

To: Planning Commission Members
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
From: Shawn Wetterlin, Building/ Zoning Official
Date: January 8th, 2015
Re: Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, January 7th, 2015

The Planning Commission met at 5:15 p.m., on Wednesday, January 7th, 2015, in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. The following members were present Jerry Steffes, Don Smith, Linda Larson, Richard Wieser, Patty Dockendorff, Mani Edpuganti, Ex-officio member Brian Krenz. Dave Hanifl was not present. Shawn Wetterlin was also in attendance.

1. The Minutes of the December 2nd, 2014 Planning Commission were approved as written by consensus of the members present.
2. Comprehensive Plan proposals were presented by two firms, Stantec Consulting Services Inc. St. Paul, MN and MSA Professional Services, Inc. Madison WI. By the flip of a coin it was decided that MSA would present their proposal first and Stantec second. After both firms presented and Planning Commission discussion a motion from Dick Wieser and second from Patty Dockendorff, **“to recommend to the City Council, that the City of La Crescent contract with MSA Professional Services, according to their proposal dated January 2, 2015 and a fee proposal of \$60,000, to assist with the development, of City of La Crescent comprehensive plan.”**
Voting in the affirmative: Mani Edpuganti, Patty Dockendorff, Richard Wieser, Linda Larson.
Voting in the negative: Jerry Steffes. Don Smith abstained from voting

Findings: Both firms and the proposed staff are experienced and capable. Thought each taking a different approach either would provide a quality product. MSA’s proposal works within our budget and the project schedule fits our timeline. Stantec’s plan was over our budget and the plan was not completely consistent with the request for proposal meeting.

3. The Planning Commission continued on the assignment by the city council to discuss and make recommendation regarding annexation of larger tracts of land. After discussion a motion was made by Patti Dockendorff and seconded by Mani Edpuganti that the Planning Commission adopted the following recommendation: "that the City Council direct City committees and staff toward the goal of annexing larger tracts of land for future development of 'family housing'. Further that City resources be directed toward attracting developers to housing projects on annexed lands. Voting in the affirmative: Jerry Steffes, Don Smith, Linda Larson, Dick Wieser.
4. The motion was made by Dick Wieser and seconded by Patti Dockendorff with Jerry Steffes, Don Smith, Linda Larson and Mani Edpuganti voting in favor. The proposal and findings are attached and hereby incorporated into these minutes.
5. Discussion continued on potential Rental Registration/ Inspection programs. Patty Dockendorff presented material in the member packet but conversation was delayed until the February meeting.
6. Dynamic signs discussion postponed to the February meeting.
7. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

Attachment: as per item number four.

Planning Commission Finding: Annexation of Larger tracts of Land.
Policy Recommendation. 1/08/2015

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council direct City committees and staff toward the goal of annexing larger tracts of land for future development of 'family housing'. Further that City resources be directed toward attracting developers to housing projects on annexed lands.

Findings and Rational.

1. There are approximately 11 regular lots available in the City available for sale for new homes.
2. There are up to an additional 17 lots available that do not have city services and are located on a bluff top in Apple Blossom Pointe.
3. It is a reasonable metric to have, at a minimum, a 5 year supply of homes. Based on building permits drawn in the last 5 years this would be minimum supply of 36 lots.
4. It is reasonable to assume that the economy will be more robust for housing starts in the five years going forward than the 5 years looking back, thus increasing the number from 36. 12 permits were drawn in the last 12 months.
5. The 2050 Coulee Regional Plan calls for denser urban development closer to the locus of jobs...namely La Crosse. This is an effort to reduce urban sprawl and provide a base for urban mass transit.
6. The existing lot inventory is in many cases is not the most desirable lots so that the need for 'choice options' is increased.

7. We have collected numerous anecdotal stories from realtors who cannot find desirable lots for clients looking for buildable sites in La Crescent.
8. There are documentable instances where families, unable to find building sites in La Crescent, locate in other communities while at the same time our schools are suffering declining enrollment.
9. A vibrant growing community will help animate the streets and provide more local retail and commercial customers. The redevelopment and expansion of the Central Business District and more locally available commercial and retail options was the number one (tied with protecting the natural environment) desire of La Crescent residents, as documented in survey preparation for the Minnesota Design Team.
10. While annexing individual already developed lots is contentious, all regional residents, regardless of their being from townships or city, benefit from regional growth. Growth should be a unifying force. Completing projects to City standards with City services is far superior to piecemeal annexation at some future date. Urban housing developments belong in Cities that provide urban services and infrastructure.
11. Annexation and the development of new homes do not mitigate the need to work toward redevelopment and increased density in the 'urban core'.
12. A clear opportunity exists in La Crescent. That opportunity may peak with the completion of the Dresbach Bridge and the opening of 'free flow lanes' in both east and west directions. It is likely in the absence of a north/south corridor, in La Crosse, that the Interstate connection with Wisconsin will serve as a 'north/south' corridor connecting La Crosse Wisconsin jobs with homes in West Salem, Onalaska and Holmen. Travel times could be shortened if commuters traveling past La Crescent lived in La Crescent.
13. The Comprehensive Planning process will more clearly document the precise numbers, but waiting for that process to be completed will sacrifice 'precision' for 'opportunity'. The urgency for more lots for families to live in La Crescent is real and present.
14. The need is for homes affordable to families. This means that focus should be on design and housing concepts that consider mixed use and new urban concepts.
15. Sanitary sewer and water is available near several potential tracks of land.