



## TOWN OF WASHINGTON TO PETITION TO INCORPORATE AS A VILLAGE

### *Seeks to Control Its Own Land Use and Prevent Further Annexation*

Town of Washington, Eau Claire County, WI – August 22, 2024 – With overwhelming support from residents across the 54 square miles of the town, the Town of Washington Board of Supervisors today voted unanimously to petition the state to incorporate part of the town as a village in order to control its own land use, establish fixed borders, and prevent ongoing annexations from eroding the Town’s jurisdictional boundaries.

Currently, due to the town form of government, residents of the Town of Washington cannot elect the officials who decide how a significant portion of the town’s land is used. The City of Eau Claire controls land use within three (3) miles of its border. This means that much of the Town of Washington’s land use decisions are made by elected officials from Eau Claire—elected by Eau Claire residents—who may have little or no understanding of the needs and interests of the Town of Washington. The City of Altoona controls the town’s land use within 1.5 miles of its borders.

The vote to petition for incorporation took place after considerable research and significant community input. A recent listening session drew over 200 town residents, where 99% of attendees voiced their support for incorporation so that the potential village can determine how its land is used, plan its own growth, and maintain the natural character of the vibrant community long into the future.

“The Town of Washington has been here for over 150 years, and we want to make sure it’s here for another 150 years. The only way we can ensure that is to become a village so we can control our own land use and development,” said Robert “Bob” Solberg, chair of the Town of Washington’s Board of Supervisors. “Town of Washington residents are heavily invested in ensuring that we grow our area in a way that preserves the beautiful landscape and wonderful community quality we have worked so hard to build and preserve. As a village, the residents will have direct control over how we grow.”

As the third largest municipality in Eau Claire County, the Town of Washington stands as the 12th largest town in Wisconsin. It’s renowned for its natural beauty, charm, strong neighborhoods, and low crime rate. The town’s topography features steep slopes and ridges, rolling hills, as well as lowland areas that all contrast sharply with the City of Eau Claire’s flat terrain.

The Town of Washington, recognized throughout Eau Claire County for being fiscally responsible, is financially stable and debt-free, with ample funds set aside for both planned and emergency capital expenditures. The town actively collaborates with neighboring municipalities to provide shared resources and services that the entire community relies on to thrive.

## *Town of Washington Incorporation*

“Our reputation as a good and collaborative neighbor precedes us, and we’re committed to remaining a great neighbor to the other towns and cities in the region as we move forward through the incorporation process and beyond,” added Solberg.

The Town of Washington has received strong letters of support for its petition from the neighboring Towns of Brunswick, Pleasant Valley, Seymour, and Union, and the Village of Lake Hallie.

The City of Eau Claire has annexed 827.17 acres from the Town of Washington since 2017 and planned high density neighborhoods in traditionally rural areas which conflicts dramatically with the Town of Washington’s Comprehensive Plan. The City of Altoona has annexed 593 acres from the town since 2005.

Given the Wisconsin Department of Administration’s requirements, the town will not be able to incorporate its entire area as a village. If the petition process is successful, the Village of Washington and the new Town of Washington would operate “separately but together,” with shared resources and services, allocating assets and expenses by collaborative agreement much like the Village of Lake Hallie and the Town of Hallie do today, after the successful incorporation in 2004.

The proposed village area is bounded by the Town’s most southern and western boundaries, the City of Eau Claire to the north and Interstate 94 to the east. The estimated population of the village would be 5,240 people, or 65 percent of the Town of Washington’s current population, over double the number required by the State of Wisconsin, and would cover approximately 19.5 square miles, almost five times the area required for incorporation. The proposed village would be part of the Eau Claire school district.

The new Town of Washington would have a population of approximately 2,526 over 34.5 square miles, bounded by the towns of Pleasant Valley, Clear Creek, Lincoln, and Seymour and the cities of Eau Claire and Altoona. The new Town of Washington would be part of the Altoona, Eau Claire, and Fall Creek school districts.

The petition, which requires a resident petitioner and resident alternate petitioner, will be circulated among land-owning electors (US citizens, at least 18 years old, who are residents and own land) in the proposed village area after at least a 10-day period as required by the Wisconsin municipal incorporation [process](#). The petitioners have six months to gather the required signatures. Robert Solberg has initiated the petition and Jackie Vold is the alternate petitioner - both live in the proposed village area.

More information at <https://townofwashington.wi.gov/government/incorporation/>

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