



Waunakee Rotary Club

Aug. 18, 2005
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What makes Waunakee such a special place with relatively low taxes?

Village Board President John Laubmeier tried to provide some answers at the Aug. 11 Rotary Club meeting.

Partly, John said, Waunakee's spirit of volunteerism saves taxpayer dollars.

Waunakee's EMS and fire department are entirely volunteer, and service club projects such as the Rotary Plaza provide amenities. The village also has a lower rate of municipal employees per capita than other communities. The growing business park, which brings in value with little demand for services, also contributes. And high-value homes create tax base. Because those families are older, they demand less from the school district.

John described Waunakee's growth policy as the "great middle way" between uncontrolled growth and no growth at all. Waunakee has adopted a quota system, allowing an average between 120 and 125 lots to come on line each year.

That growth is increasingly important in light of new levy freezes imposed by the state legislature. Municipalities are now limited to a 2 percent levy increase – or an increase reflecting the rate of growth.

People mainly call John with concerns about traffic, he said, although they should really be calling the Department of Transportation about those issues. One major need was for a left-turn signal at Main Street and North Century Avenue, and John reported that the signal is in; it just isn't operating yet.

The village has taken on a pay-as-you-go policy to street improvements and is planning another collector between Woodland Drive and Hwy. Q that will be built as growth occurs in the south area of the village. Through changes in budgeting, Waunakee built its cash balance from zero nine years ago to 20 percent of its budget.

Although street improvements are planned, John said the North Mendota Parkway is "going nowhere fast."

The village has tried to expand bike trails and recently was awarded a \$2.1 million grant for a trail between Gov. Nelson State Park and Schumacher Farm Park.

The key to low tax rates, John said, is pro-

moting business growth and development. Waunakee's facade improvement program has provided dollar-for-dollar funding up to \$5,000 Main Street business improvements. Waunakee has also passed an ordinance limiting stores to 75,000 square feet – 2 1/2 times the size of Waunakee's Piggy Wiggle – to discourage big box retailers. It is now looking at an ordinance limiting them to 50,000 square feet, yet making an exception for larger stores up to 75,000 if they comply with specific guidelines.

Waunakee has also had the foresight to protect against less desirable businesses. It adopted what John called an appropriately named SOB ordinance, restricting sexually oriented businesses.

John also hears concern about TIF (Tax Incremental Finance) districts. Currently, there are 1,100 such districts in the state of Wisconsin. Waunakee's Stokely TIF district was successful, John said. The site of the former Stokely canning factory, which was home to rats, foxes and other vermin, now accommodates a water retention pond, a senior/community center and a multi-million dollar senior housing building. Summit and Wisconsin School Music Association are other examples of good TIF projects in Waunakee.

John stressed that TIFs don't spend tax dollars. They allow the village to borrow money and use it to improve properties. The improved value generates tax dollars used to pay back the loan. Once the loan is repaid, the municipality reaps the tax increment.

Several new facilities are planned for the village, including the community center, three new tennis courts and a recreational area off of Hogan Road which could accommodate an indoor hockey rink, a skateboard park and possibly a swimming pool.

Mostly, John said, it is important that citizens are involved with village government. He urged the club members to attend village meetings and express their views.

Other items:

•The following members need to have their photograph taken for the directory: Jeff Bernstein, Kevin Even, Kevin Fischer, Danny Miller, Ted Pertzborn and Dick Pilsner. Please contact Mike Fehrenbach at 849-7729

OFFICERS

GREG GARTON, PRESIDENT • DREW LAWRENCE, PRESIDENT-ELECT
SARAH DEKRAAY, CLUB SECRETARY
BOB PULVERMACHER, RECORDING SECRETARY • JASON BROWN, TREASURER

DIRECTORS

LARRY FELSHEIM • ED NIEBUHR • LORI DERAUF
AL DASSOW • ROBERTA BAUMANN

Calendar of Events:

Aug. 18, Betty Lou Cruise

Sept. 29, golf outing

Oct. 8-9, Octoberfest

Oct. 16, Rustic Road Rally

to schedule a time for your photograph.

•Rustic Road Rally is Oct. 16.

•Tom Reis is asking all Rotarians interested in working on the Holiday Lights project to meet on Tuesday, Aug. 16, at 7:30 p.m. at Rex's Innkeeper to form committees. Anyone who cannot make that meeting but would like to work on the project should talk to Tom. Kathy Palet reported that a portion of the proceeds from the golf outing would go toward the light project.

•Ed Niebuhr is looking to book a space for the Rotary Christmas party. He has asked Rotarians to let him know which day of the week – or weekend – they would prefer for the party.

Guests: Tim Herlitzka, guest of Paul Hermanson

Visiting Rotarians: None.

Birthdays: None.

Anniversaries: None.

Prayers: Aug. 18, Pat Durden; Aug. 25, Jon Townley.

Programs: Aug. 18, Tom Wilson of the Town of Westport; Aug. 25, Kathleen Falk, Dane County executive; Sept. 1, Club Assembly; Sept. 8, Rotary's Membership Committee; Sept. 15, Genetic Savings and Clone; Sept. 22, Sheriff Gary Hamblin; Sept. 29, Robbie Olson on youth mission trip to Mexico; Oct. 6, Club Assembly; Oct. 13???. Oct. 20, ???; Oct. 27, Rick Boss on Social Security Reform.

Greeters: Aug. 11, Dan Miller and Rich Murphy; Aug. 18, Bob Nicholson and Ed Niebuhr; Aug. 25, Ron Niesen and Linda Olson; Sept. 1, Kathy Palet and Danny Paul.