

June 1, 2020

Dear Members of the La Crosse City Planning Committee—

I write today in support of Dr. Ariel Beaujot's request for continued administrative funding of the La Crosse *Hear, Here* oral history project. I work as a UWL colleague of Dr. Beaujot, in the English Department, which has partnered to support *Hear, Here* in various ways—financially and conceptually. In 2017, I worked closely with Ariel on the *Hear, Here Poetry* project, which added downtown La Crosse poems to the audio archive of *Hear, Here*. That part of the project was significant to the literary and arts community for the ways it brings creative work into contact with the public sphere, showcasing the value of contemporary literature and the arts.

While these outcomes are significant benefits to the public good, I think that the greater value of the project lies in its ability to *give people a voice* in the construction of our community. The stories in the *Hear, Here* archive are part of who we are. They make up our local identity. And they're recorded and presented by individual citizens. In a time when it's easy to see the results of disenfranchisement in communities around the country, *Hear, Here* creates a site where people can participate in creating their community. This, in my mind, is a tremendous benefit to the public good—one that warrants continued support and, hopefully, even expansion. I know that a plan is in place to expand the project to the North Side of La Crosse, which would open the archive to an even greater diversity of voices in our community. Dr. Beaujot is a tremendous fund-raiser, and I know that many organizations have supported the project with significant funding, and I believe that the future of the project will include financial support from a variety of sources. Right now, the hope is that the City of La Crosse can keep the project up by supporting its administrative costs.

I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee might direct to me, or to speak on behalf of *Hear, Here* at a meeting or public hearing. Feel free to contact me using the information below.

Thanks for your consideration, and your work on behalf of our community in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

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