



CITY OF LA CRESCENT

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TO: Planning Commission Members  
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members  
FROM: Shawn Wetterlin, Building/Zoning Official  
DATE: June 8, 2018 *Shawn*  
RE: Meeting Minutes,  
Tuesday, June 5, 2018

The regular scheduled monthly meeting of the Planning Commission met at 5:30 p.m., on Tuesday, June 5, 2018 in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. The following members were present: Jerry Steffes, Dave Hanifl, Patti Dockendorff, Jason Ludwigson, Linda Larson, Anna Stoecklein and Richard Wieser. City Council member Brian Krenz, City Administrator Bill Waller and Building/Zoning Official Shawn Wetterlin were also in attendance.

1. The meeting was called to order by Chair Steffes. Motion by Wieser, seconded by Hanifl to approve of the meeting minutes of May 1, 2018.

Upon a roll call vote, taken and tallied by the Building Official, all members present voted in favor.

Dockendorff – Yes  
Larson - Yes  
Hanifl – Yes  
Ludwigson – absent at the time of meeting minute approval  
Stoecklien - Yes  
Wieser - Yes  
Steffes – Yes

2. City Administrator Bill Waller gave an overview of general information of day to day operation/activities of the City and projects/activities planned for 2018. The Planning Commission discussed the 2018 work plan after some discussion. Motion by Ludwigson, seconded by Wieser to work on item 4.7 number one of the Comprehensive plan in 2018. (Develop a Marketing and Promotion Plan to raise awareness within the La Crosse metro area that La Crescent is great place to live.)

Upon a roll call vote, taken and tallied by the Building Official, all members present voted in favor.

Dockendorff – Yes  
Larson - Yes  
Hanifl – Yes  
Ludwigson – Yes  
Stoecklien - Yes

Wieser - Yes  
Steffes – Yes

The Planning Commission also discussed updating the Zoning ordinance for the 2018 plan of work. Motion by Dockendorff, seconded by Ludwigson to work on updating the zoning ordinance as part of the 2018 plan of work.

Upon a roll call vote, taken and tallied by the Building Official, all members present voted in favor.

Dockendorff – Yes  
Larson - Yes  
Hanifl – Yes  
Ludwigson – Yes  
Stoecklien - Yes  
Wieser - Yes  
Steffes – Yes

The Planning Commission also recommended inviting the Chamber of Commerce, Eileen Krenz to the next Planning Commission meeting on July 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss a Marketing and Promotion Plan.

3. Planning Commission member Jason Ludwigson reviewed a proposed draft Outdoor lighting Ordinance. The Planning Commission members were asked to review the proposed ordinance prior to the next meeting and make some notes for any possible adjustments.
4. The Planning Commission discussed the number of regular scheduled meetings. It was the consensus by all present members to try and keep the number of meetings to eleven if possible.
5. The past Planning Commission Chair, Don Smith reviewed a summary that was shared at a prior City Council meeting. See attached

Meeting Adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

The next regular scheduled Planning Commission meeting will be on July 10th, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Shawn Wetterlin, Building/Zoning Official

Mayor and City Council,

I write to thank the Council and previous councils for allowing me to serve the City on the Planning Commission for 18 years with many of them as Chair.

In that time we have completed: storm water plan; subdivision plan; 3 revisions of the Zoning Manual with one major rewrite; revised the Planning Commission Bylaws; established a way citizens can apply to be on committees; wrote and rewrote a sign ordinance; led a process of community participation in the creation of a Comprehensive Plan; led the process of raising funds and designing the tennis courts with the USTA; Community Involvement with the Minnesota Design Team visit; 3 Bike Ped Plans; raised well over a million dollars; raised the funds through grants to complete 9 studies; offset perhaps \$100,000 in consultant fees; offset legal fees; revised the land use map; worked with a dozen or two developers interested attempting to interest them in land or projects; written grants; supported green initiatives; created land extraction rules; and recently completed the Downtown Plan, Bicycle Pedestrian Plan and Bluffland Plan; and in progress is another revision of the Zoning Manual to include Shoreland and Floodplain zoning and many associated amendments. We formed subcommittees to focus on senior housing and other topics and helped lead the community partnership with MNDOT for right-of-way planting that will keystone our 'tree city'.

The normal business of Variance Requests and Conditional Use Permits was done without one appeal to the Council or any of the Planning Commission decisions to the courts. Land use decisions are the most frequent areas for civil litigation.

It has been fun, busy, rewarding and achieved with and through the assistance, engagement and support of others. In particular I recognize my past Planning Commission Colleagues, Shawn and the city hall staff for friendship and support. I attempted to teach and learn about planning, civic engagement, economic development at every juncture. No civic good or long-lasting achievement is ever done alone. There are over 5000 emails with the City Administrator that I have been copied on, or originated since 2009 so the ending of my 'career' will certainly give Bill and Shawn some relief.

I might be most proud of working to enhance relationships with agencies, legislators and municipalities. I have represented La Crescent on Committees of the LAPC and worked with Onalaska and La Crosse to connect our communities. Often professional relationships have allowed La Crescent to know and apply for funding from grants and special purpose funds. Our planning has been collegial and productive. And while sometimes adversarial, as in achieving the provision of future bicycle accommodation on the Dresbach Bridge, if done professionally they have enhanced not destroyed relationships. The DOT indicated efforts on the Dresbach Bridge caused internal changes that made future bridge projects more successful such as the planning for the Winona Interstate Bridge to include biking and walking from the beginning.

I believe my service, often it seems as Cheerleader in Chief, has allowed me a unique perspective. I offer 7 thoughts.

1. Staffing. The staff at City Hall (including fire and peace officers) and Shop is incredibly talented and dedicated. Staffing at City Hall is slim. Often I did things because they needed to be done and there was not enough staff time to do them. I estimate that 2 hours a day would mean in the last 10 years I offered 5000 volunteer hours. I imagine it was much more. That represents both institutional knowledge and a time commitment that are lost. Shawn, as building official, has little time to attend to planning or implementing plans.
  - a. Planning for the future staffing of the City is important. Senior Staff are within gazing distance of retirement. Greater loss of institutional knowledge. When will be the right time to begin consideration?
  - b. Who assumes the Cheerleader in Chief role? Perhaps everyone. Perhaps no one. Who asks that plans get reviewed annually, demands to know the progress toward plans, and conducts an annual review? I suggest a greater role for the Council. A joint review in July with the Planning Commission of the major plan and annual action plans are essential. The Council should ask how each action moves us closer to a collective future vision.
2. Fidelity to Plans. If proposed actions are inconsistent with the comprehensive plans that were created through community involvement then changes must require some form of community process. No short cuts. The Plan is the boss.
3. Completing an image study and work plan is important. The state border is a mental and media block. La Crescent is not top of mind and there is no clear identification that attracts people to move/choose La Crescent. The Comprehensive Plan calls for this work but it is more than a single letter head and motto. It is the consistent message that it included in frequent news releases. Without biasing the outcome it is an active, safe, community where children can move about in the summer from activity to activity. A robust summer calendar and excellent facilities. This needs to be 'shouted' daily in an organized and coordinated way by schools, chamber, city hall, and civic groups. Exploit certain themes. If we are spending over \$6million dollars on Biking and Walking (Wagon Wheel alone).....we should make the 'system' premier throughout our entire community.

4. Housing. We need more housing. Downtown, near the downtown, suburban. We need multifamily and single family. All bike and walking connected so we don't create remote subdivisions. It is all part of the vision, our plans and our future success. Holman's has flat and easily developable land, but only La Crescent is near the La Crosse downtown entertainment and major employers. We need to capitalize on our location.
5. Downtown development. If Holman had a downtown center it would be formidable. Someday it will. Developers will not come to us, the city has to aggregate land and attract developers. Besides preserving our environment a downtown/Central Business District that offers amenities and services is essential. A replacement City Hall cannot wait. If we are not willing to invest in our community who else will?
6. Time is not our ally. Back to discussion of current and future staffing. For example the City Council passed a 'joint powers resolution' with hope of working on a bike connection to Houston. But that has languished not because of lack of interest but lack of *manpower*.
7. In order to have a different future we as leaders have to change our thinking, our patterns of behavior and work. It also means change to our citizens. Perhaps when a greater plan is understood it will seem less personal and more a part of a greater good. It takes longer but always be certain that people know not only the action but the collective good.

I also offer 7 hopes/visions for the future.

1. I can see a future entrance to the City that starts at Shore Acres Road and is a 35 mile an hour entrance along a tree lined boulevard.
2. I can see a future where there is an off road bike trail to Houston MN and beyond---perhaps preceded by an on road aspirational trail.
3. I can see a future where our bluffs are used as a nearby and convenient outdoor resource for a community that is branded as the most active, healthiest and safest community in Minnesota.
4. I can see a community where the downtown is active and animated with housing and people on the broad sidewalks. Where jobs, enterprises and entrepreneurial spirit exude.
5. I can see a community where the plans of the City and School District are coordinated or at least complimentary---without a concerted emphasis on schools and families we will be an aging community.
6. I can see a community where the plans promulgated by its citizens are used to allocate the resources and drive the work of city officials, non-profits and businesses.
7. La Crescent will, because of geography, always be a community 'apart' not joined by strip malls or commercial enterprises with the neighboring community. A special place. A place of our making.

Most respectfully and appreciatively, Don.

Donald Smith, Past Member of the Planning Commission. 5/29/2018