

Elsen, Nikki

From: elsenn@cityoflacrosse.org
Subject: FW: Amendment

From: Michael Garvey <michaelgarveymail@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, June 10, 2024 6:53 PM

To: Elsen, Nikki <elsenn@cityoflacrosse.org>; Kahlow, Chris <kahlowc@cityoflacrosse.org>; Mindel, Mackenzie <mindelm@cityoflacrosse.org>; Trost, Jennifer <trostj@cityoflacrosse.org>; Dickinson, Tamra <dickinsont@cityoflacrosse.org>; Kiel, Mac <kielm@cityoflacrosse.org>; Chris Woodard <chris.woodard715@gmail.com>; Sleznikow, Larry <sleznikowl@cityoflacrosse.org>; Neumann, Mark <neumannm@cityoflacrosse.org>; Goggin, Erin <goggine@cityoflacrosse.org>; Janssen, Barb <janssenb@cityoflacrosse.org>; Happel, Douglas <happeld@cityoflacrosse.org>; Karl Green <kgreen2264@gmail.com>; schwartzr@cityoflacrosse.org

Cc: Andrew Elliott <aelliott1977@gmail.com>; Michelle Lee Elliott <melee1@gmail.com>; Jennifer Garvey <garvey.jennifer@mayo.edu>

Subject: Amendment

Council Members,

Jen and I are writing to ask that the Council not adopt the proposal to amend section 115-34. We urge City Council members to at least consider a stay of action to allow for a more nuanced and careful discussion and study of this amendment.

We object to the proposed amendment because it flies in the face of the spirit and purpose of the 12-month prohibition on refiling of rejected petitions. It also would seem to undermine the authority and procedures of the Council itself: only weeks ago this same proposal was carefully and duly reviewed, with scrutiny by Council Members and citizens alike, and ultimately rejected by the Council.

My neighbor, Andrew Elliott, has also noted that the proposed amendment to the city's ordinance is dependent on a somewhat shaky basis of a "substantial change in circumstances ". He notes that this "substantial change in circumstance" is the result of strong lobbying by the well-connected special interest group, REACH, which wishes to revive the identical petition that encountered unexpected and effective resistance only a few weeks ago by the citizens in the neighborhood who would be directly impacted by it. The apparent "substantial change in circumstances" upon which this zombie petition's rise from the dead is based seems tenuous at best.

That the petition, in identical form as was presented only weeks ago, could now be brought forth once again using parliamentary sleight-of-hand would also seem to be an insult to the City Council itself. There have been justifications for the rebirth of this rejected petition through a very contortionist semantic logic on the part of City officials who appear to be uncomfortably--and perhaps inappropriately--cozy with the petitioners, the REACH special interest group. I don't think it would be hyperbole to note that this unseemly process appears to bulldoze through the established democratic norms and processes of the city council process as it has served the city and its citizens so successfully for many decades.

There is yet another argument against this headstrong and unseemly eager rush to reintroduce this petition. Several Council members have stated that they would like to see communication between the REACH Center and the surrounding neighborhood. For weeks, our neighborhood has been working to establish a meaningful and substantive Good Neighbor Agreement, a concept first introduced by the REACH special interest group itself. The REACH, however, has shown little interest in the earnest negotiation of a neighborhood agreement, and instead appear to have been using the concept as a sop to council members who would like to see apparent cooperation in the neighborhood. We must be clear: there is no "good neighbor agreement," and it is my personal opinion that the REACH special interest group has no interest in negotiating a meaningful and substantive one. Its primary goal is to use such an agreement simply to make the appearance of caring about the concerns of citizens in the neighborhood to provide cover while it pursues its agenda. This arrogant and frankly (I am sorry to say) mendacious approach to the surrounding neighborhood is borne out also by the track record of the REACH over the past 3 years, well documented in previous city council meetings and in postings by my neighbors for the record in Legistar.

Whether or not city Council members feel that the established process of careful examination and adjudication has been violated or railroaded by this end-run around the process, I would appeal to them to allow the neighborhood more time to address the juggernaut of action by the very well-connected and funded REACH special interest group. I would urge council members to consider a delay before voting on the amendment as proposed. It is summer. Those citizens who live around The REACH Center who would be most impacted by what amounts to a large commercial establishment smack in the middle of a delicate but growing neighborhood, have full-time jobs, children to raise, and community activities in our own right. It would seem to be the right thing to do to provide a little more time to educate other neighbors about what the revived petition would entail, as well as to allow for more nuanced public conversation and consideration of its long-term impacts.

Very sincerely,
Jen, Mike, Max and Danica Garvey
221 10th Street, South, La Crosse