



Legislation Text

File #: 18-600, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: December 11, 2018

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Ben Martig, City Administrator

Presentation by Bridgewater Township Related to Northfield Annexation Agreement Status and Exploration of Incorporation.

Action Requested:

None.

Summary Report:

The City currently has an orderly annexation agreement with Bridgewater Township to provide for the long-term urban growth of the City of Northfield while balancing the preservation of the townships rural character. The City's Comprehensive Plan outlines longer-term plans for growth in development over time in this area and others in neighboring townships. The comprehensive plan is attached as a hyperlink for reference.

The current orderly annexation agreement is ending in 2019. The City has received a resolution from the County dated in July that inquires about starting a process to explore a new agreement. There had been no contact with the City since that time. City staff had planned to initiate discussions with the Council in early 2019 related to having conversations with the township about establishing a new orderly annexation agreement.

City staff very recently became aware of other discussions Bridgewater Township has been having around the exploration of incorporation, which in summary means they are considering becoming a city. The following is an excerpt of a Fall Bridgewater Township Newsletter that was sent from Bridgewater Township Board to all their residents:

Long-Term Planning

For a number of reasons, the Town Board is considering changing the governance model of the Township. Our annexation agreement with Northfield expires at the end of 2019. It has served us well since signed in 1999. In July, the Board formally requested the Northfield City Council to inform us if they are interested in negotiating a new agreement. We have not received a response. We think that having no agreement is not acceptable. Beyond that, members of the Board have been approached by residents and developers interested in building small housing clusters on land unsuitable for farming. Currently, Rice County limits the size of a cluster to 11 homes which restricts the Township to that number or less. We have also been approached with regard to limited industrial development in some areas which are marginal for farming. Again, the Township is limited in what it can do by Rice County zoning rules.

For these reasons, the Board has discussed ways to gain greater control over how the Township develops in the future. How can we protect the agricultural economy and the rural character of the Township while continuing to provide essential services and not drive taxes ever higher? If we are able to broaden the Township's tax base while delivering essentially the same services we do now, it means that the Township taxes for each individual or business will decrease.

It appears that the most practical path to take is to incorporate the Township. In other words, become a small city. This fixes our boundaries so that they can only be changed with our consent. It gives us control over zoning and development. We are in the process of determining if incorporation is really feasible. As part of this process, we will hold a series of Township Meetings in early 2019 to get opinions and questions. We have engaged a firm, Northland Securities, to give us a neutral party's assessment of whether this makes sense. Their report will be available in late December. Tentative schedule for Township Meetings on incorporation:

- 1. January 16, Wednesday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM*
- 2. February 2, Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM*
- 3. February 7, Thursday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM*
- 4. February 16, Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM*
- 5. February 26, Wednesday, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM*
- 6. March 2, Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM*

Meeting dates may change. They will be posted on the web site (www.bridgewaterwp.orgclerk@bridgewaterwp.org) and at the Town Hall or you may call the Clerk, Frances Boehning to confirm. If you would like to be notified of upcoming meetings by email, send a note to clerk@bridgewaterwp.org.

The intent of Bridgewater Township considering incorporation was certainly not anticipated and warrants more immediate attention of the issue by the Northfield City Council. Therefore, as a starting point Mayor Pownell and City Administrator Martig have invited Bridgewater Township to present a summary of this issue and where they are at in the process. Town Board Supervisor Glen Castore agreed to present and provided the attached Powerpoint for the meeting.

The intent for the agenda item on Tuesday is to allow Mr. Castore to give the presentation and to provide a brief opportunity for questions by the City Council. There is no discussion with the Council planned at this meeting but will rather bringing it back in January for further discussion particularly related to exploring a new orderly annexation agreement.

Alternative Options:

None.

Financial Impacts:

Not applicable

Tentative Timelines:

Future discussion related to orderly annexation agreement discussions planned to be discussed at a January Council meeting.