



TOWN OF WASHINGTON ♦ EAU CLAIRE COUNTY, WISCONSIN
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June 8, 2022

Dear Eau Claire City Council Members,

The Town of Washington writes to express its strong opposition to the Stewart/Hauge annexation petition, and urges the City not to annex that territory.

The Orchard Hills subdivision to be placed on the Stewart land was proposed in the Town of Washington, approved by the City of Eau Claire per plat review jurisdiction, and approved by the Town Board based on consistency with its Comprehensive Plan.

The Town certainly understands that Eau Claire County is growing. All communities in the County must work toward addressing the challenges associated with that rapid growth. To that end, the City and Town have collaborated to address the needs and desires of each respective community. For instance, the 2011 Intergovernmental Agreement between the City and its surrounding towns, which was renewed in 2021, has worked well in allowing all parties to work towards their own planning goals. Additionally, the Town has generally supported truly unanimous annexation petitions, and the City has generally only considered unanimous annexation petitions for Town of Washington territory.

The Stewart/Hauge annexation is incorrectly labeled as “unanimous.” The parkland that makes up a significant portion of the proposal is owned by Eau Claire County, and the County has not joined in the request for annexation. Thus, any annexation ordinance would be legally invalid and only complicate matters further.

More importantly, annexing the Stewart/Hauge territory would irreparably fracture the relationship between the City and Town. Annexing the territory now would cut against the collaborative efforts between the City and Town that has worked well in recent history.

Not only that, but the lengths the City is going to annex the territory undermines the parties’ current intergovernmental agreement. The Town made concessions in that agreement to allow the City more control in areas of its extra-territorial jurisdiction that are part of the City’s sewer service area. That agreement specifically recognized that:

[A]reas outside the SSA, but within the ETJ, are not anticipated to be annexed or connected to the City of Eau Claire’s public utilities within the term of this Agreement. Development in these areas is expected to be served by individual private septic systems and wells for the foreseeable planning future. Development in these areas will be regulated primarily by the comprehensive plans and applicable ordinances of the respective Town and County.

This understanding was a critical element to the Town agreeing to the intergovernmental agreement. Indeed, the Town amended its own comprehensive plan to accommodate that agreement. Despite the City's previous representations to the contrary, it now seeks to amend its own comprehensive plan, amend its sewer service area, and annex territory in areas that were supposed to be regulated by the Town. If the City goes through with these actions, it would eliminate all trust between the Town and City, and any incentive the Town has to work with the City.

The Town hopes that the collaborative relationship between the City and Town is allowed to continue. However, approving the Stewart/Hauge petition ensures that will not be the case. The Town implores the City to reject the Stewart/Hauge annexation petition.

Sincerely,

Micheal Peterson
Town of Washington Chairperson