

File 2615
Submitted 9/19/18

Request for Variance to 2422 Onalaska Ave.

My wife Jeannie and I have been residents of Lacrosse for 33 years. We chose Lacrosse to live because of it's beauty, friendly people and family atmosphere. I rode through this area on my 10 speed bike back in 1980 on my way to Canada from the Chicago area. The next 5 years were spent serving our country as a Construction Electrician in the US Navy Seabees. When it was time to leave active duty My wife Jeannie and our family decided to move to lacrosse because of that one day when I rode through. Jeannie and I bought the property at 2422 Onalaska ave in 1987 and settled in to raise our children and became an active part of the community. Over all those years we have stayed grounded in this community, encouraged Jeannie's family to move to the area and now have another generation of family being raised on the Northside. Both Jeannie and I decided to go back to college and for 4 years raised our family and studied to become teachers Jeannie an art teacher and I a social studies and special ed teacher. We were determined to stay in the area no matter what.

Adversity hit us hard with medical issues for Jeannie resulting in her getting cancer and loosing her eyesight. In order to save her life, she had to have her eyes removed in 2010. As an art teacher this should have been devastating to her, yet she has stood fast and is determined to teach art using different and unique methods. This new house will have a clay studio in the garage for her to continue her art, and teach others with disabilities, as well as provide a meeting place for friends and acquaintences.

Adversity again struck in 2016 as I began having severe nerve issues with my feet. Working through the VA, it was determined after amputations and many critical procedures that I was exposed to toxins while on active duty and the nerve damage that is affecting my body is severe and ongoing. My prognosis is not good for the future. I am loosing the full use of my feet and legs and the progression is such that within a short amount of time I will be wheelchair bound. I am now 100% service connected. When the VA contacted us about helping us stay in our home, it was determined that the only way to really plan for the future was to build a house that we could both live in for the coming years. They offered us grant money to help with the process but we have to adhere to strict ADA guidelines for the grant to be awarded, We have spent the last year working with everyone we can to put together a plan that would both keep us safe and allow for future disability issues. We chose to stay on the Onalaska property for a number of reasons including; Jeannie's understanding of the area, having lived sighted for 26 years there. The neighbors, who have been very supportive. Our family including our grandchildren, who live across the street and the close proximity to services and stores that Jeannie has used to live as normal a life as possible. Our hope for the future is that we can live together and take care of each other for many years to come, also it is our dream to invite others with disabilities into our home. The ramp and driveway play the most important role in not only getting us in and out of our home but also to be a welcoming entrance for people with mobility and visual issues. Public spaces are sometimes the only other place to meet for people with disabilities, we want to open our home to them and the ramps and driveway is the only way to effectively do that.

The V A inspector came by yesterday and determined that we would qualify for those grant funds as long as these ordinance issues were resolved. We hope that you will understand our situation and approve the variance for 2422 Onalaska Ave. so we can move on to our new lives in our old neighborhood on the Northside. Sincerely, Jeff and Jeannie Nylander