

**Special Common Council
of the City of Onalaska**
Wednesday, August 29, 2018

1

1 The Special Meeting of the Common Council was called to order at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday,
2 August 29, 2018. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a notice posted at City
3 Hall.

4
5 The City of Onalaska's Common Council will hold a public meeting/listening session, with the
6 main purpose of the meeting to gather input from attendees about what's working and not
7 working with the City's current development process and the City's existing Zoning Ordinance.

8
9 **Item 1 – Call to Order and roll call**

10

11 Roll call was taken, with the following members present: Mayor Joe Chilsen, Ald. Jim Binash,
12 Ald. Jim Olson, Ald. Ron Gjertsen, Ald. Diane Wulf, Ald. Kim Smith

13

14 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Deputy City Clerk JoAnn Marcon,
15 Planner/Zoning Inspector Katie Aspenson, City Engineer Jarrod Holter

16

17 Excused Absence: Ald. Jerry Every

18

19 **Item 2 – Discussion/Listening Session regarding improvements to the Unified Development**
20 **Code (Zoning Ordinance) as part of the Unified Development Code/Zoning Ordinance**
21 **Rewrite Project**

22

23 Jeff Miller, of Hoisington Kogler Group, Inc., introduced himself as the planner and the project
24 manager of the Unified Development Code/Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Project. Rita Trapp, also
25 of HKGi, introduced herself as a planner. Jeff said HKGi is a planning firm that was hired by
26 the City of Onalaska to assist with rewriting the UDC. The process began in May, and the
27 project will last through approximately the fall of 2019 (18 months). Jeff said HKGi's
28 presentation will be a brief overview of the project, followed by an open discussion with the
29 Common Council. Those in attendance also will be given the opportunity to provide input.

30

31 Jeff began his presentation by explaining that the purpose of this evening's meeting is to gather
32 input regarding what is and is not working with the UDC, which are the codes utilized for any
33 type of development within the city. Another objective is to determine how to improve the code
34 to achieve new, high-quality development where there is undeveloped land, which is minimal
35 within the city, and also to utilize with any redevelopment projects that occur in the future. Jeff
36 explained that the Unified Development Code is one section of the city's Code of Ordinances.
37 The Building Code is another section of the ordinance. This project will not address the
38 Building Code, but rather the Development Code. The UDC includes the city's zoning districts,
39 including Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Public and Semi-Public, and Agricultural, among
40 others. The UDC also includes special, or overlay districts that have more focused sets of
41 standards. Planned Unit Developments typically are development projects where a developer
42 wishes to do something that does not quite fit in the district. Jeff said a PUD becomes a

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43 negotiation of what the city wants in a particular area versus what a developer wants. There also
44 is a Bluff Protection District, a Floodplain District, a Downtown Form-Based District that
45 attempts to guide redevelopment in downtown Onalaska, a Medical Campus District. Jeff noted
46 there also is a section that lists standards so that each district has uses that are permitted.
47 Conditional Uses and their standards are included in that section. Jeff cited the example of a bed
48 and breakfast as a Conditional Use in a Residential District. Another section is Standards for
49 Accessory Uses, and they are specific to garages, signs, swimming pools, and sheds. The
50 General Performance Standards section relates to nuisances to adjacent properties such as
51 lighting, noise, and odors, and they only apply to Commercial Industrial uses. The Mobility
52 Standards section relates to parking, streets, and driveways. There is a Subdivision section, and
53 also a Development Review and Procedures section that addresses rezoning a property,
54 requesting a Conditional Use, a variance, or a subdivision.
55

56 Jeff explained the purpose of the project can be broken down into five objectives:
57

- 58 • Meet the requirements of State of Wisconsin Statutes regarding zoning and land
59 development. HKGi is working closely with the City Attorney to identify items that have
60 changed in state statutes and where the city's code might not yet be consistent with those
61 changes.
- 62 • Make the UDC easier to understand and utilize. Jeff noted the city's current UDC, which
63 was last updated in the 1960s, is between 300 and 400 pages and said it is not ideally
64 organized. Jeff said that while the city has done several amendments to the code in the
65 last decade, cities often do things "piecemeal" and oftentimes do not examine the entire
66 code. Jeff said the code will be made easier to utilize, including taking information and
67 placing it in tables that fit on one or two pages, wherever possible. There also will be
68 cross-referencing.
- 69 • Implement the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.
- 70 • Update the Zoning Map. The city laid out the desired future land uses over the next 20
71 years as part of the updated Land Use Plan. Jeff referred to the Commercial business
72 located along State Trunk Highway 16 and the area on the map zoned Light Industrial.
73 Jeff noted there is no industrial in this area and said the city's land use plan guides this
74 area as a Commercial district. Jeff said HKGi will look "very hard" at how to rezone this
75 section of STH 16 from Industrial to Commercial.
- 76 • Examine modernizing the city's development standards in the UDC. The goal will be to
77 ensure that any redevelopment or new development within the city is done in a high-
78 quality manner that is sensitive to what is already around those properties. Jeff said he
79 believes the City of Onalaska realizes there no longer is an infinite amount of land in the
80 city. Therefore, many of the changes that occur over the next 10 to 20 years will be
81 redevelopment or new development occurring around existing development, or
82 redevelopment of older structures. Jeff said the city is interested in having more mixed-
83 use development in the downtown area where Residential properties, Commercial

84 properties and restaurants may be closer together.

85

86 Jeff noted HKGi had recently worked on a similar project (rewriting the Zoning Code) with the
87 City of Winona, Minnesota. Jeff said the project has the following five phases:

88

89 • The initiation phase.

90 • Evaluate the current code and identify the issues the city wishes to improve. HKGi has
91 met and will meet with stakeholder groups and the public and obtain feedback about the
92 project's direction. This is typically done utilizing a Visual Preference Survey where
93 different types of development and redevelopment are shown, and individuals are asked
94 what they would and would not like to see in the future.

95 • Propose a new structure outline for the UDC during the winter.

96 • Rewrite the code during the winter and spring months.

97 • Present a full draft of the rewritten document, hold public hearings and obtain
98 recommendations, and adopt the new UDC by the end of 2019.

99

100 Jeff said HKGi said the rewrite will occur in modules, with the first part likely examining either
101 all or most of the zoning districts and determining what type of improvements need to be done to
102 them. Another part will be to examine all the standards. Jeff said HKGi also will spend a
103 significant amount of time examining the Zoning Map because he anticipates there could be
104 extensive rezoning. Jeff said the current development procedures are "confusing" and can be
105 time-consuming for developers and property owners. Therefore, a goal will be to streamline
106 those procedures. Jeff said community engagement, including this evening's session, is crucial.

107

108 Jeff said the primary things taken out of the city's Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

109

110 • The city established future land use categories. The city's zoning districts must be
111 consistent with what is shown on the Zoning Map. It is the city's goal to have more
112 mixed-use development where it fits into the city. Another goal is to offer more options
113 for Residential districts.

114 • Have mixed use in a smart growth fashion outside the downtown district.

115 • Revitalize the downtown and waterfront districts, which has begun.

116 • Enhance transportation corridors to make them more attractive, and look at what could go
117 on those corridors if they are redeveloped.

118 • Manage growth to preserve the community character.

119 • Have quality urban design.

120

121 Jeff said HKGi has toured the city with staff to see the different types of development issues its
122 team should be thinking about as the code is rewritten. The HKGi team also has met with city
123 staff, the Plan Commission, the Long Range Planning Committee, the La Crosse Area Builders
124 Association, and developers. Jeff said the feedback he had gotten from the Plan Commission

125 included ideas on how to engage the community. Members of the Plan Commission said they
126 believe HKGi should consider addressing accessory dwelling units; examine Conditional Use
127 Permits as state statutes have changed; examine simplifying regulations to promote
128 redevelopment, infill and reinvestment; and address housing standards, understanding the city's
129 role versus homeowners' associations.

130
131 Jeff addressed Planned Commercial Industrial Districts, a district the city uses to utilize almost
132 exclusively along the STH 16 corridor in the Commercial area, and he directed attention to the
133 Zoning Map and noted the diagonal lines over the properties are zoned for the PCID. Jeff said
134 the city has eliminated the PCID, and it must be determined how to proceed now that PCID no
135 longer is a zoning district. Jeff said HKGi will examine parking standards, screening and
136 landscaping, and lot coverage.

137
138 Rita said she will be leading a discussion this evening and told those in the audience the point of
139 the meetings that have been held is to listen. Rita said this evening's goal is to give community
140 members and members of the Common Council an opportunity to tell both her and Jeff the types
141 of things they need to understand in order to make recommendations, and as they review the
142 code, to be thinking about what does and does not work. Rita referred to questions being shown
143 on a slide, and she said she and Jeff want to hear from those in attendance if they have particular
144 areas of interest. Rita said she and Jeff also are trying to understand if there are inconsistencies
145 between the city's codes and the adopted policy. Rita asked those who have been involved with
146 developments within the city what has been hard to understand and utilize. Rita asked if there
147 are any sections that are outdated or unneeded; if there is a way to simplify the process; if there
148 are aspects of development or redevelopment in the city that have worked well; and if there are
149 concerns about a particular part of the city or a particular development. Rita referred to "hot-
150 button" topics she said HKGi typically sees when it works on development codes or hears about
151 from the community. These are topics HKGi will have to address, and they include parking,
152 screening/landscaping requirements, urban farming, accessory dwelling units, home occupations,
153 and mobile food vendors.

154
155 Rita asked those in attendance who has a business perspective, who belongs to City of Onalaska
156 commission or committee, and who has interest in a particular issue or topic.

157
158 Lois Riniker said she is interested in existing neighborhoods.

159
160 Patrick Clements noted there are no national chain restaurants such as Chick-Fil-A between
161 Minnesota and Wisconsin Dells, and he said the city has an opportunity to develop the city's tax
162 base and create jobs.

163
164 Jan Brock said she is interested in beautification.

165
166 An unidentified audience member said she is interested in what the plans are for the Strawberry
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167 Commons area, which is located adjacent to the City of Onalaska.

168

169 Dennis Aspenson, a local developer who also sits on the Parks and Recreation Board, said the
170 rewrite should address the actual process for working through different types of requests. Dennis
171 also said having a more clear direction is more important, noting there are instances when the
172 Common Council's vision differs from that of the Plan Commission, and the Plan Commission's
173 vision is different than that of the Community Development Authority. Dennis said, "There are
174 some real mixed signals, and we don't want to start the process and then get to the very end eight
175 months later and they say, 'No.' We can all take 'no' well, but we want to hear it sooner than
176 later because during that process it's costing everybody money and time."

177

178 Rita asked if there are any concerns about development that already has occurred in the
179 downtown district. Rita also asked if parking is a significant concern that must be examined.

180

181 An unidentified audience member said lighting is a concern.

182

183 Rita asked if anyone has concerns about landscaping, screening, or fencing; accessory dwelling
184 units; urban farming; and home occupations. Rita asked audience members if there any other
185 topics that are of high interest to them.

186

187 An unidentified audience member said Abbey Road might be opened from LB White to Kwik
188 Trip, and she asked if that topic will be discussed this evening.

189

190 City Administrator Rindfleisch said that topic will not be discussed this evening.

191

192 Mayor Chilsen told audience members he, the Common Council, city staff, and HKGi all are at
193 the Omni Center this evening to listen. Mayor Chilsen then invited Dennis Aspenson to begin
194 the discussion.

195

196 **Dennis Aspenson, Traditional Trades**

197 **1753 Pine Ridge Drive**

198 **Onalaska**

199

200 "You heard part of what I was saying. It not only would help the developers knowing sooner
201 what your vision is and what it isn't, but it also would help your department heads because that's
202 our basic first contact. If they're not feeling comfortable knowing exactly where you all are
203 coming from – and/or the Plan Commission – they don't say a whole lot. I think that will work –
204 maybe, kind of. From the developers' side, that whole process could take six months. If it's on
205 the fast track, [it could take] six months. More often, if it gets delayed, I have 30 days to take it
206 back to committee or pass it to another committee, you're adding 30 days all the time. As I had
207 indicated, time is money. Then you ask for revisions on things; we get it. But if you keep
208 sending us back to make revisions, that costs a lot of money and once again not only the

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209 company's time, but also staff's time. That gets pretty spendy. To kind of tie it all together, I
210 really think the citizens, your staff members, developers and builders need to hear from you guys
211 on what your vision is. I can stand here and tell you what my vision of downtown Onalaska is.
212 Take a look at that area and come up with a vision that we can all decide if we can develop it, or
213 is it cost-prohibitive so we back away from the project right away. But if all of your committees
214 are that way and up to speed, that would help everyone, including City Hall.”

215
216 Ald. Smith noted an audience member had stated existing neighborhoods is an area of concern to
217 her, and she said that also is an area of concern to the Council. Ald. Smith noted she had been
218 reelected as a Third District Alderperson this past April after having previously served in that
219 capacity, and she said the Comprehensive Plan had been updated prior to her reelection. Ald.
220 Smith said, “My vision for the city that I had developed over my years of service was the old
221 Comprehensive Plan. So coming back on [as an alderperson], in some areas I was quite
222 surprised to find out that the city's vision, the Comprehensive Plan, had changed and I no longer
223 was in sync with that. But I think that may be kind of what Dennis is talking about – not me
224 personally, but just us as a city. I don't think it's bad that over time things change as we learn
225 more, like now. We're updating this code because things have changed, and it's important for us
226 to stay current. In these few months I've been educating myself as to what our Comprehensive
227 Plan is now. I have opinions about strengths and weaknesses of the changes, but nonetheless that
228 is our Comprehensive Plan that a group of invested individuals put a lot of time and effort into
229 creating, and I do respect that Comprehensive Plan.

230
231 Specifically, one of the things that happened was [Dr. Leo] Bronston had a proposal to build a
232 multi-business structure off of [County Highway] PH. In my historic experience, I thought that
233 the Mayfair neighborhood – which, incidentally, I live in that neighborhood, so I'm more
234 familiar with what's going on there – I had thought that that neighborhood had already fought
235 and won the battle to preserve the neighborhood. So from my perspective, that's somewhat of an
236 encroachment into our neighborhood. I am saying it in plain terms because I think this is the
237 balance and the battle we're fighting all over the city because as our community grows, we know
238 that we are geographically limited. So as it grows, we're densifying the interior of our
239 community. That is part of the natural progression that is going to happen, and that's what
240 makes these tools even more important because we need to plan for them. We need to use things
241 to the wisest and best use that we can, and use what resources we have, bringing in experts when
242 we are able. That is one of the things I want to really stress. We do want to protect our
243 neighborhoods. We do want to limit encroachment into them. And when we do decide that we
244 are going to allow it, we need to allow it in a way that makes sense and it has the least amount of
245 impact into our well-established neighborhoods, because that's what makes this community a
246 great place to live. We love our neighborhoods; I think all of us do. We don't want to lose that
247 feeling of community that we have in Onalaska.”

248
249 Rita asked Lois Riniker to expound on her thoughts regarding existing neighborhoods.

250

251 **Lois Riniker**
252 **No address given**
253

254 Lois noted she resides in an older house in an older neighborhood located in the Second District,
255 and she said, “That’s why I’m here, because I want to keep the rest of my neighborhood looking
256 that way. I think I was at City Hall a couple years ago and talked to a couple people about that.
257 I live on 2nd Avenue North, on the corner of Locust Street and 2nd Avenue. Across the street and
258 down, there was an older home that was torn down. I was talking to another neighbor before I
259 came today, and she said [she thought] Dave Pertzsch had gone to a meeting about this home
260 being built and seemed to be fine with it. The house [was constructed], and it looks like four
261 storage units. All you see are four garage doors, and the house is in the back. It’s nice for them,
262 because they have a beautiful view of the lake. But the neighbors across the street, I wish you
263 could hear what they have to say about that. Drive up 2nd Avenue and you’ll see what I’m
264 talking about. It just looks like storage units, and it doesn’t enhance the character of our
265 neighborhood at all. On the 800 block of Main Street, a duplex was built between two older
266 homes, and all you see are big garage doors. I feel sorry for the people across the street who
267 have to look at that. One of the houses next door belonged to my great-great grandparents.
268 That’s a pretty old home, and to get a new duplex in there ... I’m not putting down the people
269 who built these, but had my son done this he would be in trouble. I think the people who built
270 these aren’t building them to live there themselves. They’re building them to rent them out.
271 Sometimes you know what kind of renters you get. I’ve driven by there when they’ve had
272 dumpsters in front and trash all over, so I know the owner of that isn’t living there.

273
274 Then, up on 2nd Avenue North, across from the bed and breakfast [Lumber Baron Inn], which is
275 such a lovely place and there are a lot of older homes going up, I think in the past few years three
276 duplexes have been built on 2nd Avenue. It’s an older part of town. Can’t we keep it that way?
277 I’ve talked to a lot of people who are kind of upset about this, and I said, ‘Why don’t you come
278 to meetings? Why don’t you call people at City Hall?’ They say, ‘They don’t listen to us,
279 anyway.’ I said if you don’t, they’re not ever going to know how you feel. I’m just hoping to
280 see some zoning changes for single-family dwellings, and to prohibit buildings that are
281 incompatible with the character of the neighborhood. A while back I think you had gotten out a
282 housing goals objectives and policies. Goal No. 2 was *‘to strengthen and support existing*
283 *Onalaska neighborhoods, and that new developments should be compatible and enhance the*
284 *character of the existing neighborhood, and to protect neighborhoods from incompatible land*
285 *uses.’* [Goal] No. 4 was, *‘to preserve historic homes both built in natural and existing*
286 *neighborhoods.’* [Goal] No. 5 was, *‘to encourage and support the maintenance and the*
287 *rehabilitation of older housing stock.’* There’s an example of a home on the corner of Irvin
288 Street and 3rd Avenue South. It’s right up from Dash-Park on the corner. I think all the railings
289 are down. There are garbage cans all over, and I just can’t understand how the owner of that
290 home can get by with that. It really doesn’t say a lot about the owners. Who wants to drive by
291 and see that? I know when Tom Skogen was living across the street up in the hill he had to look
292 at that, and I think at the time there was a big hearse in the front yard. I did call, and the city was

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293 really good to go and ... The hearse was parked in the back now and Tom couldn't see it, but
294 there's still garbage all over the yard, and I don't understand that either. Thank you for
295 listening."

296
297 **Jan Brock, member of Plan Commission**
298 **2949 Wild Rose Lane**
299 **Onalaska**

300
301 Jan noted she also is representing Centering Onalaska and said, "I'm not sure you can regulate
302 this in codes, but it's very, very important to our community, and that's beautification. One of
303 your original slides ... said, 'to create communities and enrich the lives of people who live
304 there.' Beautification does that. It helps us create a community where people love to live. One
305 of the things we do in Centering Onalaska is flower baskets. Other things we do are the holiday
306 decorations. These definitely enrich our community, especially in the historical district
307 downtown. Now we have that beautiful, 40-foot Christmas tree in Dash-Park. These aren't
308 necessarily in our codes. They kind of were there in landscaping, but in some way there needs to
309 be a collaboration between a civic group like ours and the community to encourage this type of
310 beautification in our community. Otherwise you have flower baskets that look like La Crosse's,
311 which are half the size of ours and don't look nearly so nice and Christmas wreaths that are this
312 big around instead of this big around. This is something that we really need to think about. I'm
313 not sure how you would codify this, but it's something that is important."

314
315 Mayor Chilsen asked building public-private partnerships could be an option.

316
317 Jan said it could be an option.

318
319 **Patrick Clements, President of Centering Onalaska**
320 **No address given**

321
322 "Our vision is to make this community beautiful. That's what we do. It's important to us to
323 make the City of Onalaska a place people want to come. It's curb appeal; that's how I see it.
324 When I'm driving down Main Street, whether it's in the summer or whether it's in the winter, I
325 want to live here. It's curb appeal, so how do we incorporate that idea into the codes? How do
326 we create partnerships with Centering Onalaska or other organizations to bring that community
327 pride and that community beautification to the city? That's one of the things we're here for: just
328 to give that voice where it is important for me. That's why I'm living in Onalaska. I moved to
329 Onalaska because I drove down Main Street in the wintertime when I was looking for a house.
330 It was La Crosse, Onalaska, Holmen. The Christmas trees were up, and [I said], 'This is where I
331 want to live.' Curb appeal matters. I don't know how we incorporate that. I don't know how
332 you bring that into the code, but I think it's something that we should look at as a community.
333 How do we expand Main Street? How do we keep Main Street looking good? [Those are the
334 things] that brings people to live here in Onalaska. ... As a citizen, I'm going to take the time to

335 say this. I get up in the morning, I turn my faucet on, and water magically appears. I get up in
336 the wintertime, and my streets are magically plowed. It's not magic. There are people out there
337 – men and women who work for our city – in the elements making this place a great place to
338 live. Our parks are not maintained; they're manicured. I can't find a piece of paper anywhere in
339 the City of Onalaska because we have people working for our city who are out there making this
340 a great place to live. If you could spread that to the department heads, as a citizen, thanks for
341 what you guys do.”

342
343 Rita asked Patrick if he believes there is anything in the code acting as a barrier preventing the
344 city from attracting other types of businesses.

345
346 Patrick noted he comes from a military background and he moved 18 times while serving in the
347 United States Air Force. Patrick said he spent a significant amount of time in the family
348 automobile, and his family would seek out places that had restaurants such as Five Guys or
349 Chick-Fil-A. Patrick said, “We have an opportunity here in Onalaska off – I don't care which
350 [Interstate 90] exit; 3, 4, or 5 – we need to put some really reasonable restaurants in here that will
351 bring tax money into us. It will bring people into Onalaska, and it will provide jobs for our
352 youth. There are some opportunities there. Part of it is I love Chick-Fil-A, so I have to drive
353 down to Dubuque to go there. We should have one here. Pick any restaurant you want – Five
354 Guys or whatever you want. There is an opportunity there for ... There's no place. Albert Lea
355 [Minnesota] is probably the last place you can get a pretty decent [meal] if you're traveling cross
356 country on a major interstate. Where are you going to find a place? The next place down the
357 road is Wisconsin Dells. We have an opportunity to capture that market and bring capital into
358 Onalaska.”

359
360 **Linda Schauberger, member of Centering Onalaska**
361 **No address given**

362
363 Linda noted she resides on Fair Meadow Way, which is at the end of Greens Coulee, and said
364 she has lived in the City of Onalaska for more than 30 years. Linda said, “We moved here
365 because I love Onalaska, too, and the beautification is what drew me to go into [Centering
366 Onalaska]. But this is an unrelated thing. We lived on top of Grand View Boulevard for 20-
367 some years. One of the things I think ... I don't know if it's been changed, but we had had a
368 neighbor who decided to put rope lighting on all four sides of his house – including his windows
369 and his mailbox – and the house glowed blue. When I came to the city asking, ‘What can we
370 do?’, the comment was, ‘There's nothing in the code regarding this.’ I said, ‘So I can put up red
371 lights all over my house and you can't stop me from doing it.’ So the question is, I don't mind if
372 they do it on the holidays. But when you're looking at this every single night you get really tired
373 of it. I think that's something that somebody needs to look at – is there a lighting code for
374 Residential? We had nothing to protect us back then until the guy moved. It's sort of
375 disheartening when you have a very nice house you built and realize that we couldn't do
376 anything about it. I'm just bringing that up because I don't know if anyone has thought about

377 that. If you don't have something in place ... We had nothing to protect us.”

378

379 **Mike Gargaro, Chair of the Community Development Authority**

380 **451 R. Stephen Place**

381 **Onalaska**

382

383 Mike noted he has been a City of Onalaska resident for the last 18 years and said the city also has
384 contracted with HKGi to look into redevelopment. Mike said the CDA is focusing its efforts on
385 State Trunk Highway 16 corridor and the Main Street corridor from Dash-Park south to Kwik
386 Trip. Mike he is interested in hearing ideas about restaurants or other business opportunities that
387 can be promoted so that individuals driving to jobs in the City of La Crosse from the Village of
388 Holmen will instead stop in the City of Onalaska.

389

390 Patrick Clements inquired about engine braking, asking if it already is addressed in the code.

391 Patrick also asked if it is something that should be included in the code.

392

393 Katie said the city has some standards in terms of maximum allowable noise in areas zoned
394 Residential versus areas zoned Commercial Industrial. Katie added the Police Department is
395 responsible for enforcing the Noise Ordinance, but she does not believe it is in this particular
396 section of the entire Code of Ordinances.

397

398 **Sharon Mahlum**

399 **No address given**

400

401 Sharon noted she resides on 13th Avenue South and said, “To go along with what Lois Riniker
402 said, my daughter lives on the 200 block of 3rd Avenue North, and she lives in one of your older
403 homes. She's working on doing a lot of remodeling. She did contact the city regarding ... At
404 some point she will want to be putting in a new garage. She was told that if she were to tear
405 down the existing garage, which is kind of connected to the house, and build a freestanding
406 garage, she would only be allowed a certain height. She [said], ‘If I build a garage I want it to
407 look like my house. I want it to be compatible.’ I guess that's kind of along what Lois is saying.
408 If you're going to enhance your property, it would be nice to be able to enhance it to go along
409 with your house instead of just building a box for a garage.”

410

411 Mayor Chilsen asked for input regarding temporary signage, include the type of temporary
412 signage. Mayor Chilsen said he is aware the city had completed a rather lengthy rewrite of the
413 Sign Ordinances, but he asked for input regarding yard signs for garage sales.

414

415 An audience member, who identified herself as being a member of Centering Onalaska, said she
416 does not object to garage sale signs as long as they are removed after the garage sale is finished.
417 She also said she objects to seeing signs nailed to utility poles.

418

419 Mayor Chilsen noted it is illegal to nail signs to utility poles.

420

421 The Centering Onalaska representative noted signs are not taken down, and she also noted at one
422 time residents were allowed to only have two garage sales per year. She added the individual
423 signs must be taken down at a certain point,

424

425 Rita said she does not know what the regulations are regarding signage for items such as
426 Halloween costume sales and fireworks, and she asked the individual if she has a negative
427 perception of such signage.

428

429 The Centering Onalaska representative said she does not want to see those signs, adding there are
430 times when individuals put out several garage sale signs instead of one or two.

431

432 Mayor Chilsen asked if this is a topic that should be examined.

433

434 The Centering Onalaska representative said she does not know if there is an existing ordinance
435 regarding this type of signage.

436

437 Mayor Chilsen said, “We can look at everything and anything.”

438

439 The Centering Onalaska representative said she is uncertain if it is an issue to prioritize, adding
440 she has items on her list that she believes should be prioritized. She also said she likes what
441 already has been done to beautify the city, adding she appreciates everything the city has been
442 doing. She said she hopes Centering Onalaska can work with the city as a partner.

443

444 Another Centering Onalaska member addressed the redevelopment of the Main Street corridor
445 between Dash-Park and Kwik Trip, asking if there can be a requirement not to have solid cement
446 outside a business’ front door and suggesting perhaps requiring that bushes or trees be planted in
447 the front. She complimented Gerrard-Hoeschler Realtors, who constructed their offices on the
448 former Country Kitchen site, for the landscaping in front of its building.

449

450 Ald. Smith said another concern her constituents have raised pertains to lighting; specifically,
451 business lighting. Ald. Smith said, “Oftentimes business lighting, although it has to meet the
452 current requirements and not spill out of the property line and show down in the parking lots,
453 oftentimes there are signs advertising the business. I’ll use a specific business – Arby’s is the
454 one that was brought up to me by somebody. It is a very bright orange light, and although it may
455 meet the rules we have right now, it’s visible from a very far distance. One of the things I know
456 that is done in other communities is during a certain period of time when the businesses are
457 closed those lights are turned off. While I realize people want to attract business and traffic from
458 [I-90], I’m wondering if we can look at possibly having zones where lights are turned off when
459 businesses are closed. I think it would be better for the environment, sustainability, and also the
460 beautification of our community.”

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461
462 Jeff Miller said electronic signs may have automatic dimmers.
463
464 Katie said they are required to have the dimmers.
465
466 Jeff Miller said that might be a possibility for the other signs.
467
468 Patrick Clements addressed individuals holding signage advertising establishments that are going
469 out of business and individuals who are pandering, asking if the code addresses the rules for such
470 situations.
471
472 Katie said the city's previous Sign Ordinance stated any temporary sign had to be at least 5 feet
473 back from the setback. The city's new Sign Ordinance states someone advertising a business –
474 for example, a Liberty Tax employee dressed as the Statue of Liberty – must be 10 feet into the
475 property. This was done in an attempt to reduce the potential of traffic accidents.
476
477 Patrick inquired about panhandlers who hold signs near the offramps, asking where the city
478 addresses these situations.
479
480 Katie said this typically is a law enforcement issue.
481
482 An unidentified individual noted she lived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa approximately 10 years ago
483 and said there consistently were problems with panhandlers at the same corners. The individual
484 said a newspaper reporter followed the panhandlers home and discovered they lived in a house
485 located in Davenport, Iowa. She said the individual driving the panhandlers to Cedar Rapids was
486 being paid approximately \$200 a day. She said individuals who wished to panhandle in Cedar
487 Rapids first needed to obtain a certification from City Hall. She also noted panhandlers in
488 Onalaska are standing at the end of Main Street, and she said motorists are slowing down to give
489 them money and thus delaying traffic.
490
491 Rita said that while that topic falls outside of zoning, it is beneficial for city leaders to hear it.
492 Rita said that topic will not be addressed this evening.
493
494 Mayor Chilsen addressed parking, noting it always has been an issue for the city. Mayor Chilsen
495 cited the example of individuals stating that there is nowhere to park in downtown La Crosse.
496 However, his UW-La Crosse students conducted a study that concluded customers at Valley
497 View Mall walk farther than they would have to in downtown La Crosse. Mayor Chilsen said,
498 "It's a perceptual thing, and we have a perceptual parking issue – and probably a real parking
499 issue. If we get too many more people or businesses downtown ... Screening and fencing is
500 always an issue when it comes to quieting mechanisms for developers. Neighbors are always
501 concerned about how loud it's going to be and those types of issues. I think we do a pretty good
502 job of that right now. I think we quiet things down pretty good and keep landscaping and
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503 screening and fencing pretty good.”

504

505 Mayor Chilsen next addressed urban farming, noting one citizen had inquired about allowing
506 chickens within the city, but the individual did not follow up after the Plan Commission had
507 placed the item on its agenda. Mayor Chilsen said there have been issues regarding accessory
508 outbuildings and that he believes it is an issue that must be examined thoroughly. Mayor Chilsen
509 also said he would like to see “some kind of movement” on mobile food trucks because he
510 believes they would provide a spark to the waterfront area.

511

512 Mike Gargaro asked Mayor Chilsen about his comment regarding a lack of downtown parking
513 and the city growing too much, stating he is not sure what he means by that.

514

515 Mayor Chilsen said, “I don’t think we can ever grow too much, just not practically. We just
516 don’t have that kind of space anymore. If I said that, I misspoke. That was not my intention.”

517

518 Dennis asked, “Does the city realize that they’re going to have to partake in the downtown?
519 Then we’ll talk about a parking ramp. It hadn’t crossed my mind until sitting here. Is the city
520 willing to go out on the edge?”

521

522 Mayor Chilsen asked, “And put some money toward it?”

523

524 Dennis said, “It would be nice. That point is going to come along, if it isn’t now. You can’t put
525 it on the developer to create all those parking spots and then we hear, ‘There’s no grass or
526 trees.’”

527

528 Mayor Chilsen said, “I would think that public and private partnerships is where that all comes
529 in. And I don’t think we do as much of that as we could or should. That’s kind of the way the
530 development game is being played now. It’s much different than it was years ago.”

531

532 Ald. Olson noted he also sits on the CDA and said the CDA had had “a very good meeting” this
533 week with the HKGi representatives and what they are doing for the city. Ald. Olson said, “It’s
534 a very exciting time to be an elected official in Onalaska because the future looks really good.
535 We got some information from them, and it just restores in us the things that are positive about
536 our community because we do have the best mix of real estate in any city. We have better,
537 outside of Rochester, Minnesota – and that encompasses a lot of area. There are a lot of good
538 things about this community, and we can build on those. We’re getting some information now to
539 make those decisions about what the future is going to look like, and we want all of you to
540 participate in this so we can get your ideas as some of this comes forward.

541

542 Mike [Gargaro] is absolutely right in the things we’re talking about. We talked about the
543 parking issue for downtown. That has got to be solved if we’re going to make downtown viable.
544 There is no question about that. It’s an exciting time. There are a lot of good people involved in

545 this, and we're proud to have [the HKGi consultants] on board because they're bringing us some
546 really good information. When I tell you about business and what the future could look like, it's
547 very positive. It's a good time to be alive here."

548
549 Ald. Wulf noted this is her seventh year serving on the Common Council, and also that she has
550 been involved with the City of Onalaska since 2000. Ald. Wulf said, "One thing that kind of
551 stands out to me – one of many – is home occupations. I see a number of people who have come
552 before the city who have wanted to, for example, run a business out of their home. And I believe
553 a majority of the time it hasn't been an issue. There's only been a very small number that I can
554 personally remember that have been denied. But I think that ties in with what one of the ladies
555 ... A couple of you talked about you don't want the new construction to change the feel of your
556 neighborhood. I kind of tie that into when someone wants to do a business out of their home,
557 whatever it may be. I also believe that should not change the feel of the neighborhood. I think
558 that our Planning Department has done a really good job of helping guide people with what
559 they're allowed to do and what they can't. There have only been a couple that I can remember in
560 all my years with the city have been denied, and that's when they wanted to have a full-time
561 employee at their house, [or] when they're going to have deliveries so many times a week and
562 you're adding additional vehicle traffic to the neighborhood when it's already a full
563 neighborhood.

564
565 When I look at a number of these things, I think the Plan Commission does a fabulous job
566 working with staff and staff's recommendations, and listening to public input. If someone comes
567 forward and [makes a request asking] to help with [the] neighborhood, it seems like reasonable
568 people can agree. I just don't think that we have issues with a large number of these that, for me
569 personally, I just don't see anything to change unless staff were to come up with
570 recommendations or public input says there's an issue. I just don't see problems with
571 landscaping or screening fencing or home occupations." Ald. Wulf asked if the issue of mobile
572 food vendors had gone before the Parks and Recreation Board.

573
574 Katie said, "On city property."

575
576 Ald. Wulf said she, like Patrick Clements, appreciates being a City of Onalaska citizen, noting
577 she has lived here since 1992. Ald. Wulf said, "I don't see a lot of issues that we have. There
578 are always things that can be tweaked, and that's why you're here tonight: to tell us what those
579 things are."

580
581 Ald. Binash addressed the STH 16 and the 2nd Avenue/Main Street corridors, noting HKGi will
582 be working with the city on developing those areas. Ald. Binash said he has heard people who
583 attend Tuesday evening concerts in the David Reay's/Dash-Park area leave when they are
584 finished because there is nothing to keep them there. Ald. Binash said there have been
585 suggestions about possibly turning houses into specialty shops, as has been done in the City of
586 Tomah, in an attempt to attract visitors to the downtown area. Ald. Binash also noted there is a

587 proposed apartment complex that would be constructed near the Great River Landing, and he
588 asked if the substation will be relocated, and what can be developed in that area if it is relocated.
589

590 Ald. Binash said, “One of the things to address the concerns about existing neighborhoods was a
591 bar and a house were going to be built in an existing neighborhood. [The individuals in] the
592 neighborhood all spoke against it, the Council listened and they didn’t approve it. [Regarding]
593 the downtown district development area, there are certain specifications you have to follow in
594 order to build down there. When we do that, is it going to be compatible with some of the ideas
595 that people might want to use their house as a craft store or an antique shop. Is that going to be
596 in conflict with the downtown district area? Highway 16 is going to be looked at [regarding]
597 what we can develop out there, what kind of businesses. One of the other things that I hear a
598 great deal about is affordable housing. Where are we going to put that in the City of Onalaska?
599 As we know, there are a great deal of apartment complexes being built to the north of us. And
600 there’s going to be a lot more traffic going down Sand Lake Road, [State Trunk] Highway 35,
601 and [U.S.] Highway 53. Do we take advantage of the traffic patterns for growth within the city?
602 What kind of businesses do we want in the city? These are things that, as we go along, there is a
603 Comprehensive Plan. There are plans in process for both the downtown corridor and the
604 Highway 16 corridor. Do we build things up on Sand Lake Road? Do we want to keep existing
605 neighborhoods? There’s a lot that’s going on.”

606
607 Ald. Binash noted he also sits on the CDA and the Plan Commission and said he has heard the
608 citizens’ concerns. Ald. Binash said, “I think that is being addressed. Working with developers
609 was a concern. Hopefully with this coming up it will help Onalaska with its vision for the future
610 because the tax base is very important. We may run out of space at some point in time unless we
611 annex. When we annex, we may have to look at our ordinances and see how that works with the
612 property that we are annexing.”

613
614 **Craig Breitsprecher, Plan Commission representative**
615 **613 4th Avenue North**
616 **Onalaska**

617
618 “The first thing I want to say is, in my line of work I’ve had the opportunity to work with a lot of
619 different plan commissions over the years, and city counsels. I will tell you that as a group, in
620 this community we have some of the finest people that I’ve ever seen on these groups. That’s
621 why I continue to be part of that, because I think they’re very capable, dedicated people. I think
622 Jim Olson hit on something downtown that’s going to be a challenge for us, and I think that’s
623 when we try to look at parking in terms of on-street parking. It’s problematic right now because
624 even entering Main Street from the side streets close to that 2nd Avenue corridor, having those
625 first parking stalls filled as you’re entering, you can’t see traffic coming. It’s a challenge right
626 now, and it’s going to get worse as traffic hopefully increases, so that’s something I think we’re
627 going to have to look at in the future. Jim Binash pointed out with our Downtown Overlay Zone
628 that there are criteria in place that I think, whether it’s the Common Council or whether it’s the
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629 Plan Commission, we put in place that allow development to take place. But I think one of the
630 things that has to happen downtown is the businesses that are in the downtown area really need
631 to determine, or help us determine, what is their vision? They need to create an identity for
632 themselves. I think of a small town like Lanesboro, Minnesota. They've developed themselves
633 into a summertime tourist downtown, and it's incorporated a lot of the things, whether it's
634 antique shops, whether it's gift shops, or whether it's a winery. There's a whole bevy of things
635 to do down there when you're in that community besides ride the bike trail. The downtown
636 businesses really need to be part of that development where they're determining a vision that can
637 help us put the things in place that will help them succeed in their vision. Sitting up here and
638 having us tell them what they need to do probably isn't the solve-all.

639
640 Beyond that, I don't think there are a lot of challenges that aren't being looked at consistently in
641 the city. I think by and large we do that fairly well. One of things Dennis brought up is
642 understanding our vision, and as far as the Plan Commission, in my perspective it's really not
643 about our vision. It's evaluation of the projects that come before us, applying the ordinances as
644 they currently exist, asking the right questions to protect the general good, and moving forward
645 accordingly. It's less about our individual vision. I think that it is about the community vision as
646 established in the long-range plan."

647
648 **Adjournment**

649
650 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Gjertsen, to adjourn at 8:06 p.m.

651
652 On voice vote, motion carried.

653
654
655 Recorded by:

656
657 Kirk Bey