

Hello Madam Chair, my name is Russell Hess and I am a resident of Wabasha County. I am writing today on behalf of the community of interest that ties Wabasha County to Rochester and Olmsted county.

The United States Census Bureau defines the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area as the area consisting of the five counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Mower, Olmsted, and Wabasha in southeast Minnesota, anchored by the city of Rochester. This means for the demographic and statistical purposes of the Census, Wabasha County is deeply tied to Rochester. I find this to be in line with my own beliefs on the area and to make more sense than tying Wabasha in with the Metro areas far to our north. Additionally, we in Wabasha County are connected to Olmsted county by County Road 18 as well as by the Zumbro River and the geographic characteristics of the mainly rural and agricultural driftless region.

Next, the Mississippi River-Winona/La Crescent watershed ties Wabasha, Olmstead, and Winona counties together and acknowledges the joint effort needed to address the important issues facing the Mississippi. In 2020 this watershed region received a sizable grant to improve the habitats of plants and animals in the region, constituting another way in which these areas are a part of a common community of interest.

The people of Wabasha County are also deeply tied in with Rochester. Many of our residents are Mayo employees looking for a more rural area to set their roots and many residents of the southern part of our county go to Rochester whenever they need to see a doctor, as Mayo is the closest option for them. Many of our young adults opt to commute or temporarily relocate to Rochester to attend Rochester Technical College or the University of Minnesota-Rochester Campus for higher education. Additionally, parents seeking to send their children to smaller private schools from the Rochester area often consider St. Felix, St. Johns, and Immanuel Lutheran and parents seeking larger options from Wabasha County send their children to Holy Spirit, Lourdes, or Rochester Central Lutheran School.

At the end of the day, I just hope that Wabasha County receives its due credit as a distinct part of Southern Minnesota, rather than an afterthought when the new congressional lines are drawn. For these reasons and more I am asking you today to consider Wabasha County as a community of interest with Rochester and the rest of Southern Minnesota rather than a south metro that it really shares no relationship with.

Thank you,

Russell Hess- Plainview, MN