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Subject: Public Comment on Resolution 25-0599

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Public Comment on Resolution 25-0599 – Proposed Stormwater Utility Rate Increase
City of La Crosse Common Council | June 5, 2025

Good Morning, Council Members,

My name is Robert Spencer, and I am a resident of La Crosse. I'm here today to strongly urge you to **vote NO on Resolution 25-0599**, which proposes a 120% increase in stormwater utility rates, with additional increases through 2029. While I fully support responsible stormwater management and environmental protection, this proposal is simply **unreasonable, inequitable, and fiscally short-sighted**.

Let's be clear: this is not just a technical adjustment—it's a major financial decision that affects every household, every business, and every nonprofit in our city. Under this plan, the annual fee for a typical homeowner would increase from \$53 to nearly \$119 starting July 1st—more than doubling in a single year, with additional hikes likely to follow.

Many residents are already struggling with inflation, rising utility bills, and housing costs. A sudden, steep increase like this, without sufficient community engagement or a clear phased approach, **hits hardest those who can afford it the least**.

What's most frustrating is that this situation was avoidable. The city failed to adjust rates gradually over the last 14 years. Cash reserves were drained to fund capital projects, dropping from \$5 million to under \$300,000, without turning to more sustainable funding mechanisms, like municipal bonds, which are standard tools for infrastructure investment. This proposal is a reaction to years of **poor financial planning**, not a proactive or community-centered solution. And now residents are being asked to pay for that mismanagement in a way that's regressive and abrupt.

I ask the Council to pause this rate increase and return to the table with a plan that:

- Spreads costs more gradually,
- Seeks input from residents and small businesses,
- Considers a fairer rate structure, and
- Uses responsible financing tools to avoid overburdening ratepayers.

This is not about denying the need for stormwater improvements. It's about making sure we **fund them wisely, fairly, and transparently**.

Please do the right thing for La Crosse residents and vote **NO on Resolution 25-0599**.

Thank you.

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