

**Community Development Authority
of the City of Onalaska**

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

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1 The meeting of the Community Development Authority of the City of Onalaska was called to
2 order at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 9, 2018. It was noted that the meeting had been
3 announced and a notice posted at City Hall.

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5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Ron Johnson, John Lyche, Joe
6 Bucheger, Ann Brandau, Mike Gargaro, Ald. Jim Binash

7

8 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Planner/Zoning Inspector Katie Aspenson,
9 LADCO Representatives Mike Herro and Bob Burg

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11 Excused Absence: Ald. Jim Olson

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

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15 Motion by John, second by Joe, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as printed and
16 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/individual)**

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22 Mike called for anyone wishing to provide public input.

23

24 **Jim Binash, First District Alderperson**

25

26 **700 Westwood Drive**

27

26 **Onalaska**

27

28 Ald. Binash noted he recently had been assigned a seat on the Community Development
29 Authority, and he told CDA members he also serves as Common Council President and on the
30 Plan Commission.

31

32 Mike called three times for anyone else wishing to provide public input and closed that portion
33 of the meeting.

34

35 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

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37 **Item 4 – Election of**

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39 A. Chair

40 B. Vice Chair

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42 Motion by John, second by Ron, to re-elect Mike Gargaro as Chair and Joe Bucheger as Vice
43 Chair of the Community Development Authority.

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45 On voice vote, motion carried.

46

47 **Item 5 – Discussion regarding expectations of LADCO leadership**

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49 Mike Herro noted both he and Bob serve on LADCO’s Executive Committee and provided the
50 following update:

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- 52 • LADCO Executive Director Jim Hill has retired after serving in that role for more than
53 35 years, making him the longest-serving Economic Development Director in the state.
54 LADCO has begun a search for a new Executive Director.
- 55 • Mike said it appears that construction soon will begin on The Water’s Edge Memory
56 Care Facility behind Woodman’s.

57

58 Katie told Mike she has heard that the facility will not be constructed and said, “I think it’s just
59 the end of the deal – financing, likely.” Katie said the parcel has been rezoned appropriately and
60 is ready for a memory care facility. Katie also said staff has heard the property owner is seeking
61 new buyers.

62

63 Mike Herro continued with his update:

64

- 65 • Approximately 150 individuals attended a recent economic forum where the discussion
66 included Bitcoin and Blockchain.
- 67 • LADCO’s annual report will be submitted today to the CDA.

68

69 Mike Herro asked CDA members for their input regarding what qualities the CDA’s new
70 Executive Director should possess.

71

72 Bob said Jim Hill’s retirement gives LADCO the opportunity to have “a completely fresh look”
73 at how the organization has been run, what its mission has been, where its opportunities lie, and
74 how its relationship is with all its members. Bob said LADCO’s Executive Committee members
75 have concluded there really is no need to make a dramatic change in LADCO in terms of its
76 mission and its direction. However, Bob also said LADCO has an opportunity to rework and
77 reinstate some things such as its membership call program, where LADCO representatives
78 obtained information by meeting with members of the business community. Bob said Jim’s
79 decision to retire revolved around his father’s failing health as well as the need to devote more
80 time to working on his farm. Bob said LADCO has discovered that the inventory of available
81 real estate, a critical component of redevelopment, is dwindling, as is the availability of a capable
82 workforce. Bob said the focus has shifted to workforce development and training, adding he

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83 believes LADCO also must engage the people in the community, board members, and planners
84 more now than it has in the past. Bob said he welcomes the input of CDA members as LADCO
85 goes through the process of moving forward.

86

87 John inquired about LADCO's search area for a new Executive Director.

88

89 Bob told John that Patty Balacek from Western Technical College is leading the search as she
90 has performed successful searches for executive directors for other organizations by utilizing
91 social media. Bob told John there are a couple of local candidates in whom LADCO is
92 interested, adding that there also is an individual who has expressed an interest in serving as
93 LADCO's Executive Director. Bob said LADCO made the decision it would be logical to go
94 through the search process.

95

96 John asked if LADCO has compiled the minimum criteria as to what it is seeking in an
97 Executive Director.

98

99 Bob said that has not occurred yet and told John LADCO "is starting with the proverbial clean
100 sheet of paper."

101

102 Mike Herro said Patty has met with La Crosse County officials, and also that LADCO is
103 currently gathering input. Mike said he believes LADCO members likely will reconvene soon
104 and determine how the Executive Director position will be filled.

105

106 John asked Mike Herro and Bob if LADCO has examined its organizational structure and
107 determined if it is the correct structure going forward before a new Executive Director is hired.

108

109 Bob asked John if he means partnering with another entity when he says "organizational
110 structure."

111

112 John cited the example of possibly melding with the La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce and
113 finding an individual to lead both organizations, and he also cited the example of the La Crosse
114 County Convention and Visitors Bureau. John said he would determine if LADCO has the
115 correct structure in place going forward.

116

117 Bob said the Synergy Process involved examining the possibility of combining organizations,
118 and he told John the conclusion of the process was there were not enough similarities between
119 organizations where it made organizational sense to merge. Bob said he believes John is asking
120 if it is logical to revisit merging organizations now that there is an opening for a senior position
121 at LADCO. Bob also told John that LADCO has arranged to have discussions with 7 Rivers
122 Alliance "because the fit from the perspective of mission is very similar. But the geographic fit
123 is probably ... But it raises an interesting question in terms of, when you look at the whole

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124 staffing issue, because we are next-door neighbors in the Chamber [of Commerce] building with
125 7 Rivers. We worked out a deal after some rather challenging efforts with the Chamber of being
126 able to share the third office.” Bob said Jim Hill has been involved in the discussions regarding
127 if it is logical to have both LADCO and 7 Rivers Alliance utilize an individual with an
128 administrative background or a midlevel executive lead. Bob said it is his opinion that, “The
129 time it would take in order to get consensus on a merger and the acceptance of an Executive
130 Director is relatively long, and we think we need to move faster than that to fill this position and
131 get on with our activities. So I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

132
133 John said that perhaps after a discussion at the board level LADCO might come to the conclusion
134 it might want to find someone who is close to retirement age to become its new Executive
135 Director. John said it appears Bob is saying that in five years LADCO might want to explore a
136 merger and suggested that one of the criteria for Executive Director candidates could be someone
137 who is able to facilitate dramatic change as opposed to someone who is more rigid.

138
139 City Administrator Rindfleisch said that in his year of serving as the City of Onalaska’s
140 Administrator he has had “relatively limited contact” with LADCO, noting that his contact has
141 been the mailed newsletters listing available real estate properties. City Administrator
142 Rindfleisch said, “Part of my concern is, as a city we know what is available for us (in terms of
143 land available for development). The City is almost built up and we’re looking at
144 redevelopment. Land isn’t necessarily available and for sale. We need to leverage developers
145 needs to our existing infrastructure and find willing partners at that point in time.” City
146 Administrator Rindfleisch referred to LADCO’s onsite visits to its partners and said he believes
147 it would be helpful for the City of Onalaska in not only reaching out to those in the city, but also
148 individuals/businesses in the area seeking development. City Administrator Rindfleisch said he
149 believes a more aggressive approach must be taken, “and the line of communication between
150 LADCO and the City has to be much stronger with planning and development within the city so
151 we can fulfill those needs and move some of our goals forward that way as well.”

152
153 Bob said one of LADCO’s current projects is evaluating the incubator system, which includes
154 the incubator building that is dedicated to food processing development and small
155 manufacturing. Bob noted that LADCO is a funded part of a study by an independent third party
156 with expertise on these incubators and said LADCO had met Tuesday with the party to obtain its
157 preliminary thoughts on where the opportunity was. Bob said he believes the correct conclusion
158 should be there needs to be a new incubator facility. Bob also said there will be funds available
159 for a new incubator building, “and it has to focus on today’s workforce rather than the restaurant
160 and manufacturing industries.” Bob said LADCO likely faces the challenge of determining
161 where the incubator building should be located and which sites will be available. Bob said
162 LADCO “would enjoy” having discussions with the City of Onalaska regarding if there is
163 interest in siting an incubator-type facility in the city. Bob said he believes the second leg of the
164 workforce development process is to partner with UW-La Crosse, Viterbo University, Western

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165 Technical College, and private businesses and develop training programs and educational
166 programs to retain employees.

167
168 City Administrator Rindfleisch said he sees an existing gap of knowledge base for small
169 businesses seeking to grow, and he asked what resources these businesses have outside the
170 private markets.

171
172 Bob said he believes that over the last few years LADCO has spent more time attempting to get
173 involved in attracting significant businesses. Bob said he believes there are opportunities in
174 LADCO's member communities to expand business opportunities in this area, and that doing so
175 will be of more value than spending a substantial amount of time and effort trying to attract
176 significant businesses.

177
178 John said he believes it is crucial to readjust for the workforce the city wants to have available as
179 well as the type of workforce the city wants to grow. John noted that both Viterbo and WTC had
180 just introduced a program for engineering graduates because there is a local shortage. John also
181 said he believes LADCO's new Executive Director should understand what type of financing is
182 available, such as block grants or small business development loans.

183
184 Mike Herro said that while LADCO's new Executive Director does not necessarily have to know
185 everything, he/she will know how to obtain information regarding funding resources.

186
187 Bob said LADCO also is working on the concept of an investment fund and told CDA members
188 there have been discussions pertaining to the possibility of forming a real estate trust that has a
189 community development focus as well as a return on investment focus. Bob said that while the
190 return is less and more of a risk is taken, there are resources available to execute deals. Bob
191 referred to the LIPCO (La Crosse Industrial Park Corporation) program, which is a partnership
192 LADCO has with the City of La Crosse that has succeeded due to "mezzanine financing ideals."
193 Bob said LADCO hopes there is a take-out at the end and noted LADCO does not have the
194 resources to do anything of significance in terms of size. Bob said this is a priority for LADCO
195 going forward because there is a need for it in the member communities, and also there is the
196 belief there are individuals who would be willing to participate.

197
198 John told Bob he believes LADCO would find a willing partner in the UW-La Crosse Small
199 Business Development Center.

200
201 Mike Herro said both he and Bob are willing to attend a future CDA meeting and update its
202 members on the search for a new Executive Director as well as ideas they have going forward.

203
204 Bob said LADCO realizes there are things that can be done in addition to what has been done in
205 the past. Bob also said LADCO has the ideas and the commitment, and now it must find the

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206 right people and also improve the lines of communication between LADCO, its member
207 communities and the business community.

208

209 **Item 6 – Closed Session**

210

211 To consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85(1)(e) of the Wisconsin
212 Statutes for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the
213 investing of public funds or conducting other specified public business whenever competitive or
214 bargaining reasons require a closed session:

215

- 216 • Consideration of Letter Proposals from various Planning Consultants regarding Onalaska
217 Redevelopment Project

218

219 If any action is required in Open Session, as the result of the Closed Session, the Community
220 Development Authority will reconvene in Open Session to take the necessary action and/or
221 continue on with the printed agenda.

222

223 Motion by Ron, second by John, to convene in Closed Session.

224

225 On roll call vote: Ron Johnson – aye, John Lyche – aye, Joe Bucheger – aye, Ann Brandau –
226 aye, Ald. Jim Binash – aye, Mike Gargaro – aye. In Closed Session at 4:35 p.m.

227

228

229 Recorded by:

230

231 Kirk Bey