

TO: Representative Edward Brooks, Chair, 2017 Assembly Committee on Local Government
Room 20 North, State Capitol, P.O. Box 8952, Madison, WI 53708

CC: Committee members, 2017 Assembly Committee on Local Government

FROM: Edmond Minihan, Dunn Town Chair; Steven Greb, Dunn Town Supervisor; Jeff Hodgson, Dunn Town Supervisor; Jim Lowery, Christiana Town Supervisor; Lisa Lutz, Town of Black Earth; Mary Boettcher, Town of Black Earth; Lance Boettcher, Town of Black Earth; J. David Stanfield, Town of Vermont Mick Klein Kennedy, Town of Perry, Supervisor II; Vicki Anderson, Springdale Town Clerk; Martha Gibson, Primrose Town Supervisor; Montrose Town Board; Mark Porter Rutland Town Chairman; Jim Lunde Rutland Town Supervisor; Milt Sperle Rutland Town Supervisor; Nancy Nedveck Rutland Town Supervisor

RE: Opposing AB109 Relating to: modifying the requirements for certain towns to withdraw from county zoning.

Representatives,

I write on behalf of the Town of Dunn Town Board and the other above named parties to urge you to oppose AB 109 to uphold the strong tradition of direct public input on crucial matters at town meetings.

Citizen input at town meetings is foundational to town government. The ability for citizens to vote directly on matters concerning their community is what makes towns unique among municipalities and is a reason many people choose to live in towns. We gather in November to set the levies, April to hear reports on the financial health of the community, and at special town meetings to consider the purchase or sale of land. These meetings provide a forum for electors to have a voice in key town decisions.

Administration of a zoning ordinance is vital in shaping a community over the short and long term. Adopting a new zoning ordinance and changing who administers it has a significant impact on a community – functionally and financially. This action has an impact comparable to or greater than buying and selling land, which requires a citizen vote at a town meeting. A decision of this magnitude warrants the input of citizens at a town meeting, just like other key decisions.

Proponents of AB 109 characterize a town meeting as a difficult, unnecessary hurdle. The town board can call such a meeting, providing as little as 15 days' notice. We believe that this is not a challenging hurdle at all, but rather a straightforward manner of gaining public input on important matters. A desire for expedience should never outweigh the voters' right to input in their community.

This amendment would make Dane County the only county in Wisconsin where voters would not be able to vote on withdrawing from county zoning in favor of town-administrated zoning. We respect the right of our fellow Dane County towns to withdraw from county zoning, but firmly believe the town residents of Dane County should have the same rights as voters in other counties in our state – to vote directly on whether to withdraw and establish town zoning.

We urge you uphold the proud tradition of the direct input of town voters at a town meeting by opposing AB 109.

Sincerely,

Edmond Minihan, Chairman, Town of Dunn Town Board