

September 20, 2005

Public Hearing Testimony for Incorporation

Franz Westermeier, 15659 Pilar Road, asked if the Incorporation Committee ^{had} have an opportunity to read the Comprehensive Plan of 1998. Mr. Joselyn indicated that the Comp Plan has been in the hands of the Town Board members since 1998 and others on the Committee were on the Comprehensive Plan Committee, therefore, the Committee was aware of what is in the Comp Plan. Mr. Westermeier indicated he has read the entire Comprehensive Plan again recently and believes there is a contradiction between the desire to incorporate and the Comp Plan. He also helped write the 1980 Comp Plan. Mr. Westermeier stated the MET Council has designated Scandia as permanently rural and does not support extensive development. He also indicated that the requirement for city status was 100 signatures on the petition, but it wasn't mentioned in the report. Mr. Seefeldt responded that 100 signatures on a petition is one way to request incorporation and the other is by a vote of the town board. Mr. Westermeier said additional development would not cover the increase public cost and cause greater taxes. He was also concerned about the environmental impact of more developments and a plan for sewage. Mr. Westermeier believes becoming a city relates to increased development and higher taxes.

Kristin Tuenge, 20595 Quinnell, said there is a lot of experience and wisdom in this group and that change is inevitable. There is no question that incorporation will raise taxes. People value open space and less development. Ms. Tuenge asked why the Town Board and the Committee thinks the timing is now to incorporate.

Dan Willius, 23577 Quentin Ave., thinks incorporation is premature. He read out loud his letter to the editor of the past week's Country Messenger. He believes there is nothing in the Committee's arguments that are reassuring. Mr. Willius said that County oversight is aimed at thoughtful development and can only conclude that the people for incorporation want more development. He said there is no way to measure public feelings on issue, but seems vast majority was ^{not} for incorporation at the first information meeting. He asked why incorporate now. It will lead to unrestrained development. Why not wait until the magic number is reached of a population of 5,000.

Bruce Swenson, 22161 Oldfield Ave., served on the Committee. He said he's been hearing a lot of negative feedback like we've got ours, now don't let anyone else in. The Committee never addressed sewer and water needs as that is all addressed in the Comp Plan. He said it's very easy to be negative about change, but change comes whether we like it or not. He grew up on his road growth plan as that is already in place in the Comp Plan. Mr. Swenson suggested to me the wolf is at the door – look at Wyoming Township. He also hears that we need County oversight, but the County has been giving all these responsibilities back to the townships. For example we now have our own planner and building inspector. He believes the County department will disappear in a few years. The town board and planning commission have brains as anyone does at the County to guide the town. On the question of no public input, the Committee met for 12 months in public meetings and only three people came to the meetings. If some of the concerns expressed now could have been brought up earlier, they could have been addressed.

Jan Carlson, 22085 Kirk Ave., said we all moved here to be in the country. She thinks the County does a good job, but the town can do better. As a city we can do a better job of preserving ruralness. We can deal better with annexation issues and preserve right of control. She is convinced of the need for incorporation now and that the Committee did due diligence in researching the issue.

John Lindell, 11240 218th St. N., handed out a page of additional costs for incorporation. He has calculated the cost of local control over 10 years at \$2,230,600, and asked if user fees would cover all this. He doesn't have any reason to believe these numbers are too low. Mr. Lindell also asked what is meant by "local control". Does it include the people of the township, and if so, then the people don't want to incorporate.

Wayne Schmidt said 40 years ago the town was a bar and a church. Now we have a store, cafe, dentist, insurance, chiropractor and many other businesses. Do we want the town like it was or what it can become? He said it was asked how we would have control over our destiny if we incorporate. Mr. Schmidt said we have control based on our ordinances and state statutes.

Mike White, 13310 188th St. N., believes we have a very capable town board and that taxes are going to go up either way.

Lisa Schlingerman, 20661 Quint Ave., said Mr. Lindell's figures are believable and that is scary to her. She said no one is talking of going back or staying the same; that is a nonissue. To get involved we need to be on the town board or on a committee. But she wants to know why change for change's sake.

Karen Schik, 13860 236th St., said we don't have control now as the people are not allowed a voice. She asked why we couldn't have a vote on this.

Jan Carlson said a lot of people have concerns about costs. She believes it would probably be worthwhile in the end. She didn't think the figures given in the report were significant. Costs shouldn't be a barrier to incorporation.

Tom Krinke, 15510 215th St., said this is a big deal for Scandia and that there are 40 people here tonight. He said we should take a vote tonight to get more input.

Tom Harnetty, was on the Committee and is a town board supervisor, doesn't believe that costs will rise with incorporation. There will be a public accounting firm looking at the numbers before making a final decision to incorporate. Incorporation does not mean increased development. That is determined by the Comp Plan and there is no intention to change the Comp Plan. The intent is to remain a rural community. Becoming a city is no direct link to increased residential or commercial development. Growth will be the same if it is a town or a city.

Nancy Madden, town board supervisor, said incorporation will change our legal status, not our character.

Blair Joselyn, town board supervisor, said the mention of TIF and EDA financing triggers a commercial development discussion. But this doesn't mean we are required to use them; there is no mandate to use these for development purposes.

Mike Hinz, town board supervisor, said the Committee did a great job to cover the issues, some of which were not thought of before.

Dennis Seefeldt, town board supervisor, said he hasn't heard but one person that we never incorporate. The question is to why is now the right time. He doesn't know. But why is now not the right time. It is something you can never know. At the last annual meeting there were only 12 to 13 people here to vote on the budget and levy. People have asked why incorporate now and lose the County road aid of \$25,000, but that is not a given that the aid will continue. In 2001 the state aid was \$199,640. In 2002 it was \$78,000. There were no complaints when taxes went up to cover the aid loss. Mr. Seefeldt said if there are costs the town board is capable of keeping taxes in line. He stated his appreciation for the ten people who dedicated 12 months to study the issue and overwhelmingly voted to incorporate. If not now, the whole process would have to be started over. Mr. Seefeldt believes the benefits outweigh the negatives.

Blair Joselyn related a discussion the Committee had with Christine Scotillo, the Director of the Minnesota Boundary Adjustments Office. One of Ms. Scotillo's comments were that by the time a Town inquires about incorporation, it may already be ten years too late as a result of pent up growth pressures at its boundaries. The Town of Scandia is different in that it is looking ten years into the future. Mr. Joselyn then made a motion that the Board of Supervisors direct the Township Attorney to prepare a resolution on filing for Incorporation as a city for the Board to consider in final form pending the outcome of a detailed fiscal analysis by Springsted, Inc. of both the initial and the long-term financial impacts of New Scandia being incorporated as a city. Further, that the Township Planner be directed to work with Springsted, Inc. to the extent necessary in developing the fiscal impact information, and to also begin work on the "relevant factors" information called for in MN Statutes 414.02 to be utilized in the public hearing on incorporation before an Administrative Law Judge. Findings are the recommendation of the Incorporation Committee, including documents, data and other relevant information developed by the committee. Nancy Madden seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously with five votes for and zero against.

Respectfully submitted,



Colleen Firkus
Treasurer & Planning Commission Secretary