

**Long Range Planning Committee**

**of the City of Onalaska**

Thursday, January 8, 2015

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1 The Meeting of the Long Range Planning Committee of the City of Onalaska was called to order  
2 at 5:29 p.m. on Thursday, January 8, 2015. It was noted that the meeting had been announced  
3 and a notice posted at City Hall.

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5 Roll call was taken, with the following members present: Kristen Odegaard, Gary Lass, Dana  
6 Fredrickson, Jennifer Brown

7  
8 Also Present: Planner/Zoning Inspector Katie Meyer, Land Use and Development Director Brea  
9 Grace, Brad Hentschel of Short Elliott Hendrickson

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11 Excused Absences: Debbie Clarkin, Ken Schmocker, Jim Warren

12  
13 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from previous meetings**

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15 Motion by Gary, second by Dana, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, as printed  
16 and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

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18 On voice vote, motion carried.

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20 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per individual)**

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22 As there was no one from the public present, Item 4 was addressed next.

23  
24 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

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26 **Item 4 – Review and discussion of the following documents for the 2015 Comprehensive**  
27 **Plan Update:**

28  
29 a. Chapter 4: Transportation Recap

30  
31 Katie noted Chapter 4 had gone before the Plan Commission and Board of Public Works, which  
32 had supplied additional information regarding public transit and found it to be satisfactory.

33  
34 b. Chapter 5: Utilities & Community Facilities Update

35  
36 Katie said she had received feedback from both staff and department heads that she will attempt  
37 to incorporate into Chapter 5. This chapter then will go before the Plan Commission and the  
38 Board of Public Works. Katie said the goals section from Chapter 5 still must be updated by the  
39 LRPC.

40  
41 c. Chapter 6: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources (new version) & modified goals  
42 from original chapter in 2005 Comprehensive Plan

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43  
44 Brad noted that the City of Onalaska currently has 18 parcels and slightly less than 300 acres that  
45 are assessed as agricultural.

46  
47 Katie noted there are a number of parcels located in the bluffland that are assessed as  
48 agricultural.

49  
50 Brea noted there are developable pieces located in the Midwest Business Park; specifically, at  
51 Theater Road and Midwest Drive. This parcel is actively farmed, and the assessment is shown as  
52 agricultural. Brea said the same holds true with the Menards parcel. Brea said that the city has  
53 approximately 50 acres that are zoned as agricultural when the two aforementioned parcels are  
54 removed from the equation.

55  
56 Brad noted that as of 2012 there were 748 farms in La Crosse County. By comparison, there  
57 were 821 farms in La Crosse County in 1987. The average size of a farm in La Crosse County as  
58 of 2012 was 212 acres. By comparison, the average farm size in 1987 was 235 acres. Brad  
59 referred to Table 6-2, which shows the number of farms by farm ownership. As of 2012 there  
60 were 645 individual/family farms (86 percent of the total number of farms). Brad referred to  
61 Table 6-3, which examines changes in the City of Onalaska, Village of Holmen and Village of  
62 West Salem. Brad referred to Table 6-4, which shows prices of property of agricultural parcels  
63 sold from 1998 through 2013. Brad noted that over the last several years the prices paid for  
64 agricultural land being sold and remaining as agricultural has been higher than that of land that  
65 has been converted to non-agricultural uses. By comparison, the prices paid for land being  
66 converted to non-agricultural are higher in counties north of La Crosse County, including  
67 Trempealeau, Chippewa and Dunn counties. Brad noted he had included a brief paragraph on  
68 urban agriculture that states no livestock operations, including chickens, are allowed.

69  
70 Brea referred to a sentence in the paragraph discussing community gardening and noted there are  
71 community gardens present in the city. Katie also noted that beekeeping is allowed with a  
72 Conditional Use Permit. Brea also mentioned the farmers market at Festival Foods; specifically,  
73 in the Crossing Meadows parking lot. Kristen suggested that perhaps Clearwater Farm be  
74 included as part of urban agriculture.

75  
76 Brad discussed topography, noting elevation ranges from 700 to 1,200 feet in the City of  
77 Onalaska. Brad referred to a map created by GIS Technician Joe Barstow and pointed out that  
78 the areas highlighted in yellow are slopes greater than 30 percent and therefore undevelopable  
79 for local regulation. Brad also referred to areas where there are no City of Onalaska water  
80 services, and areas to where the city's current system could provide water. Brad discussed the  
81 bedrock geology of the area, which is of the Cambrian System and the Prairie du Chien group of  
82 the Ordovician System. Brad noted there are eight classes of soils. Soil Classes 1 and 2 are the  
83 best agricultural soils for crops. Class 3 soil includes some deficiencies. Class 4 is mediocre for  
84 agriculture, and Classes 5 through 8 are not recommended for agriculture. These soil classes

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85 correlate with the city's slopes.

86

87 Brad discussed mineral resources and noted no mining exists in the City of Onalaska. Areas  
88 north of La Crosse County have seen significant increases in non-metallic mineral extraction  
89 activities. These provide the region with several jobs and employment opportunities. Brad  
90 discussed watersheds and surface water, noting that the City of Onalaska is located in the Lower  
91 La Crosse River Watershed, which is in the northwestern part of the La Crosse-Bad Axe River  
92 Basin. The La Crosse River and the Black River are the primary river corridors in the City of  
93 Onalaska. Lake Onalaska is a heavily utilized community asset. Brad said he had mentioned the  
94 city's recently completed Great River Landing plan that will allow easier access to Lake  
95 Onalaska. Brad discussed impaired waters, noting that the La Crosse River is on the Wisconsin  
96 Department of Natural Resources 303(d) impaired waters list for having high phosphorus levels,  
97 while the Black River is impaired due to mercury, phosphorus and PCB levels.

98

99 Kristen asked if perhaps a sentence should be included stating the impairments have no effect on  
100 recreational use of the bodies of water.

101

102 Brad promised to expand on this area by explaining to what degree both rivers have exceeded  
103 their water quality limits. Brad discussed point source discharges, noting that Metallica, Inc.,  
104 which is located on County Trunk Highway Z (Town of Onalaska), has an active WPDES  
105 permit. This means the business' discharged water is monitored. Readings are taken, and if the  
106 readings exceeded the permitted level the Wisconsin DNR issues a citation and modifications  
107 must be made. Brad noted there are 16 existing high-capacity wells located in the City of  
108 Onalaska, including several that are for golf courses and other irrigation needs. Brad said  
109 groundwater from the Mount Simon Sandstone Formation is the primary source of potable water.  
110 The city has a Wellhead Protection Plan and ordinance in place to help protect water quality.

111

112 Brad discussed shorelands, defining them as all land within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water  
113 mark of a lake, pond or stream/river, or all land within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark  
114 of a river or stream. Brad noted that the City of Onalaska's definition of shorelands is the same  
115 of that as the State of Wisconsin, also noting that incorporated communities may choose to create  
116 and enforce their own standards that differ from state standards.

117

118 Brea noted that the city no longer has a shoreland zoning ordinance and stated she believes this  
119 should be a goal to strive for within the next year.

120

121 Brad discussed floodplains, stating there is a 1-in-10 chance of a 100-year flood event occurring.  
122 Brad said individuals who developed properties before a floodplain designation was made  
123 generally cannot expand their structure and therefore have higher insurance rates. Brad said  
124 there will be challenges relates to the floodplain as the city expands its boundaries to the east.

125

126 Brea said a number of developments have applied to change FEMA zoning. Developers need to

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127 raise land out of the floodplain and create storage capacity. Doing so creates more developable  
128 land and water storage.

129

130 Brad discussed steep slopes, noting the city does not allow construction to take place on slopes  
131 greater than 30 percent. Brad discussed forests and woodlands, noting urban forestry is practiced  
132 by City of Onalaska, which also has been a Tree City USA for 14 consecutive years.

133

134 Katie suggested that the Emerald Ash Borer plan be included. This is a three-year action plan  
135 (removal and replanting) for the city.

136

137 Brad discussed wildlife, wildlife habitat and open space, noting that Lake Onalaska is home to  
138 several migratory species. There also is space dedicated to bird watching. Brad noted the La  
139 Crosse River Conservancy Project contains more than 1,000 acres of wetlands, floodplain and  
140 woodlands for nature-based recreation and education facilities. Access may occur through  
141 several existing community parks. The Onalaska bluffs contain more than 700 acres that provide  
142 many scenic views, and have large forests and rock outcroppings.

143

144 Brad discussed cultural resources, noting he had written two paragraphs describing the history of  
145 the City of Onalaska and obtained a list of Onalaska locations on Wisconsin Architectural and  
146 Historical Inventory.

147

148 Katie noted that the city has three locally designated structures (UnWine'd, the Lumber Baron  
149 Inn, and The Pickle Factory) as well as a Historic Preservation Commission and a Historic  
150 Preservation Ordinance and Historic Preservation Commission. As projects are initiated,  
151 development on existing structures is reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate of the historic  
152 nature of the buildings.

153

154 Brea told Brad he will be given a chart detailing what has been designated locally, what has been  
155 designated by the state and what has been designated nationally and that staff will work with  
156 Brad to update this section of the Chapter.

157

158 Brad referred to Section 6.2, "Existing Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Programs," which is  
159 required to be included and discusses existing programs that are available to the city, its residents  
160 and landowners. Brad then welcomed feedback on Section 6.4, "Goals, Objectives and  
161 Policies."

162

163 Dana referred to Objective 'd' ("By promoting compact development, especially in the coulee  
164 areas") under Goal 1 ("Preserve the bluffs, scenic views, waterfront, wetlands, woodlands and  
165 wildlife habitat within the City and encourage the protection of these resources on surrounding  
166 lands") and asked Brad for a definition of this objective.

167

168 Brad said he defines this as being open to alternative proposals in coulee areas, noting the city

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169 has ordinances that allow for smaller lot sizes to protect sensitive features.

170

171 Dana asked Brad if he is looking at allowing smaller lot sizes.

172

173 Katie referred to No. 4 (“Consider creating an ordinance to protect remnant oak savannas or  
174 mature oaks from being damaged or removed during development. Additionally, continue to  
175 work toward managing the oak wilt problem in the City”) under “Natural Resources” and stated  
176 the city has a tree ordinance with information that directly ties into tree preservation. Katie also  
177 asked to include Brea’s goal of adopting a shorelands and wetlands ordinance.

178

179 Kristen asked if the Emerald Ash Borer action plan should be included if the oak wilt problem is  
180 being addressed.

181

182 Brea said the goal could be to implement the EAB action plan.

183

184 Dana asked if it is necessary to include No. 3 (“Work with neighboring jurisdictions to  
185 encourage an orderly, efficient development pattern that protects productive agricultural land and  
186 minimizes conflicts between urban and rural uses”) under “Agricultural Resources.”

187

188 Brad said if a community plans to work with a town and development a cooperative boundary  
189 agreement, sometimes cooperative boundary agreements allow current uses to remain, but also  
190 allow the city to take over control of development approval within those areas.

191

192 Brea noted that the city has extraterritorial zoning, which means the city is notified when there  
193 are any new subdivisions within three miles of the city. Brea said La Crosse County pulls  
194 together the City of Onalaska and other municipalities to see if they have any comments on the  
195 new subdivisions. Brea said she believes the goal fits into how the city would review an  
196 extraterritorial subdivision.

197

198 Jennifer referred to Objective ‘b’ (“By establishing and maintaining an efficient system of parks,  
199 trails, pedestrian pathways, bicycle routes and greenways to provide access and linkage to  
200 natural and recreational resources”) under Goal 3 (“Enhance public access, use and enjoyment of  
201 the community’s natural and recreational resources”) and asked to add the word “safe” before the  
202 word “linkage.”

203

204 Brea referred to bullet points that express support for property owners who wish to rehabilitate  
205 their home. Brea said properties that are at least 60 years old will be identified, and they will be  
206 eligible for historic tax credits if they are designated.

207

208 Brad referred to Objective ‘e’ (“By considering an incentive program for building and property  
209 owners who apply to list their properties on the State or National Register of Historic Places”)  
210 under Goal 4 (“Identify, conserve and protect Onalaska’s cultural, historical and archaeological

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211 resources”) and said he believes he removed this objective during the editing process. Brad  
212 asked if the city would want this objective to remain.

213  
214 Brea said the city is focusing on the angle of the tax credit program and that this objective can be  
215 reworded to state this.

216  
217 Kristen inquired about No. 13 (“Continue to celebrate downtown Onalaska and the important  
218 archaeological sites in the City”) under “Cultural Resources,” noting that this has not been done  
219 except for a concert that was held a few years ago.

220  
221 Brea asked the committee if the city should take a more active role in public art, noting there are  
222 such programs throughout the nation. Brea suggested looking at what other municipalities are  
223 doing regarding public art.

224  
225 Kristen suggested rewording No. 13 to read, “Continue to promote downtown Onalaska and its  
226 beautification.”

227  
228 Gary said Centering Onalaska might have changed its mission statement to include art within the  
229 last couple of years.

230  
231 Brea said the committee could discuss ways to institute a public art program.

232  
233 **Item 5 – Pay Estimates: Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc.**

234  
235 **LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
236 **MONTHLY ESTIMATES**

237  
238 **December 4, 2014**

239

240	<b>Original</b>			
241	<b>Contract</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Paid to</b>	<b>Due this</b>
242	<b><u>Amount</u></b>	<b><u>Orders</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Estimate</u></b>
243				
244	<b>1. SEH INC.</b>			
245	Comprehensive Plan			
246	Update			
247	\$ 39,500.00	\$ -	\$ 23,074.47	\$ 2,862.44
248				
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251				

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<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Original Contract Amount</u>	<u>Change Orders</u>	<u>Paid to Date</u>	<u>Due this Estimate</u>
1. SEH INC. Comprehensive Plan Update	\$ 39,500.00	\$ -	\$ 23,074.47	\$ 2,778.56

Motion by Gary, second by Jennifer, to approve the pay estimate of \$5,641.00.  
On voice vote, motion carried.

**Item 6 – Consideration and Approval of 2015 Long Range Planning Committee Meeting Schedule**

Motion by Gary, second by Dana, to approve the 2015 Long Range Planning Committee Meeting Schedule.  
On voice vote, motion carried.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Gary, second by Jennifer, to adjourn at 6:50 p.m.  
On voice vote, motion carried.

Recorded By:  
Kirk Bey