

Elsen, Nikki

From: Margy Frazier <margyfrazier1991@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 10, 2020 9:01 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Regarding 7/9 vote on CIP

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Council Members,

I was frustrated and saddened to hear the tone of last night's meeting regarding line 8 of the 2021-2025 Capital Improvement Plan. First and foremost, please know I am not here to wag my finger and demand you abolish the police department; I so respect the officers that I've interacted with in the work that I do. That said, I am disheartened by the blatant disregard of the community's concerns regarding line 8.

My husband and I live on Market and 9th; I have also worked in the neighborhood for the last six years. The things I have seen help our community thrive have not been an increased police presence; they have been things such as the lighting projects on Market and 7th, Viterbo's relationship with the Boys and Girls Club, the Exchange, the Place of Grace, and the Coulee Region Recovery Center. Things that have been harmful are of course our poverty rate, our existing in a food desert (including the consistently empty food pantries outside of our neighborhood schools), and the continued loss of affordable housing. An increased police presence will not solve these underlying issues; police officers play a crucial role in our community, but we cannot ask them to be all things. To see a focus on a public safety facility when these challenges exist feels detached and presumptive.

Many serious, thoughtful concerns were raised prior to your 7/9 meeting regarding the timing of the proposed land acquisition (being that we are in a pandemic) and the massive spending that will go into this facility, as well as the community feeling they have not had a chance to speak into the plan. Instead of meeting these concerns, I heard many of you brush them aside as unoriginal form letters from people who 'don't even live in La Crosse.' I have read the 71 page PDF that contains the emails that have been added to the public record (including mine); many of them are personalized, from citizens living in the Washburn/Powell-Pouge-Hamilton neighborhoods. These were dismissed and downplayed; in fact, the only letter that was read was one of the few in support of the proposed facility.

To (metaphorically) roll your eyes and say there were chances a couple of years ago for public input is not enough. The public shared they did not feel they had those opportunities. I understand how hard it is to solicit feedback. It's unfortunately a large part of my work, too. :) In situations such as these, I am hopeful that you agree it is vital to go above and beyond in soliciting that feedback. Such backlash suggests that perhaps the project should be put on hold while members of the neighborhood are sought out and provided spaces to speak to their needs and share their lived experiences with you.

I know the work you do is hard, and I fully trust that every one of you is a good and thoughtful person who is a public servant because you want to do what is best for your constituents. Because I believe this, I need you to hear that people were hurt by your dismissal and your attempt to get the vote over with as quickly as possible. I am asking that you provide more widely advertised and accessible opportunities for public engagement in the future, and make an effort to make decisions that are formed by the public's opinions and concerns.

Thanks for sticking through this missive of an email with me! I truly am grateful for the heavy work you do, and hope the conversation will continue as many of you promised it would.

Be well,
Margy

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