

**Plan Commission Sub Committee**

**of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

1

1 The Meeting of the Plan Commission Sub Committee of the City of Onalaska was called to order  
2 at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 10, 2019. 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: Ald. Tom Smith, Skip Temte, City  
6 Engineer Jarrod Holter

7

8 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, City Attorney Amanda Jackson, Planning  
9 Technician Zach Peterson, Ald. Diane Wulf, Ald. Kim Smith

10

11 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting**

12

13 Motion by Skip, second by Jarrod, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as printed  
14 and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

15

16 On voice vote, motion carried.

17

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

19

20 Ald. T. Smith called for anyone wishing to provide public input.

21

22 **Larry Pohja**

23 **626 Gilster Street**

24 **Onalaska**

25

26 “I would like to make a few comments on Item 6 of your agenda. I’m here this afternoon to urge  
27 you to vote against the plan to rezone the properties along PH. I live outside of the circle that is  
28 shown on the map what properties would be affected by this rezoning. But you should realize  
29 that this zoning will affect that whole area. During the [Common] Council meeting of April 10,  
30 2018, when [Dr. Leo] Bronston was asking for rezoning to develop his business, a comment was  
31 made by an alderperson that construction at this site would include another exit and may make  
32 the site traffic neutral. This means that there would be no added congestion to this site. The  
33 primary source of traffic now comes off of [State Trunk Highway] 157 and turns left off of  
34 Jansen Place, which is in the City of La Crosse, to 157. [County Trunk Highway] PH is a main  
35 entrance to these properties, and the fastest way for emergency vehicles to reach us. Last week,  
36 coming home about 7 p.m., there was a traffic gridlock. A person was trying to turn left into that  
37 business because he could not turn left because the traffic on PH was trying to turn right onto  
38 157. That whole area was blocked off. He sat there, trying to turn into the business, and seeing  
39 he couldn’t go anywhere, the traffic coming off of 157 was backing up, which makes that, to me,  
40 a very dangerous situation. If an emergency vehicle wanted to get through there, it probably  
41 would have taken a few minutes for them to get through. As everybody knows, a few minutes  
42 can make a difference between life and death.

Reviewed 12/13/19 by Zach Peterson

**Plan Commission Sub Committee**

**of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

2

43

44 The streets out there are not designed for the traffic. I've lived out there for 52 years, and I've  
45 seen the changes and everything else. I know that growth is necessary, but why try changing a  
46 nice residential area into commercial properties? I'm wondering, is a traffic count ever been  
47 made out there? Because right now, in the period between 2013 and 2017 there were 69  
48 accidents at this intersection."

49

50 Ald. T. Smith informed Larry he was nearing the completion of his three-minute speaking limit.

51

52 Larry said, "It is rated '5' out of 12 of the worst intersections in this area. Thank you."

53

54 **Kim Smith, Third District Alderperson**

55 **436 Mayfair Place**

56 **Onalaska**

57

58 "I thank you for all the work you've been doing on the Zoning Rewrite Project. I know it was  
59 much needed, much overdue and much appreciated. I just want to ask that you take time and  
60 listen to these residents. They're my neighbors, they're your neighbors. I think what we're  
61 speaking about here – myself included – is that this isn't a situation where they're saying, 'Not in  
62 my backyard.' This is about stating, what are the values of our community? To me, one of the  
63 things that makes Onalaska the most desirable place to live is our neighborhoods. We need to  
64 protect those neighborhoods. By changing this zoning and making it more easily possible for  
65 additional commercial and retail encroachment into the neighborhood, you break down the  
66 barrier that separates the neighborhood from the surrounding retail and commercial. This  
67 residential area, this neighborhood, when the tax assessment was done this past year, this  
68 neighborhood increased in value higher than the citywide average. This is a very desirable  
69 neighborhood to live in, as stated by property values increasing. While we understand change is  
70 necessary and growth is important for our community, we also need to remember that what  
71 makes our community a great place to live is our residential areas. And we ask that you not  
72 break down the boundary for this neighborhood in one wild swoop, but let it remain residential.  
73 And when situations arise in the future, such as they did with the Bronston development, we can  
74 consider them carefully, one by one. Thank you."

75

76 **Mark Shepherd**

77 **1221 County Road PH**

78 **Onalaska**

79

80 "We have a beautiful community there. Unfortunately, we were reassessed and our property  
81 value went up almost 30 percent, and our property tax went up \$720. Now, we're both on a  
82 fixed income. Hopefully this isn't a way to get people to sell their property, because that's just  
83 not very fair. We have a gorgeous house, and we'd like to live there. Our friends and neighbors  
84 want to live there as well. Thank you."

Reviewed 12/13/19 by Zach Peterson

**Plan Commission Sub Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

3

85

86

**Marcia Horvath**

87

**1205 County Road PH**

88

**Onalaska**

89

90 “I’m here to discuss the proposed rezoning of the south end of that County Road PH. Hoisington  
91 Kogler Group, which is suggesting this zoning change, is in Minneapolis. They aren’t all that  
92 familiar with this town or this neighborhood. They are saying this neighborhood is no longer  
93 valid as R-1, but I disagree. This area is currently well-established and filled with affordable  
94 single-family homes – something this city needs. There are already nearby places that could be  
95 developed that don’t have to encroach on our neighborhood. Shopko, Payless Shoes, Carlos  
96 O’Kelly’s, Bamboo House, TGI Fridays, the space next to US Cellular in Crossroads  
97 [Shopping] Center, and two spaces in the Bronston complex expansion all stand empty – not to  
98 mention the empty spaces in Valley View Mall and the soon-to-be vacated Gap Outlet Store.  
99 The residents of this neighborhood can already walk or bike to nearby stores and restaurants.  
100 We don’t need more. I like this neighborhood as it is, and I would really like it to remain under  
101 Residential Single-Family zoning. Two of the affected homes have sold within the last year and  
102 a half. The most recent one sold for \$16,000 over the asking price. To me, that says this is a  
103 viable residential district. If zoning is changed from R-1, the people living here will no longer  
104 have any say about what’s happening in their neighborhood. [There will be] no warning of  
105 changes to come, and no place to voice their concerns about those changes. That doesn’t seem  
106 fair to the citizens whose homes have been here for decades.

107

108 I’ve been told that since Act 67 passed in the [Wisconsin] State Legislature, it makes no  
109 difference if the area is rezoned to MU-N because Conditional Use Permits can no longer be  
110 denied. But I would argue that developers wouldn’t be as likely to try to go into areas zoned R-1  
111 as they would areas zoned MU-N. We submitted a petition, and this is a copy of it. We got 87  
112 people who signed in the neighborhood and overwhelmingly don’t want these houses to be  
113 rezoned to MU-N. We have signatures from people in each of the affected houses, as well as  
114 many surrounding neighbors. Please do not ignore an entire neighborhood’s objections to this  
115 proposed rezoning. Also, I would like to take a moment to Julie and Dick McGarry for their  
116 tremendous help with the petition pages. If this area is rezoned, I envision it going commercial  
117 bit by bit in a scattershot manner, and I really don’t want to see that happen here. These are  
118 people’s homes, not just lot numbers. Please leave the R-1 zoning in place for our  
119 neighborhood. Thank you.”

120

121 Ald. T. Smith asked Marcia if she had submitted the petition.

122

123 Marcia said yes.

124

125

**Tony Horvath**

126

**1205 County Road PH**

Reviewed 12/13/19 by Zach Peterson

**Plan Commission Sub Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

4

127 **Onalaska**

128

129 “I’m here to discuss the proposed rezoning at the south end of County Road PH going from R-1  
130 to MU-N. This change would put us in limbo and make us question doing anything to improve  
131 our home because with the MU-N zoning we would never know what was going to happen to the  
132 properties around us that can make our expenditures and efforts be of little or no value. The  
133 main difference between MU-C, which was first proposed, and MU-N zoning, which is now  
134 being proposed is that you would be able to rebuild your home after a catastrophic event such as  
135 a fire. But many of the same commercial businesses could be built at any time and the  
136 surrounding properties wouldn’t know they were coming or be able to voice their opinions about  
137 it. MU-N zoning focuses on residential, but R-1 zoning does that even more so. Just look at the  
138 side-by-side comparisons of what is allowed in R-1 zoning versus what is allowed in MU-N  
139 zoning. You can see that there are a lot more things allowed with MU-N. I brought copies of the  
140 comparison that can be passed out. This is based on the revised Principal Use Table. Thank  
141 you.”

142

143 **Richard McGarry, Sr.**  
144 **1220 County Road PH**  
145 **Onalaska**

146

147 “You may not realize it, but if you rezone the homes along the south leg of PH from Single  
148 Family Residential (R-1), you will be putting many of us in a stressful situation. Some of us  
149 have lived there for a long time, while others may have just moved in. All of us have expected to  
150 stay in our homes until we are in need of leaving because of age, illness, a job relocation, or  
151 some other factor. With a rezoning to Mixed Use-Neighborhood, we do not know what the  
152 future will hold for us. None of us want to find our home in the midst of commercial  
153 encroachment. Those of us who have lived here for decades have worked at getting to know our  
154 neighbors in the Mayfair neighborhood, improving our homes, and watching out for each other.  
155 We have made it a nice community to live in, and for children to grow up in. Because of this, as  
156 some of us older folks leave, homes sell quickly – sometimes over asking price – and younger  
157 people, often with families, are moving in. Onalaska has become an increasingly affluent city  
158 with good schools, and it is a sought-after place to buy a home and to settle down. I’d like to  
159 think that our neighborhood is part of the reason. Our home values and property taxes took a  
160 jump this past year during our last assessment. It is my understanding that our neighborhood had  
161 the highest increase in the city. If that doesn’t say we are a vibrant and thriving neighborhood,  
162 what does? Do you really want to rezone us and take our R-1 Single Family zoning away from  
163 us? I hope not.”

164

165 **Julie McGarry**  
166 **1220 County Road PH**  
167 **Onalaska**

168

**Plan Commission Sub Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

5

169 Julie noted she has resided at her home for 43 years and said, “We know you, the Plan  
170 Commission, want to do what’s best for the City of Onalaska. That means what’s best for its  
171 citizens. This includes we citizens who live in the Mayfair neighborhood along the south leg of  
172 County Road PH that has been targeted for rezoning from Single Family Residential to Mixed  
173 Use-Neighborhood. By looking at the list – I believe you have that – that compares the uses of  
174 the Single Family Residential and Mixed Use, you will see what a change rezoning would do to  
175 this area. Since all of us in the Mayfair neighborhood are citizens of Onalaska, you are charged  
176 with doing what’s best for us as citizens of this great city. One-hundred percent of the 12 homes  
177 along this portion of PH want to remain Single Family Residential. That’s what we think is best  
178 for us, and we certainly hope you think that’s best for us. We live in an affordable, middle-class  
179 neighborhood where neighbors have constantly been making improvements to their home. We  
180 care about each other, and believe in preserving the integrity of our neighborhood. Homes do  
181 sell quickly here when they come on the market. If zoning is changed, what does that do to the  
182 lack of middle-income, single-family housing in the City of Onalaska? If you do rezone us to  
183 MU-N, what message are you sending to other citizens in Onalaska, to other neighborhoods, and  
184 even future citizens? We’ve always thought of Onalaska as a great place to live and raise a  
185 family. That’s why we’ve been so active and interested in preserving the quality of our  
186 neighborhood for over decades.

187  
188 When we were annexed to the City of Onalaska in 1981, we were told that we would remain a  
189 residential area – 1981. That will be a lot of years coming up in 2021. We want you to  
190 remember that basically what we were told a long time ago has been maintained. We also want  
191 to thank you and past members of the Plan Commission for all the work you do, and for  
192 supporting us over all these years with our desire to remain R-1 as part of the city. Thank you.”

193  
194 **Dave Caauwe**  
195 **1208 County Road PH**  
196 **Onalaska**

197  
198 “Every last one of us who have bought these homes, and have been very, very comfortable with  
199 it ... What I don’t understand is how somebody can come in and say, ‘We’re going to do this.  
200 We’re going to rezone this. This is what we want.’ Shouldn’t you ask us if that’s what we want  
201 to do, because this is where we live – not you. Thank you.”

202  
203 **Ryan Beach**  
204 **1203 County Road PH**  
205 **Onalaska**

206  
207 “I don’t have anything new to add, other than I also do not want the rezoning to happen. There  
208 were three email addresses I was given. I’ve sent emails to all of them. I know there’s another  
209 [Plan Commission] meeting coming up on the 17<sup>th</sup>. I might not be able to attend that, but if I  
210 could, I would be here saying the same thing then as I am tonight. Please leave us as residential.

**Plan Commission Sub Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

6

211 Thank you.”

212

213 **Jensine Wing**  
214 **1221 County Road PH**  
215 **Onalaska**

216

217 “I agree with all these people here who are just actually begging to keep this as a residential area.  
218 I’ve been through a lot of crises in the last five, 10 years. These people have been there for me  
219 every step of the way, right down to chipping ice out of my driveway so I could be safe. I don’t  
220 want to have to lose this. I’ve never lived anywhere where this kind of neighborhood exists.  
221 Please leave it the way it is for us.”

222

223 Ald. T. Smith called three times for anyone else wishing to provide public input and closed that  
224 portion of the meeting.

225

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

227

228 **Item 4 – Review and Consideration of Invoice No. 018-021-18 from Hoisington Koegler**  
229 **Group inc. for UDC/Zoning Rewrite Project**

230

231 Zach noted a copy of the 18<sup>th</sup> invoice for the UDC/Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Project has been  
232 included in subcommittee members’ packets. The invoice totals \$11,615.75.

233

234 Motion by Skip, second by Jarrod, to forward for approval to the Plan Commission Invoice No.  
235 018-021-18 from Hoisington Koegler Group inc. for UDC/Zoning Rewrite Project in the amount  
236 of \$11,615.75.

237

238 Skip asked if the Common Council had seen that an overrun might occur when it approved the  
239 original contract with HKGi.

240

241 Jarrod said, “With the original contract, with the scope of services that was outlined for the  
242 consultant, once we got into the actual rewrite of the code, for instance, there were a lot of things  
243 in the Zoning Code that were Public Works related, such as street standards, sanitary sewer  
244 items, water items. Those are all going to get moved to the Public Works section of the  
245 ordinance that, between myself and the City Attorney, will work on in the coming months. The  
246 actual consultant worked on a lot of that work trying to get it ready to move into the Public  
247 Works area. Once you got into it, [there] was a lot of public input and meetings. And with what  
248 the consultant got into, it just ended up between the Public Works part of it and the extra work on  
249 the items that were added outside the scope, this is what it ended up at.

250

**Plan Commission Sub Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

7

251 I will note that we will hold the last payment because this does go up to the full contract amount  
252 that was approved via change order by the Common Council. Until we get a final product, we'll  
253 keep the last payment as retainage until we get to the point where we have the project done.”

254

255 On voice vote, motion carried.

256

257 **Item 5 – Review and Consideration of an Easement Agreement for 1785 East Main Street,**  
258 **Onalaska, WI 54650**

259

260 Zach noted this property was approved for a Conditional Use Permit by the Plan Commission on  
261 November 22, 2005 to install a telecommunication tower facility at 1735 East Main Street. The  
262 Common Council granted final approval on December 13, 2005. Zach noted subcommittee  
263 members’ packets include the documents related to the conditions of the CUP, and also  
264 conditions related to the Site Plan Permit. An attached letter provides further background  
265 information regarding this property. Zach said Acme Commercial Properties, LLC will be  
266 providing a proposed Easement Agreement for consideration at the December 17 Plan  
267 Commission meeting. Zach said Acme Commercial Properties, LLC wishes to work with the  
268 city to clarify and acknowledge the access to the communication tower by entering into a formal  
269 Easement Agreement with the City of Onalaska.

270

271 Motion by Skip, second by Jarrod, to forward to the Plan Commission recommending approval  
272 of an Easement Agreement for 1785 East Main Street, Onalaska, WI 54650.

273

274 Skip asked if this always had been on City of Onalaska property.

275

276 Amanda told Skip it was located on the Brueske property and said the Brueske family then  
277 divided the land, sold the cell tower, and transferred the land with the access road to the City of  
278 Onalaska. Amanda said there was an inherent easement when it was owned by one individual,  
279 and it never was formalized. Amanda added, “They’re looking to formalize arguably what they  
280 were promised by the Brueskes.”

281

282 Jarrod said Arthur Brueske owned the land, the Common Council approved the cell phone tower,  
283 which was then constructed, and the City of Onalaska purchased the land for green space. Jarrod  
284 said the easement was never recorded, nor was it finalized, between Arthur Brueske and the cell  
285 phone tower company. Jarrod noted a different cell phone tower company now owns the tower  
286 and said the company is going through due diligence and attempting to clean up all the access  
287 easements so it has proper access.

288

289 Ald. T. Smith noted this is an existing tower and asked if it is a matter of formalizing the  
290 easement.

291

292 Jarrod said yes.

Reviewed 12/13/19 by Zach Peterson

**Plan Commission Sub Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

8

293  
294 On voice vote, motion carried.

295  
296 **Item 6 – Discussion and Consideration of the Proposed Zoning for County Road PH**  
297 **Properties**

298  
299 Zach said the residents along the County Road PH corridor are concerned about the proposed  
300 rezoning from R-1 to MU-N. Zach noted city staff had met with multiple residents several times  
301 to discuss the implications of the proposed zoning, and he said the residents are seeking to  
302 maintain the current R-1, low-density residential zoning. Zach said the purpose of the R-1, low-  
303 density residential district is to encourage the establishment and preservation of neighborhoods  
304 with single household detached dwellings. Zach said city staff is asking that the Plan  
305 Commission make a determination of whether the 12 properties in question should remain R-1,  
306 or proposed to be rezoned to MU-N in the comprehensive rezoning map. Zach stressed that this  
307 action does not approve the rezoning, but rather gives direction to staff on what zoning to include  
308 in the new zoning map.

309  
310 Amanda said the subcommittee is being asked to refer this item without recommendation to the  
311 Plan Commission for review by the entire commission.

312  
313 Motion by Skip, second by Jarrod, to forward without recommendation to the Plan Commission  
314 discussion and consideration of the Proposed Zoning for County Road PH Properties.

315  
316 Skip said he believes the full Plan Commission should hear what the citizens have to say before a  
317 decision is made.

318  
319 Jarrod encouraged Plan Commission members to examine the minutes of this meeting prior to  
320 the December 17 Plan Commission meeting. Jarrod also told the citizens in attendance today  
321 they are welcome to attend the December 17 meeting and provide additional input, and he said  
322 he hopes the input provided at this meeting will resonate with Plan Commission members.

323  
324 Ald. T. Smith also encouraged the citizens attending this meeting to return to the December 17  
325 Plan Commission meeting, and he noted the Plan Commission is the body that will make a  
326 recommendation to the Common Council.

327  
328 Skip said, “This is a very difficult situation because looking at it from a long-range planning  
329 standpoint, I think that this action is really best for all of the citizens of the City of Onalaska. On  
330 the other hand, you have to take into account the people who are living there now and how they  
331 feel. From that standpoint, I feel we should not have it. So I say, yes, we should approve it [and]  
332 no, we shouldn’t. I think we need to listen to this whole thing from the [Plan] Commission’s  
333 standpoint.”

334  
Reviewed 12/13/19 by Zach Peterson

**Plan Commission Sub Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

9

335 On voice vote, motion carried.

336

337 **Adjournment**

338

339 Motion by Skip, second by Jarrod, to adjourn.

340

341 Ald. T. Smith adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

342

343

344 Recorded by:

345

346 Kirk Bey