

PROTECT AND PRESERVE:

**A Plan For the Town of Chicog
Washburn County, WI**

Updated and Revised, May 2023

General Direction

The original plan which we are here updating was too long, contained too much and now outdated background material, and too many recommendations and unachievable deadlines. Without jettisoning the original plan, we determined to start over from scratch and produce a simple new plan in a few pages. The updated original remains and serves as a reference for demographic and other data. Recommendations in the new Plan supersede and render invalid recommendations in the original.

Explanation of Goal And Rationale For Planning

Protect and Preserve: Why We Call It “God’s Country”

Here, in the North Country, we are privileged to live in a land that is in almost total contrast to those places in which most people find they must live.

It is a land of forests and yet pristine lakes.

Here we find biodiversity. At night one can hear the bark of the fox, the call of the great horned owl, the singing of the coyotes and, occasionally, one can see a timber wolf. Bears live here alongside us. Countless other animal species enrich our land: otter and osprey, bass and bluegill, the pine family—Reds, Whites, Jacks, and Balsam fir, plus we have Red Oaks, Aspens, Maples, and Birches. The great eagle and the great blue heron are fellow citizens here, as is the little green heron, the Canada Goose, and the Loon. Chipmunks and chattering red squirrels, porcupines, and so many others. The White Tail deer come right up to the cabin. The Town of Chicog is a paradise of biodiversity.

Here one can see the sunlight dancing off the waves, and at night, the Northern Lights. We still have dark skies where we can pick out the stars. We have wild rivers for canoe and kayak trips. On quiet winter nights the bright moon illuminates the bare trees, and we can track the ruffed grouse in the snow.

Here, too, are opportunities for recreation: fishing, water-skiing, pontooning in the evening when the No Wake rule comes into play. Hunting in the fall. Summer picnics and parties. Bird watching. Cross-country skiing, and the mesmerizing spell of sitting on a bucket on the ice and staring down a hole. The pace of life is slower here. Lake Associations watch over the quality of the waters.

This little Town of Chicog, located up in the North Country, is a precious haven in a greater land too busy, too noisy, too over-lit at night. Here recreation means re-creation of our spirits. This is what we want to preserve and protect to the seventh generation and so we offer this comprehensive plan to ensure the quality of life for the present and future.

Why We Plan

Planning is nothing more than looking ahead. As our mothers taught us, “Look before you leap.”

Major changes are already underway including climate deterioration and large-scale campground development among others. We need to be prepared for them.

We plan to better serve our citizens.

We plan to head off unwanted change and to encourage positive change.

We plan in order to be proactive, to meet unwanted problems before they get out of control,

rather than being reactive after it's too late.

We plan to keep the character of our Town "Northwoods."

We plan to ensure our fishing and hunting rights and opportunities.

We plan to keep our lakes clear and healthy for water sports.

Process and Recommendations

Then Town Chairman, Patrick Wilcox, noted that our Comprehensive Plan was over twenty years old, was too long and as a result had been shelved and neglected. He appointed a Planning Committee to update and revise it. The Committee consisted of the following members.

Scott Pahos

Lori Krings

Wendy Streiff

Brad Harrison

Louis Columbus

Kent Shifferd, Chair

The Committee aimed to produce a concise and more useable plan, of no more than a few pages. The Committee worked for eight months. While the Committee kept elements of the Old Plan, we brought those up to date and then started anew with a SWOT Analysis and finished with 24 recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. These are grouped under seven headings: Energy Efficiency and Independence, Toxics, Biodiversity, Land Use, Invasive Species, Communication and Security. We did not specify deadlines for the initiation or completion of the recommended projects but recommend that Biodiversity and Energy Independence and Efficiency should have high priority.

The Seven General Headings

Recommendations: there are 24 recommendations under the headings of Energy Efficiency and Independence, Toxics, Biodiversity and Pollinator Protection, Land Use, Invasive Species, Communications, and Security. The rationales for these are as follows.

Energy Efficiency and Independence: The various methods suggested here for upgrading the building's R value will save money and reduce our carbon footprint, as will the solar array. We believe these will have relatively short payback periods. They also show our commitment to doing our part to head off the serious effects of uncontrolled

global climate deterioration, which, among other things will likely result in failures of the grid to supply electricity consistently.

Toxics: This is a no brainer. We need to protect our own people as they work in the kitchen and clean the Hall, as well as prevent such materials getting into the environment. Note, we consider plastics and Styrofoam to be toxics.

Biodiversity; Pollinator Protection: Biodiversity is the hallmark of our Northwoods ecosystem and is one of the main reasons people live here and come here for vacations. Biodiversity is in rapid and dangerous decline throughout the world, and it can only be saved place by place. This is our plan to protect the values that make us a unique place and that includes pollinator protection. Over 40 percent of our food supply depends on pollinators which include not only bees but also butterflies and moths. Dragonflies hold down the mosquitoes. As biologists observe, without insects the world would be dramatically different and degraded.

Land Use: The nature, extent and siting of human infrastructure including homes, campgrounds, businesses, parks, roads, etc. directly affect the quality of life and must be coordinated so as to promote the vision of Chicog as a rural, Northwoods community as described in the section, “Preserve and Protect.” Regulation of this infrastructure is designed to protect the common good for this and future generations.

Invasive Species: Our waters are the principle reason people come here for recreation. Zebra Mussels, Eurasian Milfoil, Spiny Water Flea and other invasives ride on boats coming in off the landings.

Communications: In order to provide harmony and information essential to all aspects of the community is essential to open avenues of communication to and from cottagers, the local press, other levels of government and volunteer citizen organizations.

Security: Principally focused on forest fires, this section also contains recommendations to assist volunteer organizations who care for the elderly and others in need.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Retired population available for enhancing civic life
- Well-organized and effective Town government
- Relatively new Town Hall and outbuildings
- Emergency services
 - Volunteer fire department
 - Local EMTs
 - Contracted ambulance service
- Large group of retired persons available for civic participation

Vital civic life

Walkabout, Angels On Our Shoulders, Firewise, Hunter's Feed,
Emergency Response Team, etc.

Good road system

CAFO ordinance

No wake ordinance

Brush Depository

Two strong Lake Associations

Low crime rate

WEAKNESSES

Limited by County and State (preemption)

Total reliance on fossil fuels

Understaffed volunteer fire department

Abuse of roads by ATVs

Weak internet access

Little communication between Town government and weekenders

Lack of enforcement powers

Insufficient health and transportation services

Absence of jobs that pay well

Climate Deterioration (no planning)

likelihood of extreme events including forest fires and torrential rains,
loss of wildlife habitat, eutrophication of lakes (algae slimes)

Habitat Deterioration

Light pollution and loss of dark skies, noise pollution, loss of beneficial
roadside ecosystems, wake boats eroding shorelines and endangering other users
of the water ways

Inappropriate Development

Industrial-like structures, large "campgrounds"

Aging population

OPPORTUNITIES

Move toward renewable energy (esp. Town buildings)

Encourage pollinators

Garden at Town Hall, creative roadside management

Create a Lake Advisory Committee (as per Town of Minong)

Install more zebra mussel cleaning stations

Create an effective (volunteer) education program on how to live
in the North Country (as per Twin Lakes Preservation Association)

Develop a forestry regeneration plan that reflects the trends in climate change

Develop a subdivision ordinance that prohibits developments of high density
"campgrounds" on lake shores and elsewhere

THREATS

Exotic invasive species

Japanese knotweed, zebra and quagga mussels, curly leaf pondweed,
Eurasian milfoil, spiny water flea,

Light and noise pollution

Climate deterioration including: Increased danger of forest fires

Eutrophication of lakes accelerated leading to algae blooms, loss of fisheries,
 Overdevelopment consequent on incomers escaping SW drought extreme
 Heat and threats to electric power availability

Toxic chemicals

CAFOs

Loss of roadside berry patches

Loss of fire department

Wake Boats causing erosion and eutrophication

High density park model subdivisions

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

I. ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND INDEPENDENCE

- 1. Replace all windows with high R-value windows and replace seals around exterior doors.**

Time Frame: Fall, 2023

- 2. Install a ground-based solar array to provide electricity to the Town Hall. [Maintain connection to the grid and maintain the diesel generator as backup.]
 Rationale: Saving energy saves money. Enhanced reliability during power outages. Supporting material in Appendix**
- 3. Consider adding an air-lock front entrance.**
- 4. Replace fluorescents in Town Hall with LEDs.**

II. TOXICS

- 1. Inventory and replace toxic cleaning materials and non-biodegradable products including Styrofoam with organics.**
- 2. Encourage organic and natural farming.**

III. BIODIVERSITY; POLLINATOR PROTECTION

- 1. Authorize a pollinator garden at the Town cemetery site to be created and maintained by volunteers.**
- 2. Authorize purchasing and planting bird-friendly shrubs at Town Hall site. (by volunteers)**
- 3. Alter roadside mowing to encourage pollinators. by either: mowing only after the wildflowers have bloomed, mowing only 6 feet back, mowing only every other year.**
- 4. Investigate a managed growth plan for Town woodlots to increase biodiversity.**

IV. LAND USE

- 1. Consult with Attorney re: enacting a Permitting Agreement governing the permitting of Campgrounds in the Town of Chicog in order to determine what restrictions can be applied to campgrounds. [See one possible proposal at bottom.]**

2. Pursue the CAFO ordinance with the County Boards Agricultural Committee.

V. INVASIVE SPECIES

1. Monitor and control invasive species including Buckthorn, Japanese Knotweed, purple loosestrife, etc. <https://florence.extension.wisc.edu/files/2017/02/Invasive-Updates-Page.pdf> for a complete list.)
2. Establish decontamination stations at all boat landings.

VI. COMMUNICATION

1. Authorize a citizen-based Lakes Committee, made up of representatives of each lake, to keep the Board informed of lake conditions.
2. Replace the Planning Committee with a permanent Planning Commission to oversee implementation of the Plan.
3. Hold Quarterly Saturday listening sessions during cabin season and encourage citizens to use the suggestion box at the front of the building.
4. Make a Board member available upon invitation to attend Lake Association Meetings.
5. Board member to attend County Board meetings.
6. Liaise with the Spooner Advocate Chicog News column (provide meeting minutes and other pertinent information).
7. Create a new refrigerator magnet poster with current emergency numbers and Phone number of the Town Hall and url of Town's webpage.

VII. SECURITY

1. Publicize the laws regarding fireworks permits.
2. Cooperate and facilitate with citizen organizations (e.g., Angels On Our Shoulders, ESG, Firewise, C.A.I.S.C.)
3. Improve greater access to public transportation.
4. Maintain fire department in peak readiness.

Respectfully submitted June, 2023.

Kent Shifferd, Chair

Louis Columbus

Brad Harrison

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