

Municipal LAW

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August 12, 2021

Mr. Erich Schmidtke
Wisconsin Department of Administration Municipal Boundary Review
101 East Wilson Street
P.O. Box 1645
Madison, WI53701

In Re: Petition for Incorporation of the Village of Tichigan

Dear Erich:

This letter is submitted under the post public hearing 10-day rule. The Village of Watertown has the following comments related to considerations raised during the August 2 2021 Public Hearing:

Section 66.0207(1)(a) Characteristics of territory

Homogeneity – Sense of Community

The Board has always looked to whether the residents of an area demonstrate a sense of community – a cohesive feeling of oneness towards their community. What became evident by the testimony of virtually all town residents was that the opposite exists in the Town. The residents in the southern portion of the Town identify with the Village. The residents in the western portion of the Town identify with the very rural portion of the town that exists there and specifically NOT with the “Tichigan” area around the flowage.

Homogeneity – Public Desire to Incorporate

It was clear that there is no unanimity among town residents regarding the issue of incorporation. About 90% of those town residents that testified were adamantly opposed to incorporation – another example of lack of homogeneity among town residents.

Homogeneity – Trust in Present Governance

The testimony of town residence evinced a serious lack of trust and transparency regarding the Town Board. This distrust of their own governing board is yet another example of disharmony among the people affected – clearly the opposite of homogeneity.

The area proposed for incorporation is not homogenous and compact based on social customs. Tichigan is recognized as an unincorporated place. While the boundaries of "Tichigan" are not specifically defined, social customs indicate that it does not include the entire Town of Waterford. The Tichigan limit signs are located along Big Bend Road/STH 164 just north and south of the small commercial area on Big Bend Road northeast of Tichigan Lake. Residents who live in other parts of the Town clearly do not think of themselves as living in Tichigan based on public comments received at the meeting.

Section 66.0207(1)(b) Territory beyond the core.

Development Potential

It is patently evident that the prospects for development on a substantial scale of the territory beyond the core zero. But as important, public comment from those residing in the territory beyond the core evinced a desire for the status quo. These town residents moved into and live in the area precisely because it is a rural atmosphere and they want that life style to continue. They would actively oppose urban development.

Section 66.0207(2)(a) Tax revenue.

The Town's position related to there being no future impact on tax levy on incorporation is either naïve or disingenuous. The petitioner evidently has no plan for capital improvements and stated that there will be no change in levy. This belies the facts:

- The Town roads are in poor shape.
- The Town is completely reliant on an unaffiliated volunteer fire dept that, to its credit, civic mindedly nearly donates their time and efforts to the Town. With the shortage of volunteers becoming more and more prevalent, there is no guaranty that this volunteer

department will continue to exist long term. If that were to occur, the Town budget for fire and rescue could easily quadruple.

- We learned that the entire Department of Public Works is staffed with only 4 employees handling all functions. It is difficult to understand how this staffing level is sustainable
- If the development on substantial scale would occur (which is not possible) – there is no manner in which the Town could afford to amp up staff and infrastructure to handle the growth.

Section 66.0207(2)(b) Level of services

Since the Town provided no analysis or comparison of level of services, the Board must adopt the information provided by the Village. This clearly demonstrates that the Village is better able to provide level of services needed by all residents.

Section 66.0207(2)(d) Impact on the metropolitan community

The resident testimony alone demonstrated that there will be a negative impact on the metropolitan community if this incorporation were to proceed. Town residents demonstrated interest in becoming part of the Village. There are pending annexation requests of Town property owners seeking urban services to support urban development. The incorporation petition is blocking urban growth in only areas equipped to accommodate it.

Despite protests to the contrary, the only explanation for the Town’s filing of this petition to incorporate is to thwart Village’s efforts to accommodate regional growth.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

electronically signed by H. Stanley Riffle

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