

APPENDIX 1.1

Brief historical sketch of the Township's beginnings

Native Americans were the original inhabitants of the Town of Verona. Prehistoric "mound builders" left burial and effigy mounds here and across Wisconsin. Early settlers found many mounds throughout the township, including ten in the southeast portion of Section 8, now recognized as land west of North Nine Mound Road. Nine of the mounds were circular, and one was in the form of a "mammoth". This site is recorded by the Wisconsin Historical Society as site DA-0693 and is on private land. (Protected effigy mounds in the form of birds and animals can still be viewed on the University of Wisconsin campus near Washburn Observatory and in the University Arboretum.)

The Winnebago were the last Native Americans to claim title to land in this region. In 1829, the Winnebago signed a treaty at Prairie du Chien ceding about one-fourth of their land in southern Wisconsin to the U.S. Government. Maps and records indicated the line dividing Indian lands and U.S. Government lands passed through or near the Town of Verona. The line ran along the Sugar River from its mouth in northern Illinois, southwest of Beloit, to the source of the eastern branch of the river near Pine Bluff and Riley, then northeasterly into Columbia County.

Remaining Indian lands east of this line were ceded to the government in a treaty signed at Rock Island, Illinois in 1832. After the signing of the treaties, most of the Winnebago in Wisconsin were either moved or forcibly driven across the Mississippi River by the white settlers. Section 16, in all townships, was reserved by the government for the Indians who wished to stay. In the Town of Verona, the Town Hall is located east of the center of Section 16.

The Verona area was surveyed into sections in 1833. At the time of the survey, the land was part of Grant County in the Michigan Territory. The Territory of Wisconsin and Dane County were created in 1836. An act of the Wisconsin Territory in 1847 created the Town of Verona in Township 6 North, Range 8 East in Dane County.

The first town meeting was held on the first Tuesday of April 1847, chaired by Samuel Taylor. The earliest town meeting minutes in the records are for the meeting of April 7, 1857 by Town Clerk (innkeeper and postmaster) Joseph Flick. At this meeting, \$250 was voted for Town purposes, and \$25 voted for repairing the bridge at the Badger Mill.

The first white settlers to the township were bachelors James Young and Thomas Stewart, a pair of Scots men who first arrived in 1837. Both had been butchers in Galena, Illinois, and later were employed by Edward Campbell of Cross Plains, who kept the relay house for the stages between Madison and Mineral Point.

In the summer of 1840, a party of ten or twelve, including the bachelors, started out in a wagon from the Campbell house to explore the upper Sugar River valley. After about three miles, they came upon an elevated prairie and nine circular Indian Mounds (Section 8). They called this beautiful area Nine Mound Prairie. Continuing southeast they crossed what is now Badger Mill Creek and found several hundred acres of luxuriant flat grassland without stones on either side. The tract extended to the Sugar River on the west and was nearly surrounded by groves of hardwoods suitable for buildings and fencing.

On the left bank of the creek, a timber-covered promontory (the Terminal Moraine) with an elevation of from thirty to forty feet extending out about one-fourth mile provided a commanding view of the flats,

APPENDIX 1.1

which they called Mound Prairie. The two Scots later returned to this area (Section 27 and 28) to establish their first home in the side of the ridge. Thus, settlement of the Town of Verona began with people drawn to this area by rich prairie grasslands, clear streams, wooded hillsides, and scenic vistas. (Source: *Town of Verona Land Use Plan September 16, 2002*)

Three detailed descriptions of the early history of the Verona area are available in the Verona Public Library and are offered as suggested reading:

- *Early History of Verona* by Alice Kunstman
- *Verona Area History, 1847 – 1972* by Ken Behnke
- *A Sesquicentennial History of Verona (1847 – 1997)* by Karl Curtis

A short history of the Town of Verona, 1999-2017

Resources used in this narrative include The Verona Press, Vincent Mannerter's History of the White Crossing Area and the Town of Verona website.

The following is a brief sketch of the Town of Verona (1997-2017), highlighting town government, businesses and nature/recreation areas.

Town Government

Consolidation:

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was casual talk between the city of Verona and the Town about a possible consolidation between the two governments. There were many reasons for these opinions: shared interests, committees (Emergency Medical Service (EMS), Fire, Senior Citizen), schools and a common concern about Madison annexing Town lands.

In 2006, a formal study into consolidation began with joint meetings to plan how the new Verona would look, how the government would run and how town citizens would be represented. In order for the consolidation to occur, both municipalities had to vote to approve it. The vote was in 2008. The city voted 9:1 in favor of the merger. The Town had an 80% turn out of eligible voters and voted 560 against to 345 in favor of consolidation. The main concerns of town residents were increased property taxes, no Town debt, and a rural lifestyle. Since 2008, the Town has moved forward with strategies to preserve the Town, such as a new Town Hall.

Tension filled years:

The next five years or so, were tension filled between and Town and City because of the failed consolidation attempt. The city implemented a strict enforcement of their extra territorial jurisdiction. The Town retaliated by filing a lawsuit against the City for an improper annexation. The City dramatically increased the Town's portion of the Senior Center budget and the Town pulled out of the joint commission. Later in 2013, the Town and City dissolved the Fire commission (Springdale pulled out in 2011) amid disagreements about how the Town should be assessed and who owned the land under the fire station.

Better relations and Boundary Agreement:

Eventually new public officials were elected; and while some staff stayed, other seasoned staff retired and new staff was hired. Better relations continued to improve and in 2016, the Town and City adopted a boundary agreement. This agreement has benefitted both governments. The City has a certainty and control over certain lands that they expect to grow into (annex) in the short term. There is another planning area where City/Town will have a joint committee to determine if Town growth may

APPENDIX 1.1

occur in this area. Finally there is an area of the Town that the City will not interfere with and allow the Town to have total control (with Dane County's approval).

Opt out:

Dane County and the Town, at times, have had an uneasy relationship regarding rezone applications and lot splits that would allow the Town to grow. Many townships in Dane County felt frustrated by this and other factors. Legislation, in 2016, passed that would allow towns to band together and opt out of Dane County zoning and create their own rules and regulations to govern zoning. After intensive review of the opt out option, the Town of Verona decided that for the present it would not continue the path to opting out. Reasons for this were the Town's Association zoning draft had unclear definitions and it was difficult to apply their draft districts to the needs of the Town. Also, Dane County is working to overhaul their plan. As of 2017, their draft has received positive feedback and is expected to be adopted in 2018.

Town Hall:

Starting in the early 2000s, the Town Board started looking for land to build a new Town Hall. The Town Hall on Nine Mound Road no longer supported the needs of the staff and its citizens. For example there was not enough room for staff to meet privately with citizens or business people, Town board to go into close session without having town residents leave the building, lack of space for large meetings or elections, and deterioration of the existing building's roof and sidings.

In 2015, 41 acres of land was purchased from a bank on Highway PD. The Town citizens approved the construction of a new Town Hall and supporting buildings at the April 2016 Town meeting. Ground-breaking occurred in May 2016 and in February 2017 the new town hall opened for business. The current site is seven acres, and the remaining land was sold to Epic Systems. The proceeds from the excess 34 acres plus the sale of the old Town Hall was almost enough to pay for the new buildings. The remaining amount owed was in the 2017 budget and the Town Hall and supporting buildings paid for by the end of 2017.

With a new town hall, came a need for new committees. Most of the committees have one or two town board members and 3-5 volunteer citizens.

Old committee:

- Plan commission
- Open Space and Parks
- EMS

New committee:

- Plan commission
- Natural and Recreational Areas
- EMS
- Public Works
- Financial Sustainability
- Ordinance

The Town has been fortunate to have citizens willing to serve on committees and to be politically active.

Voting:

In the past 20 years, the Town of Verona has a higher than State or national level of voter turnout.

APPENDIX 1.1

Business

Agriculture:

In the past 20 years, the town has lost more than four farms to annexation. However, there are at least four farms that became century farms. Several dairy farms have converted to beef and/or crop farms.

There are several other types of agriculture businesses in the town that have started in the recent past. They include horse boarding and stables, one of which caters to youth riding lessons. Another agricultural operation in the Town is a farm animal sanctuary, which started in 2014. It offers summer camps, special needs therapy and a home for unwanted farm animals.

In 2003 a new gravel pit on the east side of Highway 69 was started. The projected life of the pit is 25 years. Once operations run out, the company plans to convert the site into a series of fresh water lakes, as well as a 14 acre park.

Landscaping is big business in the town for both large and small operations. There are four landscaper companies in the Town and two have started businesses within the past 20 years.

Nature and Recreation

Open spaces and natural areas:

Both the Upper Sugar River watershed and the Badger Mill natural resource areas lie within the Township.

Henderson Natural Oak Savannah was created in 2007 when Rich Henderson sold some of the family land to the Prairie Enthusiasts. The site is located at Highway PD and Timber Lane.

Richardson Cave (formerly known as Cleveland Cave) is on private property and is believed to be a part of a large cave system that is connected to the Cave of the Mounds near Mt. Horeb.

Parks, Trails and Forests:

Parks: Dane County has several parks within the Town of Verona. They include the well established Prairie Moraine Park and Badger Prairie Park.

In 2014, a new 466 acre wildlife area, the Falk-Wells Sugar River Wildlife area opened. Three years later, the park introduced hiking trails. This park is named after former Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk and her Chief of Staff Topf Wells.

Trails: Three trails traverse the Town. Ice Age National Scenic trail, Military Ridge State trail and (a water trail) Sugar River Water trail.

Forests: There are two forests in the Town of Verona. The Madison school forest is owned by the Madison School district and is used for educational purposes. The other forest is the Scheidegger Forest County Park, established in 2010. It is a gift from the Walter Scheidegger estate that purchased the former Dane County shooting range. It is located on Range Trail and has a shelter and several hiking trails.

Recreation: The Town of Verona abounds in recreational opportunities that have come into existence since 1997.

The Town is home to the Reddan Soccer Park, a 60 acre soccer complex leased to MAYSA (Madison Area Youth Soccer Association) from Dane County. It hosts over 1,200 games and 225,000 visitors annually since its construction in 1997.

The Irwin A. and Robert G. Goodman Jewish Community Campus, established 1999, is a recreations facility for everyone. The 154 acres has an aquatic center, and a youth and community center for gatherings. Camp Shalom offers day-time camping opportunities for many youth in the Madison area.

In 2001, Ironman Wisconsin triathlon came to the Town of Verona. The 112 mile biking leg of the annual September event crosses through many miles of our hills and valleys.

APPENDIX 1.1

The Town and City of Verona became an Ice Age Community in 2017, the seventh in Wisconsin to earn this status. The mission of an Ice Age community is to improve the trail, educate citizens and hold community events to promote the trail.

Town of Verona Chairs

Samuel Taylor	1847-?
Brant Coryell	?-1857
John Beath	1857-1860
William Charleton	1860-1862
John Drieslack	1862-1864
Aaron Meyers	1864-1865
Jesse Dickerman	1865-1867
Hiram Cornwell	1867-1870
John Shuman	1870-1871
James Stewart	1871-1873
Hiram Cornwell	1873-1874
James Stewart	1874-1876
Harvey Hathaway	1876-1877
John Mason	1877-1879
Henry Wineland	1879-1880
T. A. Stewart	1880-1883
Thomas Gordon	1883-1885
John Mason	1885-1890
T. A. Stewart	1890-1892
M. A. Doyle	1892-1894
Thomas Gordon	1894-1895
T. A. Stewart	1895-1904
J. W. Cowie	1904-1906
C. W. Derrickson	1906-?
John Miller	?-?
Arnold Detwiler	~1927-1936
R. W. Roesthlisberger	1936-1945
Bert Thompson	1945-1967
Donald Feller	1967-1976
Harland Dahlk	1976-1999
Steve Sheets	1999-2001
Donald Beauchamp	2001-2003
David Combs	2003-2015
Mark Geller	2015-present