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INTRODUCTION: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1.1 Plan Purpose and Use

The Town of Hancock’s Comprehensive Plan has been developed to establish a strategy for community development while conserving natural resources within the Town. It updates and replaces the *Town of Hancock Community Management Plan (2005)*. Substantial portions of this comprehensive plan are direct carryovers from the community management plan. This was done to preserve the efforts and intent of that document while updating to conform to the requirements set forth by the State of Wisconsin.

The purpose of this comprehensive plan is to provide direction to Hancock’s decision makers on matters related to the use and prosperity of Town resources. It has been prepared under the State of Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning Law under section 66.1001 of the Wisconsin State Statutes to meet all elements and requirements. The law requires that all Town land use decisions be consistent with the plan. It is a working document that is intended to be reviewed and updated as necessary. The review serves as a checkpoint to ensure that the document is providing clear direction and that it remains consistent with community goals, values, and needs.

1.2 Comprehensive Plan Format

This plan is composed of two documents – Volume One and Volume Two. Together, the two volumes contain all information necessary to meet state requirements. The purpose of the two reports is to create a user-friendly plan that separates a majority of the required background material from the Town’s goals, objectives, and recommendations. Generally speaking, Volume One serves as the “guide” for decision making whereas Volume Two provides data and support for actions detailed in Volume One. Specific details are provided below for each volume.

Volume One: “Comprehensive Plan (Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations)”. This volume contains issues, goals, objectives, and recommendations for each of the nine required comprehensive plan elements for implementation over the next twenty years. It describes actions and strategies to achieve the goals and objectives listed in each of the nine planning elements, or chapters, within the plan. This document should be consulted by the Plan Commission and Town Board when managing community resources. It will also be used by Waushara County on matters where a county land use control, such as zoning, is applied to the Town of Hancock. Content was developed and/or assembled by the Town and its consultant.

Volume Two: “Existing Conditions Report”. The second volume of this comprehensive plan contains an analysis of existing conditions within the Town. It provides a series of Census and other empirical data available through local, regional, state, and national sources. These data reveal current findings within the Town and how these compare to other communities, Waushara County, and the State of Wisconsin. These data were primarily used to identify challenges within the community which were addressed in Volume One. The report is a companion document to Volume One and should be used to locate evidence of existing conditions that provide support for recommendations and strategies located in Volume One. Content was developed and/or assembled by East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

1.3 Planning Process

Public input is a fundamental component of any planning process. Public participation is especially important for this document because Hancock’s plan, along with other municipalities in Waushara

County, will comprise the countywide comprehensive plan. This “bottom-up” approach is based on consensus building and plan preparation at the local level. The result is a stronger countywide plan because each locality within the county has the opportunity to identify the issues, needs, and goals that will drive the overall development of the plan. The following formal public participation activities contributed to the development of Hancock’s plan. All public meetings and events were properly noticed.

1. Adoption of a Formal Public Participation Plan
2. Citizen Questionnaire
3. Public Information Meetings (Waushara County)
4. Public Meetings (Waushara County Land Use Committee, Town Committee)
5. Written Comments
6. County Fair Booth
7. Public Hearing

1.3.1 Public Participation Plan

The purpose of the Public Participation Plan is to outline the process and ways in which the public will be invited to participate in developing a comprehensive plan in accordance with 66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The Town of Hancock adopted a Public Participation Plan on September 8, 2008. It is located in Appendix A.

1.3.2 Citizen Questionnaire

The Citizen Questionnaire was completed in the spring of 2002 during the previous land use planning process for the Town of Hancock. 552 questionnaires were mailed out and 209 were returned. This reflects a 38% response rate. Most of the questions in the questionnaire were broken down into three categories based on an individual’s residency status in the Town: resident, part-time, or other. There were 91 respondents who indicated permanent residency, 79 part-time, and 39 others for a total of 209 respondents. Almost half of the respondents who consider themselves residents have lived in Hancock for more than twenty years. Respondents were also asked to describe their principal property by responding to any combination of the following categories: general residence; business/commercial use; recreational land; lake; farmstead; agricultural land without residence; and no response. Because respondents were allowed to mark multiple property descriptions, the total number of responses (269) is more than the total number of surveys returned (209). Of the 269 property type responses, 219 people indicated that their primary property was best described as general residence, recreational land, or lake. About three-quarters (74.6%) of the respondents indicated that there was a home on their property.

Demographic Information

Almost half of respondents that were permanent residents have lived in the Town for over 20 years. Over half of the respondents have owned property for 11 or more years. The age range for respondents were from those under twenty-five to over 65. The largest age group of Town respondents was between the ages of 45-54, followed by those who are 55-64 years of age.

Existing Development

Respondents were asked how they felt about the Town’s residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural development and recreational opportunities. Most respondents indicated that the amount of residential development was about right, but that there was not enough commercial development. Respondents were split about the amount of existing industrial development. Most residents felt that there was not enough industrial development, while part-time dwellers felt that the amount of industrial development was about right. Opinions about the amount of industrial development from respondents in the other category were split. Most respondents

also felt that there was the right amount of agricultural development as well as recreational opportunities.

Land Preservation and Recreational Opportunities

Respondents overwhelmingly supported the protection of environmentally sensitive resources, such as managed forests, wetlands, forestlands, parks and open spaces, the Ice Age Trail, historic/cultural site preservation, public hunting lands, snowmobile trails. Most respondents also felt that farmland should be preserved and the avoidance of conflict between agricultural and residential developments was very important.

Development Issues

A majority of respondents supported single family housing developments while the support for multi-family housing was mixed. 23.4% of respondents supported multi-family housing and 21.5% indicated that they do not support multi-family housing, but accept it. Combining these respondents, 44.9% of respondents accept multi-family housing in some capacity. About the same amount of respondents indicated that they did not support multi-family housing in any capacity (45.9%). The community response for mobile homes in the community is similar to the responses for the question on multi-family housing; respondents were split in their acceptance and opposition to mobile homes.

Almost half of the respondents accepted large livestock operations in some capacity, either by supporting it or by not supporting it but accepting it. In addition, a majority of respondents do not support natural resource extraction in any capacity.

Many respondents indicated that they support small business opportunities for individuals within the Town. In addition, the preservation of farmland and the avoidance of conflicting land uses (i.e. residential/agricultural/industrial) were also found to be important issues. The questionnaire also found that respondents further supported natural resource and farmland preservation efforts by indicating that they supported the promotion of compact residential growth.

Public Services and Facilities

Services and facilities evaluated in the questionnaire were the maintenance and condition of Town roads; snow removal of Town roads; garbage/recycling; County roads; fire protection; law enforcement; public recreational lands; and emergency medical services (ambulance). Public services and facilities were generally ranked above average or acceptable by respondents. Less than 10% of the responses indicated that services and facilities were rated below average. In general, public services and facilities surveyed in the Town appear to be meeting the needs of the community.

1.3.3 Public Information Meetings (Waushara County)

Local residents, interested parties, and non-committee members were encouraged to participate as equals and attend county public information meetings throughout the process. This was the primary public participation method for disseminating progress made on the countywide comprehensive plan. These meetings occurred at key benchmarks in the planning process with one meeting held in each sub area.

1.3.4 Public Meetings (Waushara County Land Use Committee, Town Committee)

A volunteer committee was assembled in the Town of Hancock to assemble the comprehensive plan. All meetings were open to the public and agendas were posted on the Waushara County website, and at the Town Hall. The committee met on an as-needed basis to review plan components and oversee the local planning process.

A representative of the Town of Hancock was invited to sit on the Waushara County Land Use Committee. This Committee oversaw the development of the countywide plan. The intent of having local representatives on the Committee was to ensure local goals and priorities were being addressed in the countywide document. All meetings were publicly noticed and open to the public.

1.3.5 Written Comments

Written comments were solicited throughout the process. Members of the public who had comments were asked to submit them to any local or county official, the UW-Extension agent assigned to this process, or the consultant. Comments received were provided to committee members for review and discussion.

1.3.6 Public Hearing

A public hearing was held on October 12, 2009 to solicit comments pertaining to the content of the Town of Hancock Comprehensive Plan. This meeting was preceded by a Class 1 Public Notice. Additionally, drafts of the comprehensive planning document were sent to all overlapping and adjacent jurisdictions (including Waushara County, ECWRPC, etc.), the Wisconsin Department of Administration, and the Hancock Public Library.

1.4 20-Year Vision

The following 20-Year Vision Statement has been developed to guide future development and resource management activities in the Town of Hancock over the next twenty-year planning period. This vision statement was originally developed for the *Town of Hancock Community Management Plan (2005)* and continues to describe the Town's overall vision and statement of values.

Residents of the Town of Hancock enjoy the quiet rural character and small town attributes provided by the area's blend of natural and cultural resources. Town residents would like to prepare a plan that will preserve these positive attributes which contribute to the quality of life, while providing for sustainable economic growth for future generations.

The vision of the Town of Hancock land use plan is quite simply, to preserve the positive aspects of rural living that residents now enjoy, and to provide guidance for responsible and attractive future growth which respects the Town's quality of life.

1.5 Key Demographic Findings and Projections

The following section identifies the key demographic findings and projections for the Town of Hancock. A complete listing of demographic information can be located in the *Town of Hancock Comprehensive Plan Volume Two: Existing Conditions Report*.

Demographic Trends

- Over the past fifty years, the population of the Town of Hancock has remained fairly stable.
- The population decreased from 480 in 1950 to 346 in 1970 before starting a gradual increase to 531 in 2000.
- Migration has played a greater role in population change in Waushara County than natural increase between 1950 and 2005.
- Since natural increase rates were negative, the entire increase in population in Waushara County since 1990 can be attributed to in-migration.
- Population density in the Town of Hancock was less than the county average (37 persons per square mile) and the state (82 persons per square mile), with an average of 16 persons per square mile.

Household Structure

- Household size for the Town of Hancock, Waushara County and the state has been decreasing since 1970.
- The Town of Hancock had an average household size of 2.6 in 1990, and then dropped slightly to 2.5 in 2000.
- In 1990 and 2000, the majority of households for the Town of Hancock were family households, and the majority of family households were married couple families.
- The population in the town is less diverse than that of the county and state. In 2000, whites comprised 96.8 percent of the Town of Hancock and Waushara County's population compared to 88.9 percent of the state's population.

Income Levels

- Access to earning opportunities is a strong determinant in meeting the income needs of residents in the Town of Hancock, Waushara County and Wisconsin.
- The State of Wisconsin maintained higher median family and per capita incomes than Waushara County and the Town of Hancock for both 1989 and 1999.
- Over eighty percent of households in the Town of Hancock reported incomes below \$75,000 in 1999.
- Between 1989 and 1999, both the number and percentage of persons living below the poverty threshold declined in the Town of Hancock, Waushara County and Wisconsin. In spite of the decline in poverty, 3.7 percent of Town of Hancock residents still lived below the poverty line in 1999.
- In 1989, 13.6 percent of children in the Town of Hancock lived in poverty, compared to 11.1 percent of the elderly. By 1999, the share of children living in poverty in the Town of Hancock had decreased to no children living in poverty, while the share of elderly living in poverty had decreased to 8.1 percent.

Population Forecasts

- The Town of Hancock is expected to grow by 24.3 percent between 2000 and 2030.
- Waushara County population projections by age cohort indicate that the number of county residents age 65 and older may almost double between 2000 and 2030, while the number of children may decline by 21 percent.

Household Forecasts

- Based on projected growth patterns and smallest average household size assumptions, the number of households in Waushara County is expected to increase by 28.9 percent between 2000 and 2030. It is anticipated that the number of households in the Town of Hancock may increase by 37.0 percent during this same time period (211 to 289).