

Town of Tainter Post Survey

Information Pertaining to Survey and Comments

Wisconsin State Statutes require comprehensive plans be reviewed and updated every ten years. The Town of Tainter Board Members and Tainter Plan Commission Members want to thank everyone who completed our recent town survey. We had a fantastic response rate with about 50% of the surveys returned. The primary purpose of the survey was to collect your thoughts on how we should plan for future growth and development as we work to update the Town of Tainter Comprehensive Plan over the next two years.

We would also like to thank those who answered Question 29 which asked for additional comments. We read all your comments and appreciate your thoughts. The Tainter Survey summary, which can also be viewed on the Tainter web site, includes common themes identified in those comments. Perhaps the biggest takeaway from your comments is we need to explore better ways of keeping you informed on issues.

In light of trying to keep you better informed, we want to take a moment to address some of the survey comments/common themes. Many comments we received fall outside of our jurisdiction, that is, we simply lack the legal ability to act. For example, we have no jurisdiction over state or county roads. The condition and maintenance responsibilities for those roads lie with the state and county. However, we do work with the state and county if issues arise but ultimately have no say in their decisions. Similarly, the town and county are restricted by Wisconsin State Statutes such as what we can impose under shoreland zoning regulations (areas that lie within 1,000 feet of shoreline). Likewise, bodies of water and wetlands are regulated by the Department of Natural Resources. While we may lack the ability to act, we certainly keep your concerns in mind as we work with these other agencies.

As to common themes specifically mentioned in the survey summary:

- **Many survey comments mentioned cleaning up Tainter Lake, improving water quality, and/or dredging areas where the rivers flow into the Lake.**

Lake improvement has been an issue for many years and is an ongoing work in progress. There have been many initiatives to clean up the lake over the years and some survey comments indicated we may be seeing improvement. Summer algae bloom is primarily attributed to phosphorous levels in the water and cleanup efforts center around reducing those phosphorous levels. The challenging part is keeping phosphorous out of the water that flows into the lake since the lake is fed by a watershed area covering a large portion of northwest Wisconsin. Some initiatives to help with this problem include removing phosphorous from lawn fertilizers, establishing natural vegetative buffers along shorelines to help reduce runoff into the water, modifying upriver sewage treatment plants to reduce phosphorous output, and educating farmers and waterfront owners about water runoff prevention.

Dredging where rivers flow into the lake will take funding and a coordinated effort with other agencies. A majority of lakes in Wisconsin face problems of some type and funding for projects is very competitive. Our local Tainter Menomin Lake Improvement Association is involved and dedicated to fixing lake issues associated with the entire watershed area. Their web page (<http://www.tmlia.org>) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/TMLIA/>) are a great source of information and we encourage you to also become involved with them as they work the problems from the entire watershed area perspective.

- **Many surveys indicated a lack of high-speed internet in the Town of Tainter.**

Lack of high-speed internet is a problem for rural areas throughout Wisconsin. Legislators are working this issue and potential solutions take many different forms. The latest Wisconsin budget proposal once again includes spending on broadband communications. However, the cost to lay fiber optic cable (the current preferred means of high-speed internet connection) is very high and grant money goes to areas that will serve the most people for the least amount of money. A new grant initiative proposed in the upcoming Wisconsin budget is to provide financial assistance up to \$4,000 per eligible household to subsidize the cost of line extension from existing broadband infrastructure to a residence that lacks 25/3 Mbps service. Getting broadband to the more rural areas is similar to the problems faced in getting electricity and telephone to rural areas way back when. Surprisingly, only 14.92% of Tainter residents indicated high speed internet service was not available at their location. The good news for all of us is technology improvements may be part of the solution to service and costs. Much faster cell phone data transmission rates are on the horizon and you can now use cell phones as a means of connecting your computers to the internet. You may even see people start dropping their hard line internet service and going with a single cellular service that provides both phone and internet.

- **Survey responses showed concern about the loss of the transfer station and had questions about future solid waste services.**

Changing Town of Tainter solid waste and transfer services is something that unfolded quickly. In July 2020, towns in Dunn County began looking for alternatives to the cost increase of Dunn County services. When some towns pulled out of Dunn County services, the county program was no longer feasible, and the county terminated their waste service program. The Town Board worked this issue during their fall meetings with final arrangements as to locations and times for disposal being determined in late November. A flyer addressing the new waste services was posted on the web page in early December, long after most surveys were returned.

- **Many comments indicated a need for a noise ordinance.**

As with any ordinance a town adopts, establishing standards that can be measured, enforced, and constitutional is difficult. Dunn County does regulate noise somewhat and our residents have called the sheriff with noise complaints. Part of the problem is defining what is noise and how to measure it. Noise can be below certain decibel levels but still be annoying. And what is annoying to one may be music or commerce to others. Establishing

noise level standards that are measurable and enforceable is a problem in communities that try to regulate noise. In Tainter we do not have any law enforcement officials that enforce town ordinances. Proposals for a town enforcement official have been discussed but were found to be not ideal or possible.

- **Numerous surveys wanted to improve lake access.**

All public boat accesses and parks in the Town of Tainter are owned and maintained by Dunn County. The Town of Tainter does not have any improved accesses to the lake. Under Wisconsin Statutes, some lakeshore developments were required to provide a narrow strip of land dedicated to the public that allows them lake access. Developers typically dedicated minimum sized, narrow strips located in the least desirable locations to the town to satisfying this public access requirement. Consequently, the limited number of narrow lake access locations under town jurisdiction can generally be characterized as having features undesirable when considering making improvements, such as steep slopes/drop-offs to the lake and small acreage that presents parking issues. If you have thoughts or proposals on improving town lake accesses, please attend a Plan Commission so we may better understand and discuss those issues.

- **Many surveys indicated a desire to have no wake areas.**

In 2007, the Tainter Menomin Lake Association proposed an ordinance that established the current slow no wake areas along three narrow channels located in the Town of Tainter. State law required this slow no wake ordinance be coordinated between the Town of Menomonie, Town of Red Cedar, Town of Sherman, Town of Tainter, and the DNR. Under the Town of Tainter ordinance agreement, the Tainter Menomin Lake Association is responsible for placing and maintaining the slow no wake buoys. Enforcement is primarily handled by the DNR. The public did express some opposition to establishing no wake areas during the ordinance public hearings. Under state law, any changes to the current no wake ordinance, including changes to the no wake locations or adding additional areas, will have to be a coordinated effort by the same agencies that worked the original no wake ordinance.

- **Increased trails and routes were often mentioned with most pertaining to ATV's and hiking.**

The Tainter ATV Ordinance was passed in October 2020 allowing ATVs to operate on town roads. The ordinance stipulates that signing and maintenance will be done by the Dunn County ATV/UTV Association. Once signs are placed, ATV/UTVs can legally operate on town roads.

More hiking trails/walkways in the town is on our minds but providing them is more difficult. Costs, locations, and maintenance are just some of the issues. We have entertained proposals to make streets wider allowing for a wider bike/walking path on the road edge. Widening a standard 22-foot road by just 3 feet increases construction costs by at least 15% when you factor in base, ditching, tree removals, additional asphalt, etc. With current road re-pavement costs of about \$125,000 per mile, a rough estimate is it would cost at least \$18,000 per mile of road to make the road just 3 feet wider. Widening county roads or constructing walkways along county roads falls under county jurisdiction. We

continue to search for and are open to ideas that better provide for walking/hiking activity. Some towns in Dunn County were able to convert abandoned railroads to trails but we haven't found such opportunities in Tainter yet.

We appreciated receiving all your survey comments - they help us as we conduct business and update our comprehensive plan. The public is welcome to present inputs for our updated comprehensive plan at our regular Plan Commission meetings.

You are also welcome to attend Town Board and Plan Commission meetings to learn of happenings in our town. The Town Board normally meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:00pm. The Plan Commission normally meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. Special events may cause meeting dates and times to change. You can visit the Town of Tainter web site www.townoftainter.org to view agendas which will include the meeting place, date and time.