

RECOMMENDATION

**WASHINGTON ISLAND PLANNING & ZONING
COMMITTEE**

January 19, 2024

At a publically posted meeting of the Washington Island Zoning and Planning committee held on January 19, 2024, it was the unanimous recommendation of the committee members present that **the Town of Washington approve the draft introduction written by Washington Island Archivist Steve Reiss for The Town of Washington Comprehensive Plan.**

The motion was made by Kickbush, 2nd by Kehren. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael G. Kickbush AIA
Secretary
Washington Island Planning & Zoning Committee

Washington Island is the small island located several miles off the northern tip of Door County, Wisconsin. Containing an abundance of scenic and recreational resources, it is 35 square miles in size, being 5 miles wide, by seven miles long, with 26 miles of shoreline. The Town of Washington consists of Washington Island and its neighboring small islands of Detroit, Rock, Plum and Pilot. Rock Island became a Wisconsin State Park 1965, and Plum & Pilot Islands are owned by the Federal Government.

This Island chain was originally called the Islands of the Pouteouatimia and was a popular hunting, fishing and living grounds of the Menomonee, Chippewa, Winnebago and Potawatomi Indians. Archeologists discovered remains of all these tribes near the sandy beach on Rock Island, and at several places on Washington Island. Also found were many artifacts of the French explorers. In 1634, Jean Nicolet visited the Island while investigating a possible northwest passage through the Great Lakes and in 1679, La Salle came to the Island on his sailing vessel, Le Griffen. A brisk fur trade was eventually developed between the French explorers and Potawatomi communities, which lasted until the early 1830s.

The 7 mile stretch of water which separates Washington Island from mainland Door County has its own long history. The French explores called this area Port De Mort, or Death's Door, due to the waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay meeting at this point and sometimes creating treacherous waves, currents, and wind. During the age of sailing, hundreds of vessels were lost or driven ashore by its ferocity, and the Potawatomi Indians tell of its storms.

The Island originally received the name "Washington" in 1816, when three government ships stopped in Washington Harbor to wait for other ships of their group before setting off to establish a fort at Green Bay. Their flagship was the named the Washington and that name was bestowed on the Island.

In 1835, the government surveyed the Islands and by 1845, small clusters of settlers had formed on Rock Island and on Washington Island at Detroit Harbor on the south end, Washington Harbor on the north end, and at West Harbor. Early pioneers were fishermen, who found the Islands location desirable. Its main advantages being abundance of fish, protected harbors and being near the Lake Michigan shipping lanes.

By 1848 steam vessels were stopping frequently for cordwood and fish and in 1850, the Islands became the Town of Washington, with a population of 170. Over the next ten years, this diverse cultural community of settlers from the Eastern United States, Canada, England, Denmark, Ireland, Germany, Norway, Iceland and others, grew to 632 people in 1860. Most of these relied on the fishing industry and logging for their livelihood.

The 1865 census showed the Islands population had decreased to 269, mostly due to the effects of the Civil War. Over the next 25 years, new settlers to the Island steadily increased the population back up to 412 in 1875, then to 612 in 1885. By 1890, 738 people resided in the Town of Washington, with a large number of the newer settlers being from Scandinavian countries. Between 1870 and 1900, more land was being cleared and tilled, increasing the Island's farming economy.

Many Islanders were involved in two or three endeavors to maintain a year-round income. While fishing and farming were more of a spring-summer-fall occupation, logging was predominately work, with the height of the logging industry being between the late 1870s to the early 1890s. The fishing industry was the most important way to earn a living for early Islanders. In 1862 it was noted that over 20,000 barrels of fish were shipped that year. In the 1930s there were 40 independent fish tugs

operating from Washington island, but this number started to decline in the 1940s until only a small amount of commercial fishermen remained by the late 1970s.

Before and after the turn of the century, agriculture grew in importance to the Islands economy. Potatoes was one of the first major crops and many schooners were hired to take the Island's fall harvests to market. Peas was another main crop of early farmers. Soon the farmers organized a local chapter of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, and then a Holstein Association when many farmers turned to Dairy farming. A creamery was built and for many years delicious butter and cheese were made, until this was discontinued in the mid-1960s. After WW II, most Island farming waned. Except for a small revival of raising potato crops in the 1950s and 1960, and wheat in the early 2000s, most fields now grow hay or are shrinking back to forest.

Various early shipping companies had always made Washington Island a regular stop. The Islands peacefulness and recreational beauty attracted people to visit, and the tourism industry grew quickly after 1900. The transportation, retail and construction industries followed this growth, with the building of businesses, many summer homes and cottages over the years.

Between the 1920s and 1940s Washington Island experienced a transition in how people and goods were transported to-and-from the Island. Before the 1920, everyone and everything arrived by sail and steamships, mostly into Washington Harbor at the north end of the Island. Once the automobile was established, and roads in Door County improved, the Island's Ferry Line in Detroit Harbor became the main artery to and from the island, and still is today. The old shipping transportation out of Washington Harbor was gone by the late 1930s.

Washington Island's economy continues to be closely related to the tourist industry, due to its relative inaccessibility and high transportation costs. Although the summer tourism population continues to increase, some years being 3000 on a busy summer day, the number of year-round residents has mostly stayed the same, at around 650. The average age of the Island's residents has also changed. In 1940, only 8.2% fall into the 65 and older category. By 1980, this age group made up almost 30% of the population.

Islanders have always been self-reliant, forming a telephone company in 1915, an airport in 1928, an electric co-op in the mid-1930s, fire department in 1948 and a Rescue Squad in 1968. The Town of Washington contains a state park, county park, and several town parks which are available for Island residents and the thousands of tourists who visit during the summer months. These parks have been improved and increased in size over the years. Preserving the Islands tranquil beauty and peacefulness has always been an important aspect of its development planning.

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January 19, 2024

At a meeting of the Washington Island Zoning and Planning committee held on January 19, 2024, it was the unanimous recommendation of the committee members present that **Susan Kochanowski** be made a member of WIZAP.

The motion to recommend Susan Kochanowski as a member of WIZAP was made by Mike Kickbush, 2nd by Connie Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael G. Kickbush AIA
Secretary
Washington Island Planning & Zoning Committee

December 12, 2023

Town of Washington
Main Road
Washington Island, WI 54246

Dear Town of Washington,

I was recently invited by Doug Hansen to participate in the December 11, 2023 meeting of the Washington Island Zoning and Planning Committee. During the meeting, I was invited to apply to become a committee member and advised to submit a letter requesting to be reviewed as a potential WIZAP committee member.

Please accept this letter as my formal request to be reviewed in order to join the WIZAP committee as a member. I am also submitting a current resume so that my qualifications can be reviewed.

Please let me know if you need anything else as you review my qualifications for committee membership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Kochanowski". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Susan Kochanowski
1921 Lobdell Point Road
Washington Island, WI 54246
615-626-4716