

## **2022 Summer Listening Sessions Summary**

### **Overview**

The Town of Spider Lake (TOSL) held three community “Listening Sessions” (one each in June, July and August) in the summer of 2022. The purpose of these Sessions was to give the property owners in TOSL an opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions, concerns, and questions with the Town’s Board of Supervisors - as well as with their fellow citizens - on any topic they chose. Input via email was also encouraged.

Twenty-five separate individuals chose to offer input during the Sessions. Twenty-one of those participated in person or via Zoom call, while four participated via email.

Fifty-four percent (54%) of the speakers/emailers were full-time residents of TOSL, while 46% were seasonal residents.

### **Methodology used for summarizing**

Topics mentioned by speakers were counted and then grouped into major categories (e.g., Short Term Rentals, Ordinances, Community & Open Dialogue, etc.). To avoid double counting, each topic mentioned by a speaker was only counted once for that speaker, no matter how many times they mentioned it during a session. If a speaker spoke at more than one Listening Session and mentioned the same topic in more than one session, the topic was still only counted once for that speaker, though their remarks were still captured in the detailed notes (attached) by the Scribe.

The general categories of “Ordinances”, “Community & Open Dialogue” and “Short Term Rentals” (STRs) were the most often mentioned. Concerns within these categories sometimes overlap and some speakers talked about certain issues relative to one topic, while others mentioned it relative to a different topic. Boating Speed Limits is a good example. Some speakers mentioned it relative to STRs, while others mentioned it relative to Ordinances.

For this summary, to avoid double counting, issues like Boating Speed Limits were counted under the category the speaker used when they mentioned it. For example, if they mentioned Boating Speed Limits while talking about STRs, then speed limits were counted within that category only. If they mentioned the limits while talking about general ordinance compliance or as a stand-alone topic, it was counted under Ordinances.

## Summary of main topics and issues within those topics

Figure 1 below summarizes the general topics followed by the total number of mentions of that topic.

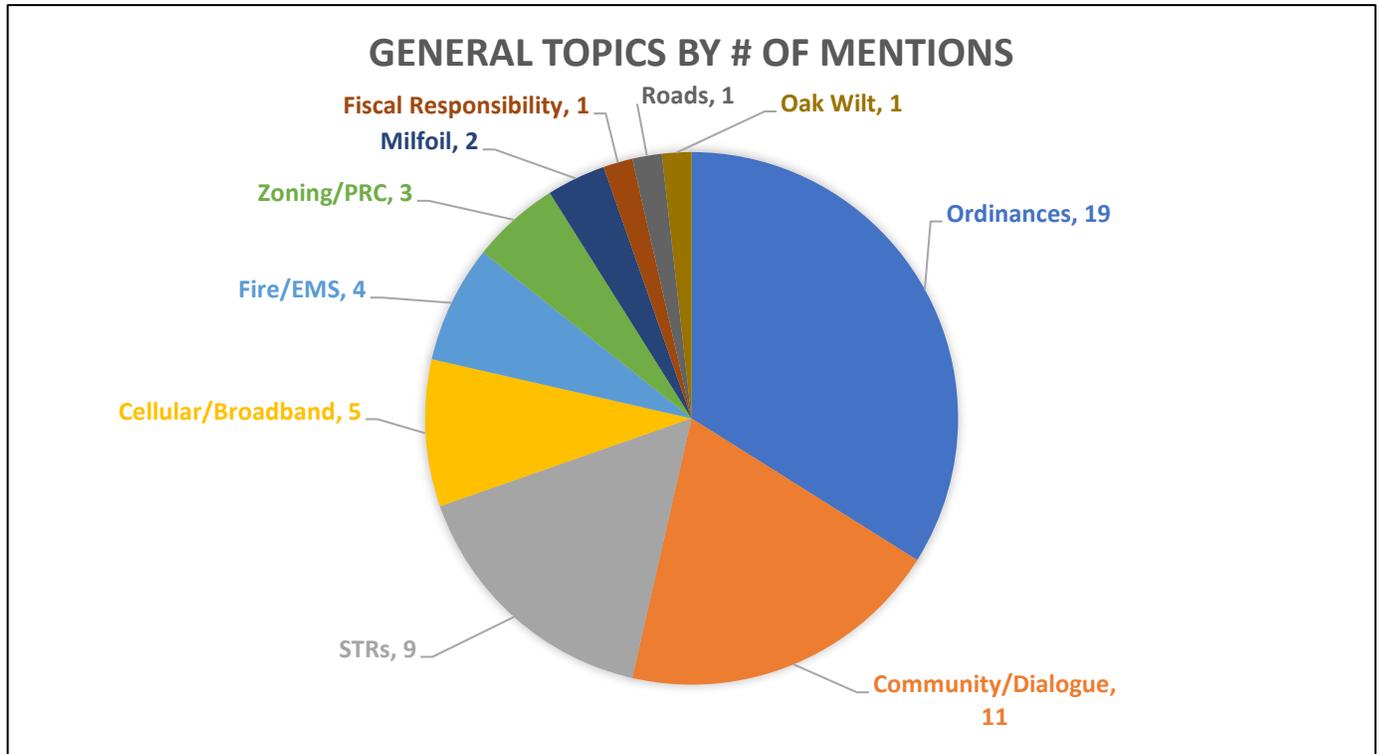


Figure 1. Main topics followed by the total number of mentions for all three sessions.

Below, the information is presented in more detail. Here, we list the subcategories (and counts) clustered under each topic, including number of mentions across all speakers for that issue in ( ).

### TOSL Ordinances (19 speakers)

Fourteen speakers (74%) spoke in favor of maintaining/enforcing/strengthening the Ordinances in order to address complaints or areas the speaker viewed as problems. Five speakers (26%) expressed opinions to the contrary, suggesting that the status quo was adequate or “less attention” was warranted. The issues where Ordinance applicability was discussed included:

- Boating speed limit violations (9)
- ATV/UTV use (7)
- Comprehensive Plan/Northwoods Character/Environmental Quality (5)
- 200’ shoreline requirement (2)
- Tent camping ordinance (2)
- Animal feed lot ordinance (1)

### **Community & Open Dialogue (11 speakers)**

All eleven speakers (100%) expressed support for some form of civil dialogue and sense of community

- Supporting civility, communication and open dialogue, incl. Listening Sessions (9)
- Balancing good of the community/all property owners with individual rights (4)
- Enhancing committee structure (3)

### **Short Term Rentals (9 speakers)**

All nine speakers (100%) expressed complaints regarding STRs

- General disregard for ordinances/environment/enjoyment of others (7)
- Capacity limits exceeded (5)
- Noise (4)
- Boating speed limit violations (4)
- Inadequate garbage handling/bear problems (2)

### **Cellular & broadband services (5 speakers)**

All five speakers (100%) expressed need for improved services, especially cell service

- Cell - Safety/emergency response (3)
- Broadband – enjoyment (2)

### **Fire/Emergency Services (4 speakers)**

All four speakers (100%) expressed concern/support for Fire/EMS department service provision

- Response times/remote location challenges (3)
- Staffing & training (1)

### **Zoning/PRC administration and processes (3 speakers)**

Two speakers (66%) expressed concerns and 1 speaker (33%) expressed support

- Zoning decision-making processes (3)
- Lack of Zoning Administrator (2)

### **Hybrid Eurasian Water Milfoil (2)**

Both speakers (100%) expressed that HEWM is a significant problem

### **TOSL fiscal responsibility (1)**

This speaker spoke in favor of maintaining financial discipline

### **TOSL roads (1)**

This speaker praised current road conditions and Roads Department.

Town of Spider Lake (TOSL) Listening Sessions, Summer 2022  
Summary of Notes on Speaker Comments

**June 23**

Speaker # 1

Problem with ATV/UTV traffic on Upper 'A' – needs enforcement of existing ordinances

Short term rental problems

- Too many people/renters for facility size (e.g. septic systems are not adequate for that many people)
- Renters are exceeding boat speed limits

TOSL needs better support of existing ordinances

- Need improved enforcement
- Animal feedlots are a concern – need to create ordinance to control their introduction -- like Round Lake did

Speaker # 2

Short term rentals – too many people for size of rental unit

Do not allow wake boats on the lakes

Speaker # 3

Maintain existing TOSL ordinances

- Especially protecting 200-foot shoreline minimums, limiting ATV/UTV access to current routes, enforcement of boat speed limits
- The push to relax ordinances is driven by individual profit motives; need to put community first

Continue emphasis on TOSL fiscal responsibility

Speaker # 4

Broadband Internet access

- Current CenturyTel service is abysmal
- Seek external funding (becoming increasingly available)
- TOSL should fix it ourselves, or find support from some entity that will

Any movement toward increasing the 10-mph boat speed limit on Teal Lake will be very unpopular – many property owners bought on Teal specifically *because of the 10-mph limit*

### Speaker # 5

Short term rental concerns:

- Group size limitations are needed
- Renters are not honoring boating ordinances
- Irresponsible renters -- Poor garbage control causing nuisance bear problems, leading to residents trapping bears as a solution
- Renters have no stake in the community or concern for the environment
- TOSL needs to follow the rules and enhance ordinance enforcement in order to manage these problems

### Speaker # 6

Need to enforce ATV/UTVs ordinance on Upper 'A'

- Traffic and speed issues (differing speeds between multiple types of delivery vehicles, commercial trucks, regular vehicles, people hauling boats, bicyclists, pedestrians, etc.) is already a safety issue, made worse by ATV/UTVs

Maintain and enforce existing ordinances

Boaters not observing speed limits on Spider Lake chain

### Speaker # 7

Noise problems at short term rentals needs to be addressed

Roads are in good shape – thank you

Volunteer Fire Department needs attention – find ways to deal with challenges of TOSL's remote location

TOSL needs to listen to different perspectives about ATV/UTV roads access

Allowing tent camping should be looked at again

### Speaker # 8

Speed limits on Teal Lake are being ignored

- It is having a negative effect on the lake
- Why no enforcement?

Owners of short-term rental units should be required to actually live on the property as a way to control renter's behavior

Maintain and protect the current Town ordinances – need to find a way to discourage people from not respecting the rules

Need better communication about milfoil – improve signage

## July 21

### Speaker # 1

Need a full time Zoning Administrator, an employee of TOSL, not consultants

Cell service needs to be improved – it is a serious safety issue for TOSL

Need to expand ATV/UTV road access on Upper ‘A’ from M to Highway 77. This will increase business revenue, which will also add to TOSL tax base

(Note: At this point Supervisor Siebert added commentary on cell service improvements he is aware of that will be implemented soon)

### Speaker # 2

We need to value the pristine natural beauty and quality of our environment by protecting our current ordinances

- No changes to 10 mph boat speed limits or 200’ shoreline minimum
- Finding ways to enforce the ordinances would be helpful

### Speaker # 3

Historically, the Town of Spider Lake was a vibrant community both environmentally and socially. This changed with the advent of short-term rentals and ATV/UTV issues

- ‘Community’ feel and been lost with lots of social disharmony now.
- Too much emphasis on rights of property owners and not paying attention to what is good for the community over the long term.
- We need to re-introduce the civility that has been lost.

### Speaker # 4

The TOSL Comprehensive Plan is an excellent document that not many towns have, and that reflects favorably on us.

- The emphasis on maintaining our ‘Northwoods Character’ is a particularly important concept and goal
- Consider improving ordinances to better achieve this concept and philosophy

Keep community openness going

### Speaker # 5

There is an urgent need to improve emergency medical services; especially cell tower services, personnel staffing and training, and improved response times.

- Our aging population makes this a critical need
- Staffing for the Volunteer Fire Department has been a problem for a long time
- We need an organized approach to really solving the problems – pay more attention to this and less attention to ordinances

Speaker # 6

Boating speed limits is not a true issue. There is no need for a constable or other enforcement options. Our real issue is milfoil.

The changes the ATV/UTV ordinance (first expanding access and then restricting it) is unfair to those people who bought an ATV/UTV assuming the roads would be open.

We should open Upper 'A' from M to Highway 77 to ATV/UTVs

ATV/UTVs are not dangerous, as has been stated in the past.

Speaker # 7

We cherish this environment. Changing zoning ordinances is a problem when it comes to protecting the environment. Please maintain and enforce the existing ordinances.

Speaker # 8

The TOSL leadership has its priorities mixed up. With an aging population, there are many examples of policy mismanagement in the areas of:

- Misguided ordinance management
- Incompetent zoning interpretation and decision making
- Personal agendas influencing leadership decisions

The priority issues are staffing and equipment for the Fire Department, and cell service/tower improvements.

Speaker # 9

Camping in pup tents should be allowed. The TOSL Board should fix this issue.

Speed limits on Teal Lake are not being enforced.

Homeowner property insurance has been increased as a result of the poor/inadequate ratings of our Volunteer Fire Department.

Speaker # 10

As a campground owner, we were able to increase cell phone service with use of a booster, but need Internet service to run it. We need to find improvements for both cell service and Internet access for both safety and convenience. Police officers seek out his parking lot to get cell phone service.

Campers enjoy his property and follow the ordinances. No ordinance violations have been handed out to anyone renting at his campground.

Improved ATV/UTV access would improve his business. Many potential renters do not choose him because of the limits on ATV/UTV road access

### Speaker # 11

There is an interest in understanding what will be done with the findings and results of the Listening Sessions.

### Speaker # 12

We need strong enforcement of town ordinances. We should focus on understanding the ordinances, making sure that ordinance language is clear and correct, and communicate the ordinances more effectively.

We need vigilance and a proactive approach to protecting our Northwoods Character.

## **August 18**

### Speaker #1

Four major points

1. Continue efforts to improve town government – committees and other means of focusing on problems and ways to improve
2. Improve town operations – work to recruit qualified employees and enhancements like the town’s website, which has been a great success
3. Enforce the ordinances. They have been in place for a long time, and all of us that live here came into the community with an understanding of what they are. Wisconsin has 1,250 towns, and Spider Lake is one of only two towns that has authority over its ordinances. Despite claims to the contrary, TOSL has been adaptable to change and has made compromises in the past – allowing increased speed limits on the Spider Lake chain and accommodating select use of roads by ATVs are two examples.
4. TOSL should create an ordinance(s) to better manage short term rentals. Noise, improper handling of garbage and disregarding various other community standards should not be allowed.

### Speaker # 2

Short term rentals on Teal Lake are a major problem. One neighbor allows up to 16 people in a small house. He is repurposing garage space to add more people and is planning on building another housing unit in a back lot. This owner is creating a virtual resort hotel in a residential area. At full capacity, this could mean 30 people, and 15 cars. The property is noisy all the time and renters seem oblivious to boating and other ordinances. Our roads are not constructed to manage this kind of traffic. We need a better balance of respecting the rights of all the owners on the lake.

### Speaker # 3

Thanks to the TOSL supervisors, staff and all the others that are working on improving communications.

We should establish a Committee on the Environment that standing committee within the TOSL governance structure. Its charge would be threefold:

1. Monitor environmental issues
2. Oversee and facilitate implementation of the TOSL Comprehensive Plan
3. Identify and prepare for future challenges to the environment

Speaker # 4

TOSL has a valuable resource in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. As stated, we should protect the ‘Northwoods Character’ of the town, while fostering appropriate economic growth.

A recent issue with zoning ordinances calls into question whether the spirit of the Comprehensive plan is being achieved. The zoning ordinance in question evidently allows the construction of large industrial like buildings on F1 zoned properties of 10 acres or more, provided the structure includes some form of year-around living quarters. There are no criteria for the size of the living quarters relative to the building itself, and the setbacks for such a building are unnecessarily minimal for a structure on such a large lot. Living quarters should be at least 50% of such a structure, and setbacks should be greater than 30-40 feet.

Speaker # 5 (submitted via email)

There has been an increase in oak wilt over the last two years. TOSL is conducting brushing of the roads during the summer months, which is a known cause of spreading oak wilt. We should only do this type of work during the fall months – a practice followed by other municipalities in order to prevent spread.

Speaker # 6 (submitted via email)

An increase in short term rentals on Teal Lake is a major problem. Capacity limits of buildings are not being followed or enforced. This may be benefitting a few people who own their properties for the sole purpose of renting them out for the short term, but it is spoiling enjoyment of Teal Lake for many others. We should look into hiring a compliance officer to enforce the ordinances, and/or set up a committee to oversee short term rentals in TOSL.

Speaker # 7

The Listening Sessions are a great idea. Thanks to the TOSL supervisors for their work.

County codes, noise limits and other ordinances must be enforced when it comes to short term rentals. Yes, there should be fairness and a balance, but the town should get involved. Good property management on the part of owners could solve a lot of the problems.

Speaker # 8

Applauds the TOSL efforts to improve our town, including the idea of conducting listening sessions.

Comments/criticisms from a previous listening session have suggested that there is a conflict of interest regarding the current PRC (Planning Review Commission) staffing. This is not true. In fact, the current PRC process has increased transparency and made the decision-making process more open and democratic – including active participation by all five members in all decisions.

On a related topic, it is also important that we all understand what is, and is not, conveyed under the umbrella term of “property rights.” These are not constitutional rights. It is true that, in legal terms, certain rights may be granted to a property owner, but only through due process, not as an inherent, constitutional right. So, to make a statement such as “It’s my property, and I have the right to do with it as I please” has no legal standing, and it never has had legal standing. This has big implications, especially for protecting the environment. The various levels of government are what truly establish what is, and isn’t, a property owner’s right. The Town of Spider Lake determines what can and cannot be done – the rights of property owners – through its ordinances. The Town of

Spider Lake, through its ordinances, is what controls how we manage our town's environmental concerns, and its duty is to do what is best for the public good.

Speaker # 9

The listening sessions have been good. We have problems with speed limits not being adhered to, and there is poor and/or negative communications with the owners that put their places up for short term rental. We need active management of these problems.

On a positive note, the ATV/UTV riders that use fire road 203 seem to be doing so responsibly.

Speaker # 10 (submitted via email)

Exceeding boating speed limits is growing worse. Visitors seem to ignore all the warnings and advisements. We need active management of the problem, not just signs. In a comment from the audience, another speaker added that the DNR was responsible for making Teal a "quiet lake" in the first place, and we need to get the DNR back involved to help us resolve the boating problems.

Speaker # 11

Lack of enforcement of speed limits on Teal Lake is a major issue. It has become a safety issue, where even having kids go swimming is becoming too dangerous. Also, wave action on the docks from boats throwing off big wakes is causing damage and is a safety issue as well.

Speaker # 12 (submitted via email)

Commends the Board for opening dialog with constituents, having meaningful activities, improving website and generally being more communicative.

The Board should involve more non-Board citizens in committee activities.

- Would help eliminate perception that Board members share information and discuss issues outside of Board and committee meetings, and that critical decisions are made without chance of public scrutiny or dialogue.
- Board could send taxpayers a request for volunteers for positions that are or soon will be vacant.
- Obtain diversity of input (Differences in age, location of residency, gender, etc.)
- Transparency, discretion, inclusion, compromise, etc. should be working tenets of the Board and its committees.

Requests for permits/variances should be seriously considered, not just evaluated/judged on the specifics of an ordinance. Approval can satisfy the petitioner, if no adverse impact on the environment or legitimate objections by neighbors.

Watercraft ordinance on the Spider Chain has worked and should remain.

- The few violations do not justify a law enforcement officer. Vast majority of boaters are respectful of the ordinance; those few who blatantly ignore them are mainly residents and their guests.
- Property owners need to do a better job in adherence and disseminating information to neighbors, guests and friends.

- We have a SHARED responsibility to "Preserve and Protect" our lakes and environment.
- We do have serious new problems with shoreline damage, flora disruption and safety issues caused by wake boats.
- The Board should establish a committee to study, investigate and offer suggestions and solutions [for wake boats].

Most want to see a return of a friendly and supportive community. Let's embrace inclusion, respect and a decency.