

VAN VLIET LAKE ASSOCIATION

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October 1, 2002

Hon. Jack Harrison
Town Chairman
Town of Presque Isle
Presque Isle, WI 54557

Hon. Marshall H. Reckard
Supervisor
Town of Presque Isle
Presque Isle, WI 54557

Hon. Charles Hayes
Supervisor
Town of Presque Isle
Presque Isle, WI 54557

Subject: Presque Isle Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gentlemen:

I am writing to report on a just completed survey of the members of the VanVliet Lake Association. I am President of the VanVliet Lake Association and have corresponded both with Chairman Harrison and Mr. Dillenbeck earlier on the unanimous opposition by the members of the Van Vliet Lake Association to the Land Use Plan as it was presented at the June meeting in Presque Isle.

After the present version of the plan was presented, the Board of the Association directed that I contact owners on Van Vliet Lake and members of the Association regarding a proposed amendment to the plan. The proposed amendment is based on a discussion with Mr. Williams of Foth & VanDyke as a potential solution to the issue.

We have polled the membership of the Association and there is overwhelming support for an amendment to the current plan. That amendment is based primarily on the fact that the plan does not recognize the near total residential use and character of Van Vliet Lake. The result of the survey is 74 in favor of the proposed amendment, 1 opposed to the proposal and I who would like to see a modification. Given the short time to generate a response to the plan, it is my opinion that this is a very significant statement of support for the amendment and opposition to the plan as it currently stands. With the amendment, there is support for the plan.

Both the earlier and the present plans propose that Van Vliet Lake have a designation of "Residential B". Only 5 lakes in the Town are targeted for "Residential B" status. Since this designation allows for expanded uses beyond those in "Residential A", we believe that the designation is clearly not in the best interests of the property owners on VanVliet. It will target VanVliet for these expanded uses.

Specifically, the following "B" uses exceed those in "A" - Resorts, Bed & Breakfasts, Eating and drinking establishments, Retail sales and service, Nature/Interpretive Center.

Our primary objectives for Van Vliet Lake are:

1. Preserving the residential nature of the lake;
2. Preserving the ability of Alpine Resort to continue operations;
3. Preserving property values;
4. Preserving the environment of the lake;
5. Allowing the continuance of guest apartments;
6. Allowing the continuance of home occupations.

In addition, we earlier sought the following on behalf of several landowners:

1. Allowing individuals to keep horses so long as they didn't negatively impact on the lake environment;
2. Allowing for the potential for some unknown future commercial activity on Novak's Island.

At its special meeting in June, the Association voted to seek a special zoning district such as that at Crab Lake to achieve our objectives. We now understand that this is an unlikely outcome.

The Board of the Association also requested a meeting with the Land Use Planning Committee. The Land Use Planning Committee chose not to meet with us. This is unfortunate in that it did not provide us a chance to exchange ideas. Since the Association represents a large membership on the lake, it would have been a great opportunity to try to work out the differences with a representative organization.

Map 9-1 of the Land Use Plan identifies the current uses on Van Vliet Lake. All of the uses identified are single-family residential with the exception of the Alpine Resort property (Novak's Island is not identified but is being used as a residence). Depending upon how one makes the count, this is approximately 73 of the 75 parcels on the lake which are identified as single-family residential on the map.

Van Vliet Lake is not near the commercial center of Presque Isle, and there are no retail operations located on or near it. Alpine Resort is the only commercial operation. Retail operations away from the Village and in proximity to VanVliet Lake have failed. The former grocery store, gift shop, repair shop and gasoline station on Hwy P along Presque Isle Lake are all long gone. I am unaware of any attempt to revive those businesses, and they are on a thoroughfare which is far more amenable to retail activities

than any of the town roads in the Van Vliet Lake area. All representatives of the planning process with whom I have discussed the retail issue have indicated their thoughts that any retail activity is highly unlikely to succeed in the Van Vliet area. Although it does make sense to allow for retail near the current commercial center of the Town, it does not make sense to encourage it on Van Vliet Lake. A plan which encourages uses which will not work is not in the best interests of the Town.

Likewise, the potential for additional resorts on Van Vliet is scant. Given the current zoning requirements, it would require that several parcels be assembled adjacent to one another so that any size of resort could be built. The current valuation of properties makes this highly unlikely. This is even more true when one considers the number of resorts which have gone out of business in the Town recently. Three of these were located close by -- on Presque Isle Lake. One can only assume that the businesses were not generating sufficient income to continue them particularly when one considers the underlying value of the land' on which they were located.

Well, then, why should we worry? A couple of statements taken directly from the Land Use Plan highlight our concerns.

While discussing "Lake shore Residential A" on page 12-2, the following statement appears:

" . . . The occurrence of a few existing commercial uses within the classification are acknowledged and will continue; however, new commercial uses should be limited to protect the property values and character of the existing residential uses. New resorts and bed and breakfast establishments are not preferred." (emphasis added)

And, again on page 12-2:

"These properties should be developed and improved to minimize their impacts on the natural shoreline aesthetics, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and other public natural resource values of the lakes. Property owners should be encouraged to go "beyond" the minimum restrictions by increasing the setback distance of new structures, minimizing the amount of impermeable surfaces (roof, pavement) to limit runoff, and minimizing shoreline vegetation clearing. Other uses of these properties should be limited as protection for the high property values of these lake residences."(emphasis added)

On page 12-4 where "Lake shore Residential B" is discussed, there is absolutely no mention made of "protecting property values" or "protection for the high property values of these lake residences" as is discussed for those properties in the "Lakeshore Residential A" category. By its own statement, the Plan recognizes the need to protect some property values but not others. This would appear to be fundamentally unfair to the property owners on Van Vliet Lake. However, even that might make sense if Van Vliet Lake were located in the center of the Village of Presque Isle. It is not; it has no major highway access; it has no existing retail; it has 97% of its current ownership in single-family residential use. The planned designation for Van Vliet Lake is not grounded either

in fairness or in economic reality. And it has overwhelming opposition by the property owners.

A proposal that does make sense is to designate all of Van Vliet Lake as "Residential A" in the plan with the exception of Alpine Resort which should be designated as "Residential B". There is authority for this kind of planning as can be seen in the plans for the Town of Manitowish Waters, the Town of Plum Lake, and others. I have confirmed this point in a discussion with Mr. John Williams.

This proposal addresses the vast majority of the concerns raised by the property owners at the VanVliet Lake special meeting held in June. If statements made to me by several involved in the planning process about the highly unlikely nature of development on the lake come true, the Plan as amended would more accurately represent a real potential land use plan for the Town. It would not have the negative impact on property values (and assessed valuations?) which is clearly implied in the current Plan.

I would submit to you that a plan which creates options with little chance of success and which is opposed by the people impacted is a bad plan. Our proposed change could make that plan a good plan.

Once again, I would urge you to listen to the overwhelming opinions stated by the owners on Van Vliet Lake. With 74 of 76 opinions clearly against anything other than a use consistent with "Residential A" (except for the resort), it is pretty easy to predict what the attitudes would be when any conditional use permits would be proposed for activities beyond "Residential A" uses. One can safely predict opposition to every non-residential use ever proposed for Van Vliet Lake. The owners support Presque Isle's claim to be "Wisconsin's Last Wilderness". That is why we own in Presque Isle. The owners on Van Vliet have no interest in becoming an area of commercial and retail development.

I urge you to amend the plan as follows:

- Redesignate all of the property on Van Vliet Lake to "Residential A" except Alpine Resort which would stay as "Residential B".

I would be happy to discuss these ideas and this proposal with you at any time.

Very truly yours

Tom Olson

Cc: Van Vliet Lake Association Board of Directors