to the City of Madison, Windsor continues to experience incredibly rapid growth," Wipperfurth added. "Based on the data and growth projections I've reviewed, incorporating as a village is the best option for

Windsor. Incorporation will protect residents' quality of life and allow for orderly growth in the future."

Timeline for incorporation

In July 2014, Windsor held four listening sessions to seek input from residents on three governance options available to the town. After receiving input and direction from the public, the town undertook substantial analysis to assess the possible impacts of incorporation.

The studies concluded Windsor already provides the expanded services of a village and that there are fiscal benefits to incorporating. The reports can be viewed at www.windsorwi.gov.

On Nov. 25, 2014, a town meeting was held to review the 2015 budget and to gather input from residents on Windsor's future governance structure. Citizens at the meeting directed the Town Board to move ahead with incorporation.

On July 12, 2015, Gov. Scott Walker signed Wisconsin Act 55 into law. Act 55 created Wis. Stat. § 66.02162, which gives town electors the ability to choose the form of governance that best reflects the needs of the community.

Wis. Stat. § 66.02162 further allows the town board to adopt a resolution that will authorize a referendum vote by all Town electors. The authorizing resolution was approved on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2015. A Nov.

3 referendum is set for final town resident approval.

Short-term impacts minimal

City Community Development Director Scott Kugler said short-term impacts of Windsor becoming a village would be minimal. A joint extraterritorial zoning arrangement between the city and Windsor "would eventually go away."

"I don't know that there would be a big impact early on because all of the provisions of the Cooperative Plan that we negotiated a few years ago would remain in place," he said.

"We also don't have a lot of conflicts with them over land use because the city does not have plans to expand in that direction in any major way," Kugler said.

"Clearly, long-term there could be other issues that arise any time you have shared municipal boundaries," Kugler added, "but the cooperative plan will help to avoid any major development/growth related issues for some period of time."