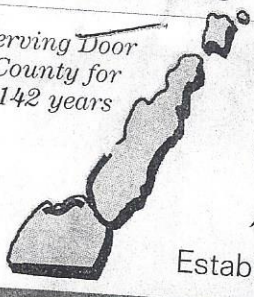


FOUR SECTIONS

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Serving Door County for 142 years



# Door County

Established in 1862

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Jan 2005

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## Island airport plan divides residents

Board rejects referendum proposal

By Deb Fitzgerald  
Advocate staff reporter

The latest developments in the conflict over the Washington Island airport improvement issue have not moved opposing sides of the issue any closer together.

In fact, "gut-wrenching," "crazy," "divisive," "nasty" and "frustrating" are still some of the words the residents are using to describe the controversial project dividing the small community.

At issue is a proposed plan to improve the Island's 77-year-old, town-owned airport. The proposal, developed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT), calls for a realignment of the northeast/southwest runway 10 degrees to the north; an

extension of the runway to 2,250 feet from its current length of 1,250 feet; acquisition of aviation easements over the realignment area; and the installation of lights to improve airport safety.

Town Chairman Gordon Jaeger crafted a referendum question and put the issue on the board's Tuesday night agenda. The idea was to have the question appear on the April ballot, but the measure failed 3-2.

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"We haven't improved the port in over 70 years, but I've improved other (public) things," Gunnlaugsson said. "That is costing the town sweetener pot."

Some of those who support the project say the improvement need to be made for safety reasons. In fact, Bill Bassett, supervisor, didn't support the referendum because he said safety should trump opinion.

"I don't think it's appropriate to put it out to the public as a safety issue," Bassett said.

But the opposition hasn't been convinced that the airport is unsafe, because if it was, it would have been closed down or pilots wouldn't use it.

## Jaeger will...

Island board asked to revoke its July 12 decision

By Deb Fitzgerald  
Advocate staff reporter

Washington Town Chairman Gordon Jaeger has pleaded no contest to charges he violated Wisconsin's open meetings law.

Jaeger's plea means he'll face a \$150 fine and attendance at an "Open Meetings, Open Record, and Public Access" seminar.

Department of Justice.

"I couldn't see any point in the town paying legal fees for me greater than the fine," Jaeger said about his plea.

Jaeger was charged with the violation by Joan Korb, Door County District Attorney, after Korb investigated a verifiable complaint filed by Washington Island resident Bill Olson.

Olson complained that the Town Board had added three items to the agenda during its July 12 board meeting: to allow the town ballpark to be used July 13 by the Bethel Church Youth Group; to allow a prayer to be said at the beginning of each Town Board meeting; and to

raft and buoys at School House Beach Park.

Town Supervisor Jim VanRamshorst requested the items be added; the full board signified its approval by voice vote; and Jaeger allowed the items to be placed on the agenda, according to Korb's charges.

Adding these items to the agenda during the meeting violated the open meetings law, which requires 24 hours notice prior to public meetings, or, in the event that notice is "impossible or impractical," no less than two hours.

While one of the agenda items affected events that occurred a day after the board meeting, the

minimum two hours according to the charges.

Instead, the items were added to the agenda during the meeting because it was "extremely convenient, and advantageous" to the agenda, according to Jaeger's charges.

In an Aug. 13 statement, Jaeger said it "was wrong to allow the items but issues needed 'to be tal of.'"

As part of the penalty, the Town Board was also required to vacate the action authorizing prayer prior to the July 12 meeting.

## charge