



City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Meeting Minutes - Final

Board of Zoning Appeals

Monday, November 16, 2020

4:00 PM

Council Chambers

Call to Order, Roll Call

Cherf called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and announced that alternate member, Lu Seloover would be finishing out her term and not continuing on the Board. Members applauded her commitment to the Board. Cherf then explained the meeting procedure, called the roll, and opened the public hearing.

Present: 5 - Douglas Farmer, James Cherf, Anastasia Gentry, Delores Spies, George Kimmet

Also present (in audience): Joe Ledvina, Lu Seloover (BOZA Alternate Member)

Variance Appeals:

[2651](#)

An appeal regarding the requirement to provide a vision clearance triangle at the northeast corner of a property known as 1111 7th St. S., La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Jon Molledahl, representing Community Risk Management (the inspection department), was sworn in to speak. Molledahl states that the La Crosse School District has applied for a permit to construct an addition to Hamilton School. Per municipal code section 115-149(d) the vision clearance of this district shall not be less than 10 feet, determined by measuring ten feet each way from the corner lot at the street intersection on each street lot line. At this property the proposed vision clearance is zero feet. For this project to proceed as proposed a variance of 10 feet will need to be granted.

Molledahl shows a site plan of the addition and points out where the vision clearance area is at the corner. He shows an elevation from the street, looking at the new addition. He shows a close-up of the corner and points out the building and the proposed new intersection which will have bump-outs for safety purposes in the crosswalk. Farmer asks if the vision clearance is from the inside of the sidewalk; Molledahl responds in the affirmative. Farmer asks if the bump-out is on the School's property or the City's; Molledahl responds that it is City right-of-way. Farmer asks who is putting the bump-out in and Molledahl states that the City will be installing.

Farmer says he can technically see why they are here because of the inside of the sidewalk is where the measurement is taken, but obviously there is a mitigating factor in the fact that the bump-out pushes the vision clearance out. Molledahl states that the bump-outs do limit the effects of necessity of the vision corner probably, because of the distance from the street. Kimmet asks if what the distance is from the corner of the building to the corner of the bump-out. Molledahl states that a typical city sidewalk is 6 feet wide and the boulevard is another 5 feet, a bump-out adds another 5 to six feet, so from the back of the sidewalk would be roughly 16 to 17 feet.

Molledahl brings up his last slide showing an overhead view of the property and points out where the addition will be placed. He also states that the intersection at 8th and Johnson will be redone.

Speaking in Favor:

Joe Ledvina, 4071 Starlite Drive, La Crosse, is sworn in to speak. Ledvina starts by giving some history on the project. He says the project started about three years ago and it started with a vision that they'd start a neighborhood school in a community that was lacking some amenities. A focus group of 100 people was created; from that process they looked for community partners for funding: Gundersen Lutheran, Boys & Girls Club, and City CDBG are helping with funds. What this project will do is create an addition of a community room which will be able to be accessed by the community and there will be an area where people can get healthcare. There will be a gymnasium, a new LMC, and the current LMC will be turned into four additional classrooms.

Ledvina states that Hamilton School sits on 2.03 acres, which is the smallest school site that the School District of La Crosse, so they need to make the best use of the property. Ledvina says they have been planning the project with the City Planning and Street departments for the last year, they have been before the Board of Public Works, and the City Planning Commission (CPC). Ledvina says the bump out is part of the whole project and is being paid for by the School District; he states that the bump-out allows for the vision clearance, but they need the variance because the vision clearance that is created is not on their property. Ledvina states that this project is creating 22 parking spots which will be available to the neighbors. Farmer asks for the acreage and Ledvina again states that it is 2.03.

Cherf states that there is reference (in the application) to discussions during the development phase about abandoning or vacating the street; he asks why that was not done. Ledvina responds that they wanted to do that so they could move the building out, but because of buried utilities, it was not a good option. Ledvina adds that they moved the building back to its original location and actually farther back after more discussion. Spies asks if it would be possible to cut the corner of the building off in order to meet the vision clearance requirement. Ledvina says they could've done that but they decided it was critical to use the space for the community.

Speaking Opposition: None

Farmer: I would move for the variance to be granted; a variance of 10 feet required for the vision clearance and mindful that they adhere to the aspects of the law because they've created a de facto effective vision clearance. The unique property limitation is obviously the school is located on 2.03 acres; from my time on the school board the State requires 15 acres and this is the smallest school site in the district. Space is very limited. That creates a congestion not normally found. The School District has imaginatively found a solution with the bump-out, developing an effective de facto vision clearance. The public safety wouldn't be jeopardized because you do have the de facto vision clearance. And finally, the unnecessary hardship if we didn't grant it the solution is to cut the corner off the building. Every corner is an additional expense and they wouldn't be able to maximize the space and so a site that already has limited utility because it is so small would be further limited.

Kimmet: I second.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Farmer, Cherf, Gentry, Spies, Kimmet

Adjournment

Motion by Spies, second by Seloover, to adjourn at 4:23 p.m. Motion carried.