WHAT'S INSIDE: The "D" Word Comprehensive Plan Then & Now A Watershed View Town News

VERMONT'S

SUMMER 2023

rown of vermont/wisconsin

SUMMERTIME IN THE TOWNSHIP: Living outside!

AGRICULTURE

Its summertime and many of just never seem to come inside. Whether its gardening, brush clearing, farming, hiking, fishing, or just enjoying a pleasant meal on the deck, the long days of summer never seem long enough to fit it all in.

If you have a story idea or a photo to share, please reach out to Judy Robb at judy@vandehoney.com or Michael McDermott at mmcdermott75@outlook.com.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Vermont's Voice.

— Judy, Gary and Michael, your Vermont's Voice Team

at judy@vandehoney.com or mmcdermott75@outlook.com.



THE "D" WORD

READ MORE

our feet

The heritage beneath



Make your voice heard

READ MORE

PLAN



THEN & NOW

READ MORE

Lessons from the past

vermon1

• ENVIRONMENT • RECREATION



A WATERSHED VIEW Downstream impacts

READ MORE

OUR ENVIRONMENT



DO YOU USE THE D-WORD The heritage beneath our feet

By Nick Balster

Town of Vermont Plan Commission member and Town Board

"How can I stand on ground every day and not feel its power?

How can I live my life stepping on this stuff and not wonder at it?"

–William Bryant Logan

The power, the wonder, the stuff referred to in this quote by William Bryant Logan is SOIL, more commonly referred to as dirt, a term you will never hear me utter. I'm Nick Balster, one of the newest residents and member of the Town Board and Plan Commission. I'm a professor of Soil Science and Forest Ecology at UW-Madison.

The genesis of this article was from my presentation on the Soils of Vermont Township at our last Annual Town Meeting. In the presentation, I hope I was able to help folks appreciate how, "this relatively thin, ecstatic skin of the Earth quietly provides all the food, fiber, and lumber to feed, clothe, and shelter the 7.9 billion people (and growing) on this planet".

I tried to demonstrate how the soil was (and still is) key in attracting peoples to this part of Dane country from the early Native Americans to the Europeans that first settled this area. I used quotes from a book on the History of the Town of Vermont that demonstrated the formative role of soil in the shaping of the communities and culture of the township. As early as page 6 in this book the soil was highlighted as "very productive, particularly in the valleys, where corn, hay and oats do very well". It was noted (page 32) by the early settlers that the "potency of the American magnet [to migration from Europe] was attributed to two major forces: (1) Its great civil liberties, and (2) its wonderfully fertile soil." Indeed, from the many historical accounts, it is clear that one of the most important and attractive features of Vermont to the early settlers was the soil.

My hope is that we do not take soil for granted, but instead renew our reverence for this life-sustaining material we walk on every day. A reverence again noted by early settlers to the region, "Every farmer became very conscious of the effects of soil erosion" (page 44). "A respect if lost, we will do at our own peril". In newsletters to come, the newsletter editors thought it would be fun and informative to include brief installments highlighting interesting tidbits related to this fascinating world of soil and the systems it supports. It is my hope that this information will intrigue you to feel the power of this stuff and wonder at it this precious resource as a true treasure that is our heritage.

So stay tuned – more di....err, soil to come!



TOWN OF VERMONT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE Your chance to direct the future of the township By Tim Pierce

Town of Vermont Plan Commission Chair

Vermont, as well as every other local unit of government in the state, maintains a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. These plans are a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions.

A statistic that may give some weight to the importance of this plan update can be seen in the number of Potential Development Rights that are still unused. Many factors play into how many of these PDR's could be developed in the future, but currently only about half of the PDR's are in use in the township.

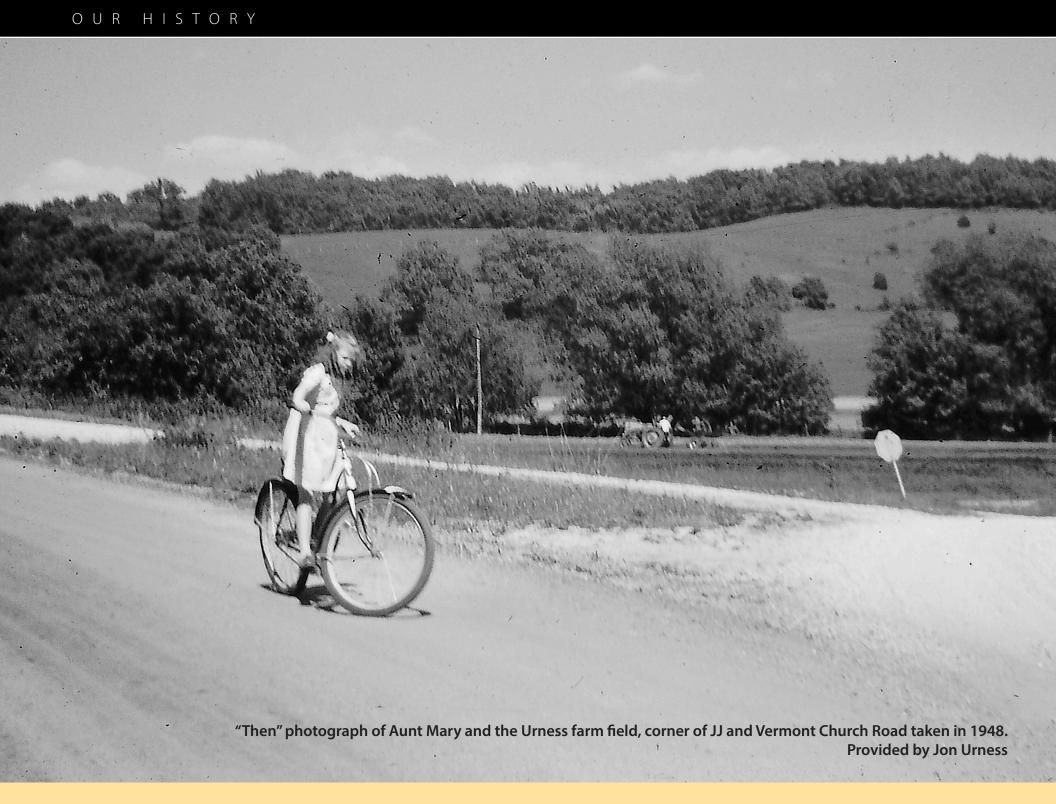
The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law does not mandate how a local community should grow, but it requires public participation at the local level in deciding a vision for the community's future. The uniqueness of individual comprehensive plans reflects community-specific and locally driven planning processes.

State Statute requires comprehensive plans to be updated every 10 years, however Vermont's plan states "The Town Board shall initiate the revision process when the Board or the Plan Commission determine that the plan or any portion of it is not achieving its purpose, or when seven years have elapsed since the plan's effective date. (Past experience shows that a period of at least three years is required for a complete plan revision.)"

The current plan was adopted on July 10, 2017 by the Town Board. Given the duration of time needed to complete the plan update, with Board approval, the Plan Commission has a goal to begin the revision process in September 2023.

Interested parties are encouraged to participate in the revision process. The process will extend over a three-year period. Each meeting the topic to be covered in that meeting will be posted on the agenda for the Plan Commission. We encourage you to make your voice heard on topics that concern you.

If you have any questions please reach out to myself at planchair@townofvermontwi.gov or Diane Anderson, Plan Commission Secretary, at planning@townofvermontwi.gov.



THEN & NOW EXHIBITION

By David Stanfield

As input into the discussion surrounding the review of the Vermont Township Comprehensive Plan, the Vermont Township's *Then & Now* Project, is developing pairs of photos of farmsteads and landscapes—a *Then* photo from 50-80 years ago, and the second one—the *Now* photo—from the same viewpoint taken in the past year. The project pairs of *Then & Now* photos stimulate landholders' comments on the changes in land use, family structures, and economic and policy changes affecting the Township's land over periods of time longer than the time periods usually referenced in Comprehensive Plans.

The Project's intention is to use the *Then & Now* photos and comments to provide suggestions to the Planning Commission and Board for updating the Township's Comprehensive Plan.

Some preliminary suggestions to the Planning Commission at its May 19, 2023 meeting.

- 1. Planning Commission might consider adding this requirement (several landholders mentioned variants of this suggestion)
 - "Proposed buildings should have low visual impact"
 - 2. The Planning Commission might consider modifying the third Town Goal in the Comprehensive Plan Presently that Goal is: "3. Protect the environment" Several commentators suggested more specific wording, for Goal 3 along these lines:

"Maintain good land conservation so that future generations may enjoy the Town's soil, wildlife, forests, and water"

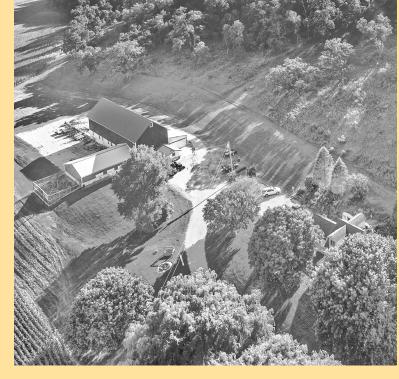
- 3. A third suggestion involves adding a goal on home based employment:
- For many Township residents a "home" is not just a place to live, but also a place to work and to raise a family like dairy farms of the past. Today in Vermont Township people are building places to live and to a launch a variety of home based businesses. Many are also working for others from home. Such arrangements allow parents to earn a living but with more involvement with their children A third suggestion is for the PC to add a Goal to Comprehensive Plan after "2. Preserve Agricultural Opportunities"

"Encourage small scale home-based businesses and work from home"

- The present Plan mentions support for small businesses in the township. This proposal is to elevate the topic to a Goal of the Plan.
- Town could show support of home-based businesses and of employment by others through creative re-zoning, improved internet and well maintained Township roads.
- Other support activities such as offering space at the yearly Vermont Picnic for local businesses to inform the community of the products and services they offer.

There will be an exhibition of *Then & Now* photographs and commentaries for several farmsteads and landscapes on the walls of the Vermont Town Hall. Below is an example of the exhibit-paired photos.





Helmenstine Homestead 1961

Helmenstine Homestead 2023

Please visit the exhibition of the Town of Vermont *Then & Now* photos from now through December, 2025, and at the Town Picnic September 10, 2023, and provide more input into a revised Comprehensive Plan which can help us all become better Land Stewards. For providing comments or for more information about the *Then & Now* Project, contact David Stanfield, email: jdstanfi@wisc.edu, or cell: 608-556-0556

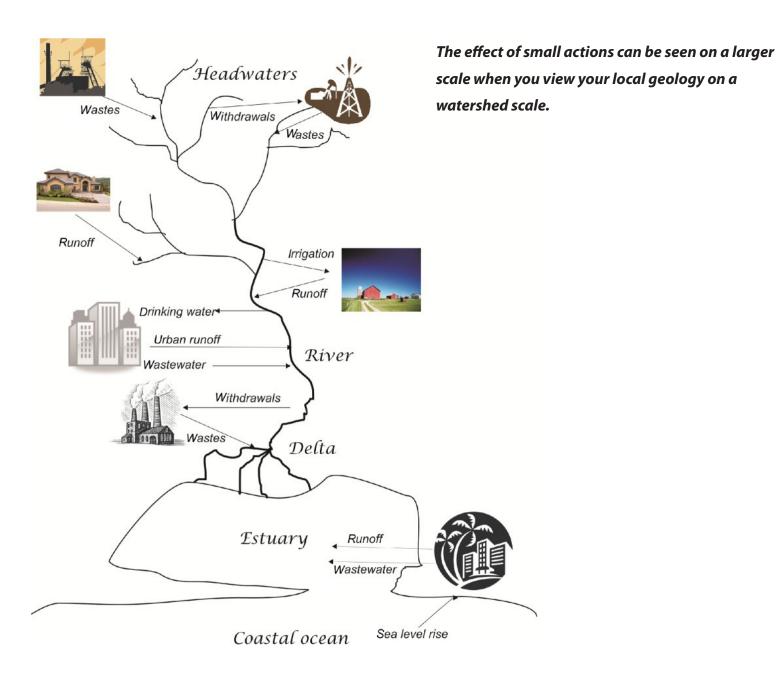


WATERSHEDS SHAPE LAND AND THE SHAPE DEFINES A WATERSHED

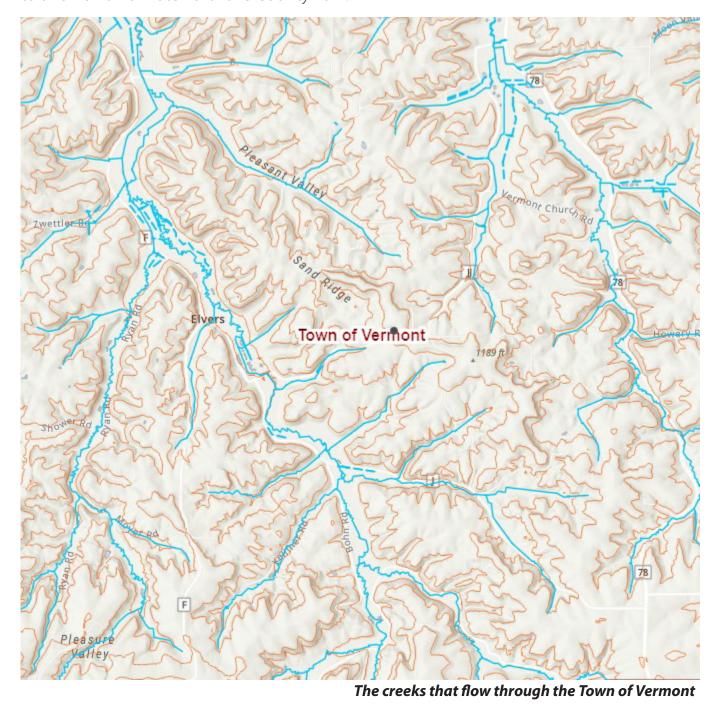
By Michael McDermott

Some months ago, colleagues of mine started an on-line discussion and sharing group to talk about rivers, what were our favorites and how we relate. Initially I thought and spoke about rivers I had seen and experienced in different parts of the world, but then I began to think about the streams around me and even the now-dry slopes that have water in the spring. I live near the junction of Old Indian Trail and Blue Mounds Trail and just beyond the end of my driveway the land slopes to the east and feeds a tributary of Vermont Creek but then the whole of my land towards Pleasant Valley falls 160 feet and feeds, at least in spring, the now formally named Pleasant Valley Creek which then goes onto join the East Branch of Blue Mounds Creek that had just been formed by Ryan and Elvers Creeks. In a way that creek formation, Vermont Creek on the east and East Branch of Blue Mounds Creek on the west and their respective tributaries define most of the area of Town of Vermont. These are small watersheds and aside from the beauty, they define the landscape and locate houses, farms and other properties in one place of another in hillsides, broad creek bottoms, even named ridges like Sand Ridge.

Watersheds became literally the designated geographic area for the ecological study and activity to improve the health of water circulation and what makes things better and what makes problems. For many years now, on a large scale watershed analysis can be used as a model for these activities. Here is a graphic of how a large watershed whose quality and temperature may be affected and used in many ways. Applying this to Town of Vermont, there are not complicated issues like industrial runoff but lawns, gardens, farm fields, road maintenance, and other activity all have runoff to be considered. The quality of the water in our creeks varies and those higher up are often better than lower down where pollutants may be concentrated.



Even on our small scale the fundamentals of watersheds hold, for example, ground water, even from aquifers, supply the creeks along with rainwater, these are reinforced by wetlands both marsh and fen based. As above we can enjoy and see the many creeks and valleys that we have, Ryan, Bohn, Pleasant Valley, Elvers, and Moen, feeding the East Branch of Blue Mounds Creek on the west and Vermont Creek on the east along with unnamed smaller tributaries. Especially for those systems in the west, their origin waters are found in the relatively higher lands near Mt. Horeb or Blue Mound State Park. Moen Creek is even linked to and flows from Stewart Lake County Park.



Where are you in and on in all this? You may be in a flatter valley marked by a county or state highway as creeks created such areas eons ago, you may be at the top of one of little watersheds or part of the way down from the top but not yet in the broader valleys, Think about where you are in this system and how such beauty and function go together.

Here is a **link to a map** with contour lines that you can explore yourself.

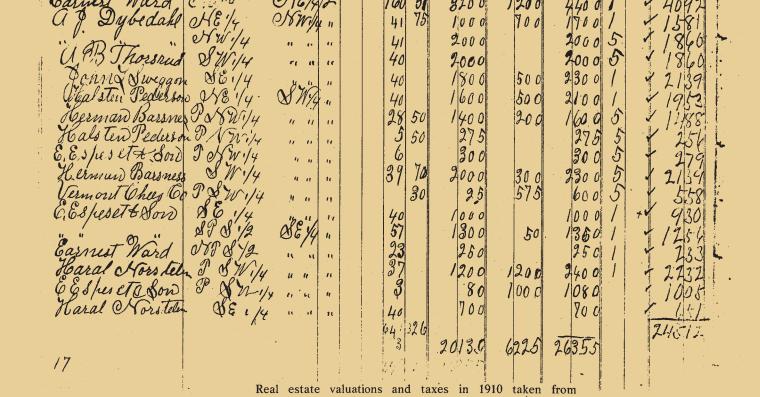
Now ask yourself, how can we enjoy the land we occupy and yet protect it. Keeping vegetation along the creeks can help. Anything that reduces or traps run-off is good and needed. How can citizens support farming and general fertilizing activities to reduce runoff? Think for yourself and act.

OUR HISTORY

ASSESSMENTS FROM 1910.

(Excerpt from the 1977 book History of the Town of Vermont) One page records discussion of rent for the use of the town hall. The sum of twenty dollars was suggested as a fair amount per year. The town meetings were not always quiet business meetings. Some times the feelings on certain issues ran so strong that it was necessary to demand a stand up and be counted vote. This meant going outside and lining up for or against the issue. The pages in the old record books record township annual meetings and board meetings from April 1, 1856, to November 1, 1916. Time or space doesn't permit telling any more than the few we have highlighted. As the township became more populated the town's affairs and business increased and records later show the need of a Board of Review.

REAL ESTATE	for the Town or Village of	••			•••••		
OWNER	Part of Section or Other Subdivision	Section	Township or (Lot)	Range or (Block)	Acres	Hun- dredths	VALUE AS FIXED BY BOARD OF REVIEW Exclusive of Improvements Land and Buildings (Building) Improvements 2
2 at Ward	a in the obser	9	·		11	17	19 10 10 11 11 1 11 12 11 12 1



When the township voted to find a more centrally located meeting place; and arrangements were made to meet in Elver's Hall at the settlement of Elvers. This continued to be the town hall for many years. It was known as Lohrs Hall, Haugner's Hall, and then Gallagher's Hall until 1957 when the township bought the District No. 7 school building and land known as Sandridge School and this is the Town Hall to the present day.

assessor's book. Hans Gilbertson was the assessor.

OUR GOVERNMENT

VERM Towns

TOWN OF VERMONT PICNIC SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 10TH, 4 - 7 PM Vermont Lutheran Church

Come out and share a meal with your neighbors. The Town Picnic will be at Vermont Lutheran Church on September 10th from 4-7 PM.

Artemis Provisions will be providing pulled jerk pork Mac and cheese (buns also provided),

Cress Springs will have blueberry bars for a dessert. Corey Matthew Hart will provide musical

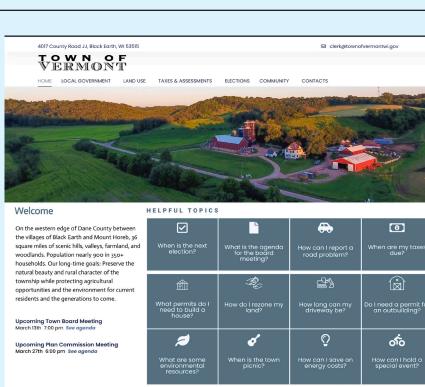
entertainment on guitar.

There is a playground as well as 36-acres of prairie and over 75 acres of woodland with trails to hike. Watch for more details in your email!

THE TOWN OF VERMONT WEBSITE REDESIGNED FOR EASE OF USE The township website has been redesigned with the goal in

mind of making it easier to find important information and to assist residents in the tasks that involve township government. We view this redesign as a work in process and will be evaluating usage trends and comments from users to update and adjust the website to make it as usable and clear as possible. www.townofvermontwi.gov

www.townorvermontwi.gov



DID YOU KNOW?

The Red Cross has designated Vermont Church and its Gathering Place as the emergency shelter for the Township. The large basement and central location made it a natural option. In the case of an event, such as an ice storm or tornado, the Red Cross will bring emergency staff and equipment to the church to serve residents in need.





CONTACT VERMONT'S VOICE

Micheal McDermott <i>Editor</i>	<u>mmcdermott75@outlook.com</u>
Judy Robb <i>Editor</i>	judy@vandehoney.com
Gary Cox Production	<u>coxco@chorus.net</u>

ERMONT TOWNSHIP BOARD	
Town Board Chair Karen Carlock	773-682-8599 email <u>chair@townofvermontwi.gov</u>
Town Clerk Katie Zelle	
Town Treasurer Heather Richter	608-963-0939 email <u>treasurer@townofvermontwi.g</u>
Town Board Supervisor Doug Meier	608-219-1886
Town Board Supervisor Nick Balster	supervisor2@townofvermontwi.gov
Town Board Supervisor Alex McKenzie	
Town Board Supervisor Kirk Lynch	supervisor1@townofvermontwi.gov
ERMONT TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION Plan Commission Chair Tim Pierce	
Plan Commission Secretary and Member Diane Andersonemail <u>plancommission@townofvermont.com</u>	
Plan Commission Vice Chair Jim Elleson	

 Plan Commission Member Doug Meier.
 .608-219-1886

 Plan Commission Member Dean Bossenbroek.
 .608-669-1728

 Plan Commission Member Scott Moe
 .608-767-4738

WHAT'S INSIDE: The "D" Word Comprehensive Plan

Then & Now A Watershed View Town News

ermo

HOME

ed View s