

Dear Council Member:

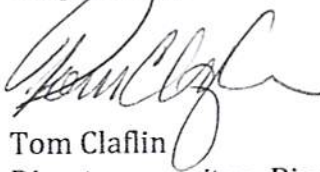
A week ago or so, in a letter to the La Crosse Tribune editor, I expressed a concern that we were putting our state-wide natural resources at great risk by removing or reducing the environmental regulations regarding sand mines, high-capacity wells and such. I suggested that the rivers, streams, forests, bluffs and other valuable resources constitute our endowment; an endowment passed along to us by previous generations for us to do the same for those to come along after us. I likened it to a situation whereby a fiscally sound organization decides to spend their endowment to either grow or simply maintain a desired level of day-to-day business. Outcomes are most often predictable when that occurs. When the endowment is depleted the organization collapses.

I believe the very same principles apply to the La Crosse Center/Riverside Park proposal. Riverside Park constitutes a significant part of the endowment of the citizens of La Crosse. It is an important connection and venue for people to interact with the Mississippi River. Furthermore, it was created with the idea that people would enjoy it in perpetuity.

I understand that an addition to the center would attract additional commerce and tourism. But to imperil and lessen the value of the park simply to increase cash flow for the immediate future seems to me to be short-sighted. To say that the project would only affect an "under-used" portion of the park is fiction. The value of a park area cannot be equated simply with the number of people present at any given time. In fact, many people prefer the quiet and solitude of being alone in a park space. Furthermore, projects such as these always have impacts that extend beyond their physical boundaries. Like many projects that have environmental consequences, as often as not, the true cost of the use of the environment is difficult to accurately calculate. The irretrievable losses that would be experienced in Riverside Park may well result in a long-term net-negative outcome.

I simply cannot believe that the council doesn't have time to debate the issue again and to return to a planning process to develop an acceptable compromise. Let's stop chasing the buck for a while and consider our fortune in having a resource like the Mississippi River and Riverside Park at our doorstep.

Respectfully,



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