

Long Range Planning Committee

of the City of Onalaska

Thursday, February 5, 2015

1

1 The Meeting of the Long Range Planning Committee of the City of Onalaska was called to order
2 at 5:33 p.m. on Thursday, February 5, 2015. It was noted that the meeting had been announced
3 and a notice posted at City Hall.

4
5 Roll call was taken, with the following members present: Debbie Clarkin, Kristen Odegaard,
6 Gary Lass, Dana Fredrickson. Jennifer Brown arrived with the meeting already in progress.

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

10
11 Excused Absences: Ken Schmocker, Jim Warren

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

14
15 Motion by Gary, second by Kristen, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, as
16 printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

17
18 On voice vote, motion carried.

19
20 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per individual)**

21
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:**

25
26 **Item 4 – Review and discussion of the following documents for the 2015 Comprehensive**
27 **Plan Update:**

- 28
29 a. Chapter 5: Utilities & Community Facilities Goals Review and Update

30
31 Katie noted that Chapter 5 has gone before both the Board of Public Works and the Plan
32 Commission. Katie also noted that the Parks and Recreation Board and the Tourism
33 Commission will be the last to review this chapter. Several department heads also have
34 examined this chapter.

35
36 Debbie referred to a news report that featured Cedar Falls, Iowa, which has one of the best
37 broadband internet facilities (Cedar Falls Utilities) in the Midwest. Debbie said that while she
38 knows the committee had previously discussed this topic, she had not read anything about it in
39 this chapter. Debbie said she believes this is a crucial element that needs to be addressed,
40 especially with Mayo Clinic Health System looking to develop a site east of Sand Lake Road.

41
42 Brea said she also had reviewed the chapter and stated she believes this is an area that can be

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43 strengthened. Brea also noted there is no mention of cell phone towers and said she had written
44 a paragraph about them. Brea said she has spoken to citizens who desire more 4G coverage and
45 stated she believes more providers will provide this service. However, Brea also said this will
46 present land use challenges as far as where a tower is placed.

47

48 Brad said broadband is significant infrastructure that schools and medical facilities need. Brad
49 also said the number of cell phone towers will need to increase when 5G coverage becomes
50 available because they do not signal out as far.

51

52 Brad said individuals will be looking to utilize any existing structure because it usually is much
53 easier to obtain approval rather than to build their own towers. Brad also said this could be a
54 potential revenue source for the city.

55

56 Brea asked Brad to create a goal related to cell phone towers that will help the city in the future.

57

58 Brea referred to the Public Facilities section; specifically, No. 7, which reads: *“The City staff or*
59 *board and the Onalaska and Holmen School Districts’ staff or boards should meet jointly at*
60 *least annually to plan education improvements. The City and school districts should work*
61 *together to encourage siting, renovation and expansion of school facilities in areas that are best*
62 *equipped to accommodate growth as identified on the Future Land Use Map. School boundaries*
63 *should be defined so as not to overcrowd any schools, if possible, and transportation should be*
64 *coordinated so that schools are easily accessible by the neighborhoods they serve.”* Brea noted
65 this goal was pulled from the last planning document and asked if this is something that needs
66 attention.

67

68 Gary noted that some of the newer subdivisions that were annexed in also were served by the
69 Holmen School District. Gary said this is something that is ongoing.

70

71 Brad noted that the Onalaska and Holmen School Districts cross municipal boundaries.

72

73 Kristen asked if the City of Onalaska had been part of the conversation when there had been
74 discussion of possibly constructing a new middle school on Riders Club Road versus renovating
75 Northern Hills Elementary School.

76

77 Brea said that while the city had been part of the conversation, she is unsure if the Holmen
78 School District had been.

79

80 Debbie said what likely has changed since the 2005 Comprehensive Plan is the ability to petition
81 to attend a school in a different district.

82

83 Dana asked how much oversight the city has with regard to Onalaska School District issues.

84

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85 Debbie said she believes if the City of Onalaska were to plan construction of a new subdivision it
86 would coordinate with Onalaska School District to ensure that its schools either would have the
87 facilities to accommodate new students or the district could plan for the subdivision.

88
89 Brea referred to No. 9, which reads: *“Evaluate the need for a future library expansion. When
90 appropriate, conduct a space needs study to determine if expansion or relocation is
91 appropriate.”* Brea noted that this also was pulled from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and asked
92 if it still is applicable.

93
94 It was noted the library expansion had occurred after the Comprehensive Plan had been updated
95 in 2005.

96
97 Brea suggested deleting this goal. Brea also noted that the library has storage needs and would
98 consult with Library Director Chris McArdle Rojo.

99
100 In response to a question by Dana, Brad said the ISO (Insurance Services Office) rating refers to
101 fire protection, adding he believes this has been covered in the chapter.

102
103 Brea said ISO does a full review of the Fire Department and its services, and then files a report
104 listing the department’s score. Brea said she believes the Comprehensive Plan’s goal of either
105 maintaining or improving the city’s ISO rating refers to this document.

106
107 Brad said there might be a need for a second (auxiliary) fire department as the City of Onalaska
108 expands eastward.

109
110 Katie suggested deleting both No. 11, which reads, *“Ensure utilities are well-maintained and
111 functional,”* and No. 14, which reads, *“Refer to Onalaska’s Comprehensive Plan on an annual
112 basis when updating the Capital Improvement Plan.”*

113
114 Brad said that while he will mark both No. 11 and No. 14 to be deleted, he plans to perform a
115 review. Brad said it is important that the Comprehensive Plan retain some generic language
116 should, for example, the city apply for a water service grant and there is only one location in the
117 Comprehensive Plan where water service is mentioned.

118
119 Brea suggested perhaps adding No. 11 to No. 12, which reads, *“Extend and upgrade public
120 utilities (public water, sanitary and storm sewer) to logical infill areas as an incentive to
121 encourage growth at appropriate locations in compliance with this plan.”*

122
123 Dana referred to No. 13 and suggested that *“Onalaska shall not extend its sanitary sewer and
124 municipal water lines to development that is not located within the City boundaries unless
125 appropriate compensation is provided”* be revised to begin *“Onalaska should not ...”*

126

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127 Brea suggested adding “*unless there are extenuating circumstances as approved by the Common*
128 *Council.*” Brea referred to No. 12 and asked if it can be reworded to read “*as an incentive to*
129 *encourage reinvestment and growth.*” Brea referred to No. 15 under “Efficiency/Cost
130 Effectiveness” and suggested that the sentence “*Review City policies and update if needed on a*
131 *biannual basis*” be revised to read “*on an annual basis.*” Brea also recommended splitting No.
132 1 under “Policies and Recommendations – Parks and Recreation” into two numbers. One would
133 read, “*Continue to collect parkland fees or require parkland dedication or trail rights-of-way for*
134 *all new developments.*” The other would read, “*Work with park and recreation department to*
135 *ensure adequate staffing is available for maintenance.*”

136
137 Brad said all comments pertaining to this chapter will be incorporated and included in the draft.
138

139 Brea said the various boards and committees that are reviewing chapters simply are providing
140 feedback and the addition of a cell phone tower and broadband has thus far been the most
141 substantial change.
142

143 Brad said both the Issues and Opportunities and Housing sections are in a suitable format. Brad
144 said the Transportation section, which has gone before other committees, is the next section that
145 will be put into this format. Brad said that there eventually be a complete document that puts
146 together all the chapters and committee members will have an opportunity to examine it. Brad
147 estimated that the complete document will be ready either by June or July. The Long Range
148 Planning Committee will recommend adoption of the document to the Plan Commission, which
149 in turn will recommend adoption of the document to the Common Council. Brad said it is likely
150 that two open houses will be held either in May or June, adding that the final draft must go
151 before the public.
152

153 Katie said the more formalized documents and the drafts are posted on the internet and noted
154 citizens have provided feedback.
155

156 Brea said the next open house will be held after the Land Use Chapter is finished.
157

158 b. Chapter 7: Economic Development (new version) & modified goals from original
159 Chapter in 2005 Comprehensive Plan
160

161 **7.1 – Existing Conditions** 162

163 Brad noted that this section discusses the City of Onalaska’s labor force, including the
164 population and expected growth. The city’s labor force participation rate as of 2012 was 71.4
165 percent. Approximately 32 percent of the city’s residents are employed in the education, health
166 and social services industry. Approximately 4 percent of the city’s residents work from home.
167 City businesses employ approximately 28 percent of the city’s residents, while another 60
168 percent work within the La Crosse County area. The industry that is expected to experience the

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169 greatest growth through 2020 is natural resources and mining/construction (26 percent). The
170 occupations expected to see the largest increase through 2020 are computer and mathematical
171 occupations (21.1 percent) and healthcare support occupations (19.3 percent).

172

173 Brad discussed economic strengths and weaknesses, noting the strengths are on positioning to
174 meet future business and industry needs as well as attracting employers and employees. The
175 strengths specific to the City of Onalaska include:

176

- 177 • Unique environmental quality, particularly coulees, bluffs and water
- 178 • Education and training – City of Onalaska residents have very high high-school
179 graduation rates and excellent access to secondary education and training facilities in the
180 region.
- 181 • Customer base in the La Crosse metropolitan statistical area of more than 133,000,
182 according to the 2010 Census
- 183 • Excellent transportation facilities and options – freight rail, commercial airport, located
184 on Interstate 90
- 185 • High (disposable) incomes
- 186 • Excellent infrastructure, including roads and utilities
- 187 • Niche area businesses – high tech, medical fields

188

189 Brea suggested adding broadband as a strength.

190

191 Kristen asked if it would be possible to update the customer base statistics as they are now five
192 years old.

193

194 Brad said the city's weaknesses include the following:

195

- 196 • Lack of financial resources for development assistance
- 197 • Workforce age – An increasing age will lead to individuals dropping out of the workforce
198 into retirement. Entry-level workers may become difficult to find for employers.
- 199 • Higher taxes, land costs and wage scale compared to more rural communities
- 200 • Limited available development space

201

202 Brea said she has heard in economic development circles that skilled workers are difficult to
203 find. Brea suggested editing the second bullet point to state that entry-level workers are
204 becoming difficult to find, and also that skilled workers are difficult to find.

205

206 Debbie said she considers the minimal mass transportation in the city to be a weakness.

207

208 Kristen asked if 4G coverage for cell phones could be considered a weakness from a business
209 standpoint.

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210
211 Debbie referred to utility companies such as Charter Communications and CenturyLink and
212 noted that there is more competition in other areas. Debbie also asked if parking could be
213 considered a weakness, noting parking along Main Street can be challenging.

214
215 Katie suggested that perhaps redevelopment opportunities could be considered a strength
216 because she believes there are a few areas that could be primed for redevelopment, rehabilitation
217 and reinvestment.

218
219 Brea returned to the topic of downtown parking and noted the Goals and Objectives section
220 includes a goal (2d) of creating and updating an overall Downtown Redevelopment Plan that
221 builds on results of the Great River Landing Plan. Brea suggested this might be an ideal location
222 to discuss how parking will be addressed. Brea referred to “Design Standards” under “Policies
223 and Recommendations” and noted there is a goal to “ensure adequate parking and delivery
224 vehicle accommodations for all business areas.” Brea said parking also is being addressed on a
225 larger perspective with this goal.

226
227 **7.2 – Assessment of Future Conditions**

228
229 Brad referred to the community survey that was administered in the spring of 2014 and said
230 respondents had expressed a desire to see “a wide variety of businesses.” Brad said he believes
231 the consensus was to leave downtown Onalaska historic and have a “creative buzz” with small,
232 niche local businesses, including small shops, cafes and eateries.

233
234 Dana asked what citizens would consider to be downtown Onalaska – only Main Street, or also
235 2nd Avenue North.

236
237 Brad said he considers downtown Onalaska to be a two-block area of Main Street.

238
239 Brea said I think the goal where we need to put together a Downtown Master Plan, that is a big
240 goal. That is something that I think is the next step. Brad said this will provide the opportunity
241 to define downtown Onalaska.

242
243 Brea said the city must determine how it wants its downtown to look – will it include major
244 employers, senior-assisted living, multifamily living and/or hotels. Brea said that more
245 individuals in this area means there is a greater likelihood of support for restaurants and niche
246 shops.

247
248 Brad returned to the community survey and pointed out that 52 percent of respondents indicated
249 additional industrial or manufacturing would be ideal for the area.

250
251 Kristen said that while this would be beneficial for economic growth, she also noted that the

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252 city's available space for development is extremely limited.

253

254 Brad returned to the local survey and noted the retention and expansion of local employers
255 ranked as the second most prevalent issue throughout the survey. Additional industrial and
256 manufacturing properties may be built in areas with particularly good access to major
257 transportation corridors. Additional private investments are likely to occur in downtown
258 Onalaska, particularly as additional public expenditures are made for the Great River Landing
259 Project.

260

261 Brad referred to placing an additional focus on the downtown and told the committee, "You have
262 one chance with the downtown for the next 30 years." Brad cited the example of the City of
263 Chippewa Falls, where SEH had constructed a new building in that city's downtown. Brad said
264 a vacant building across the street is being razed and new development proposals are being
265 accepted. Brad encouraged committee members to attempt to identify a particular use about
266 which they have strong feelings for not only the downtown area, but also for any area in the city.

267

268 Kristen referred to the site on which Hock's Scoreboard, a bar on 2nd Avenue that is no longer is
269 business, is located and asked how much latitude the city has in determining what type of
270 business may operate on that site.

271

272 Brea said the city does not have much latitude, noting the use remains the same if someone
273 wishes to open a restaurant on the site. A building permit must be pulled if any alterations are
274 desired, and the city requires a site plan review if there are plans to change the parking lot or
275 alter the structure with an addition.

276

277 Gary said in a way the city is serving in this capacity, [as a landlord] citing the examples of the
278 City Shop and the demolition of the Braund Lumber site. Gary said he does not believe the city
279 will want to start controlling as opposed to encouraging development.

280

281 Dana noted there are only two blocks with available properties and said the city's development
282 options are rather limited in the area the committee is discussing.

283

284 Brad referred to Mayo Clinic Health System's purchase of land located near Menards, noting
285 that the proposed development in this area could be an economic driver and large traffic
286 generator for the area. Brad noted there are 27 buildings and 18 sites within the city that are
287 being actively marketed on LocateInWisconsin, which is the Wisconsin Economic Development
288 Corporation's marketing website. Brad said an area that could be targeted for redevelopment is
289 the Center 90 area.

290

291 Brea said she finds it odd that only one location has been identified, and asked that this section
292 be "a little more general." Brea noted that the city's TIF plan calls out "blighted" areas along the
293 State Trunk Highway 35 corridor. Dana encouraged including the STH 35 corridor as he

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294 believes this is an area that needs improvement.

295

296 Kristen asked if there is potential for growth along the STH 16 corridor. Brea said this is the
297 area that has drawn the greatest interest from national chains. However, space along this
298 corridor is very limited. Brea said she believes the Sand Lake Road corridor will experience
299 significant changes with the development of the Mayo Clinic Health System site and if a north-
300 south corridor ever comes to fruition.

301

302 Brad referred to Brownfield Redevelopment Sites, noting that a search of the Wisconsin
303 Department of Natural Resources BRRTS database revealed that the city has 125 sites that have
304 been contaminated. However, none of the sites are “open” and all have been cleaned to a
305 satisfactory level.

306

307 **7.3 – Local Plans and Programs**

308

309 Brad referred to a list of programs that can be utilized to assist in economic development
310 activities, including the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and the Wisconsin
311 Department of Transportation. Local programs include the 7 Rivers Alliance, Western Technical
312 College, UW-La Crosse and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, among
313 others. Brad referred to the La Crosse Municipal Airport Land Use Plan, noting that there is an
314 overlay district in the City.

315

316 **7.4 – Goals, Objectives and Policies**

317

318 Katie referred to “Commercial and Light Industrial Economic Development” under “Policies and
319 Recommendations;” specifically, No. 5, which reads, “*Allow for flexibility in location of home
320 occupations where compatible with neighborhood use.*” Katie said she believes the city is
321 flexible noting citizens who wish to have a home occupation in a residential area may obtain a
322 Conditional Use Permit. Katie referred to No. 6, which reads, “*Review required items to be
323 submitted for permitting. New development and/or land uses should be required to quantify their
324 impacts on existing infrastructure,*” and said staff is updating all new applications.

325

326 Brea referred to a recommendation in the previous plan that states, “*Require substantial projects
327 to submit independent impact analysis so that the City can better assess the full effect of these
328 projects on infrastructure and local economy.*” Brea said if there is a significant development
329 she believes it is ideal to have “something to fall back on” and determine how it will impact
330 infrastructure and the economy. Brea suggesting combining what she had just read with No. 6.

331

332 Brea referred to Objective ‘c’ (“*By continuing to implement the Great River Landing Plan for
333 safe and convenient access and improvements*”) under Goal 2 (“*To focus on creating a healthy
334 City that provides for a quality of life that attracts and retains a creative, skilled labor force*”)
335 and suggested rewording Objective ‘c’ to read “*By continuing to implement the Great River*

Reviewed 2/16/15

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336 *Landing Plan to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of the Highway 35/Downtown area,*
337 *and to offer a recreational amenity to Onalaska residents.”*

338

339 Katie said she was thinking about the potential for grants when she read Objective ‘c’ and
340 suggested tying this in to Brea’s suggestion will strengthen this objective.

341

342 Kristen asked if the City of Onalaska’s potential regional tourism collaboration with the City of
343 La Crosse has any relevance in this instance.

344

345 Katie said she and Brea will be taking Chapter 6, Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources,
346 to the Tourism Commission. Katie added that Chapter 7 also will be taken to the Tourism
347 Commission as well as the Community Development Authority.

348

349 Brea said it is difficult to include regional tourism at this point because no decision has been
350 made yet, adding she does not think a decision is forthcoming until either late spring or early
351 summer.

352

353 Dana referred to Goal 4 (“*To foster high quality, architecturally interesting development and*
354 *redevelopment that strengthens Onalaska’s economy*”) and asked Brad to define this.

355

356 Brad cited City Hall as an example of a structure that is more than “a box with cinder blocks.”
357 Brad said it would be possible to incorporate architectural components into design standards,
358 stating that while strip malls typically are not aesthetically pleasing they can be enhanced
359 architecturally. Dana suggested rewording this goal.

360

361 Brea referred to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, which contains a chart that lists major employers
362 and the number of employees, and said she had received an update from the La Crosse Area
363 Chamber of Commerce. Brea suggested including this data in Chapter 7.

364

365 Brad said he wanted to discuss redevelopment opportunities and highlight on a zoning map a
366 downtown economic redevelopment area, a STH 35 economic redevelopment area that runs to
367 Mason Street, a STH 16 economic redevelopment corridor, a Sand Lake Road economic
368 redevelopment corridor, a Theater Road economic redevelopment corridor, and an economic
369 redevelopment area included in the vicinity of Rudy Street and Lester Street.

370

371 Brad suggested including a goal that addresses an entranceway plan. Brea said she believes if
372 committee members are agreeable it would be helpful to show support for adding such a goal to
373 the document. Brea said staff has been attempting to obtain funding for entrance signage, stating
374 she would like to see such a sign both by Mason Street and also Exit 3.

375

376 Dana suggested having City Engineer Jarrod Holter check with WisDOT and asking whether a
377 sign can be included as a change order on the STH 35 reconstruction project scheduled for 2016.

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378

379 Brea noted that Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has proposed cutting Community Sense of
380 Design funding in his proposed budget and said the city likely would have to pay for a sign.

381

382 Kristen asked if there still is any available land on Theater Road.

383

384 Brea estimated that the Theater Road/Midwest Drive/National Drive area will be fully developed
385 in five years or less.

386

387 Katie said another area possibly worth examining is the connection of Sand Lake Road and STH
388 35 via Main Street, noting she has heard comments that this corridor has become more
389 commercialized.

390

391 Gary noted there is some development in the area near Sand Lake Road/East Avenue.

392

393 Brad pointed out areas on the map that either are in the floodplain or on a 30-percent slope and
394 said these are development limitation areas.

395

396 Brea noted that city staff is working with the Village of Holmen on a boundary agreement and
397 said more information might become available in the future. Brea also noted that the La Crosse
398 Area Planning Committee has been speaking with other municipalities about boundary
399 agreements and said the City of Onalaska soon will start discussions with both the City of La
400 Crosse and the Town of Medary.

401

402 Brad said that judging by the committee's discussions it appears that any redevelopment either
403 would either office or retail. Brad also asked if there are any locations on the map that would be
404 appropriate for industrial or manufacturing redevelopment within the next 20 years.

405

406 Katie said she believes Century Place would be an appropriate area for possible industrial or
407 manufacturing redevelopment.

408

409 Brea said some of the land owned by Steve Nicolai could be industrial/commercial.

410

411 Brad asked if there are any areas that would be suitable for multistory offices.

412

413 Kristen said Theater Road could accommodate multistory offices.

414

415 Gary suggested there could be buildings along STH 35 where there is retail on the first floor and
416 offices on the second floor.

417

418 Brea said there could be potential for development along Oak Avenue South and suggested
419 including this area as part of the STH 35 corridor.

Reviewed 2/16/15

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420
421 Brea said she does not see the city actively encouraging redevelopment in this area and noted this
422 is an area with historic industrial uses.

423
424 Brad noted there had been several comments during the public input period about the wish for
425 pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and said this likely is a goal for redevelopment areas. Brad
426 asked if there should be a discussion about neighborhood commercial.

427
428 Kristen noted that there were citizens who were disappointed when Skogen’s closed its grocery
429 store in Center 90, but also noted that not enough individuals shopped there for it to remain open.
430 Kristen said there might be a need for convenient, accessible services if high-end apartments or
431 high-density senior housing is constructed.

432
433 Debbie noted that purchasing habits have changed over time and said it is important to be
434 mindful of what might change in 20 years among the demographic that wants to see the return of
435 something such as a neighborhood grocery store.

436
437 Brad asked committee members to start thinking ahead to the Land Use Chapter and whether the
438 City of Onalaska always will be suburban. Brad also asked committee members to think about if
439 there are areas where growth could be up instead of out.

440
441 **Item 5 – Pay Estimates: Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc.**

442
443 **LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE**
444 **MONTHLY ESTIMATES**

445
446 **February 5, 2015**

447	448	449	450	451
<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Paid to</u>	<u>Due this</u>
	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Orders</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Estimate</u>
452 1. SEH INC.				
453 Comprehensive Plan				
454 Update				
455	\$ 39,500.00	\$ -	\$ 28,715.47	\$ 291.81

456
457 Motion by Kristen, second by Jennifer, to approve the pay estimate of \$291.81.

458
459 On voice vote, motion carried.

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461 **Adjournment**

462

463 Motion by Kristen, second by Jennifer, to adjourn at 7:32 p.m.

464

465 On voice vote, motion carried.

466

467

468 Recorded By:

469

470 Kirk Bey