

Mayor Kabat;

February 11, 2020

I appreciate your letters trying to explain the reasoning for this “gateway.” It appears you’ve already made up your mind about developing these trails. We already have people parking in front of the entrance between homes on 29<sup>th</sup> Street and walking up through the woods; this after a heavy snowfall. It appears that any type of weather is okay for going up there. It’s not evident that there is any concern for the environment and these people can’t wait until the land is dry to do whatever they are doing.

The rogue trails you mentioned in your last letter are either non-existent or are animal /deer trails. Over the 20+ years I’ve lived here, there have been only a handful of times I have seen people walking/hiking above my house; mostly college age out on a nice day. Unfortunately several of these times they walked right through our yard to get back to the street because they were “lost”.

The one picture you sent showed the undercutting of the sand stone at the base of the bluff. This is evidence of the fragile nature of this area and the friability of these stone walls. Every year we see at least one instance of the emergency and police squads going up the road and up the driveway of our neighbor to get to someone who has fallen from the bluff usually because a piece they were holding onto broke off. Accessibility to this area will invite people to try their hand at rock climbing even with signs posted. This too may create damage to the bluff and injury to anyone attempting to climb.

I am concerned about who will patrol this area. With open access you don’t know who will use the trail and because it’s in the “woods” the possibility of drug use and drug transactions is real. Is the City police going to patrol this area on a regular basis. There are homes abutting this area. Now there will be access from behind the houses. From the street no one can see what is going on behind the houses. Are there going to be more thefts and vandalism to homes and property? Are there going to be fences built to separate the trail area from property owners?

You mention in your letter that ISG had done the trail in Winona at Sugar Loaf. Again there are no homes below the trail, and they have access through a realtor parking lot. One of the pictures they have on their website is someone rock climbing at the top. I believe the rock type is more stable there / different than what is below Grand Dad. I copied portions of the ISG report and highlighted in yellow parts of it and below each section I asked questions and comments (in blue):

Erodibility of many of the soils in the project area are listed as moderate to severe; however, sustainable trails are designed to minimize the possibility of erosion by creating uninterrupted sheet flow across the trail. Erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs) as part of trail construction should further minimize erosion on the site. Erosion control BMPs will be addressed in the site construction Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that would be developed.

I can understand this if the trails were flat, but these will have to go up and down with switchbacks. Moderate and severe soil erodibility doesn’t present a problem when they use the word “minimize” erodibility?

I assume the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be developed.

The City along with ORA Trails would monitor the trailhead and trail system. Monitoring would identify maintenance projects, trail user safety, and erosion. Volunteer trail crews would be tasked to regularly inspect the trail for any erosion and safety concerns.

Special volunteers make up a post-storm inspection group that rides the trails post-storm to remove fallen limbs/trees and identify any section(s) of the trail that may have been damaged by the storm. Each trail ambassador would receive training how to monitor trail conditions, repair if possible, or note and report issues for future repair. This method of employing volunteers to inspect and maintain the trails is consistent with successful system throughout the region and Midwest.

Does City and ORA have enough trained volunteers? What about sustainability over the years? It concerns me that you're counting on a loosely knit group (ORA) who hasn't responded (my letter you sent to their "President") and doesn't have to respond to anyone and can dissolve at anytime. Do they have a national organization behind them? Are they bonded? They raised money to match the grant? How much money do they raise a year? Are there dues to be member of the organization? Do they have to volunteer so many hours per year similar to what the soccer organization did to develop and care for the soccer fields to maintain their membership? How often would they monitor the trails? How often would they repair their findings? Who do I call if I see erosion and how soon would it be repaired? I know some of the people pushing for this don't even live in La Crosse and none live in the adjacent area of this proposed gateway. Would they want the trails behind their house?

## 29<sup>th</sup> Street

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The speed limit on 29<sup>th</sup> Street is 25 MPH. The proposed access point is located at the crest of a hill. Using a design speed of 30 MPH the stopping sight distance typically required is 200 feet. Southbound vehicles have more than 550 feet of sight distance to the access point. Northbound vehicles have more than 700 feet. 29<sup>th</sup> Street has a paved surface of 24 feet and concrete curb and gutter. Cars are allowed to park on both sides of the road.

Because 29<sup>th</sup> street is on a hill, you cannot see the proposed entrance from the street in front of my driveway which is about 400 feet south of the proposed entrance. It's not until you can get about 280 feet that you can see the entrance area. Again if trucks or cars are parked south of that area it would reduce visibility even more. When people are walking, riding their bikes, or parked on 29<sup>th</sup> street, the street is reduced to a useable one lane. Again they don't mention the slant that 1/2 of the street has and how that affects traffic on the street.

In your last letter you wrote: "we work with the Friends of the Bluffs, Friends of the Marsh, WisCorps and the Mississippi Valley Conservancy to preserve and enhance our natural areas".

I have spoken with several active members of the MVC who are against the proposed development of the area. I do hope the city would continue to work with and listen to these groups and their concerns.

If the city was so concerned about what was happening to this area environmentally and wanted to remove invasive species, plant native species and pollinator gardens and remove rogue trails, it could have all been done to improve the area without mountain bike trail development. Yet I have never seen anyone from the City in the area behind my house let alone anyone working on enhancing vegetation and wildlife there.

I believe this whole process was done backwards. The home owners adjacent to the area should have been notified first. This should have been done before the application of the grant and finding matching funds, and discussing it with ORA and neighborhood associations to gain support. Of course the political process was known so as to proceed and pass this through the park board and City Council. And ORA was in the loop so that they could make a good turnout in front of decision making groups. I also believe petitions were signed without the signees knowing the concerns of the other side.

Because things were done in this manner, it feels like the process was rushed. I had only learned of this as a considered project by the city after the January letter. There are still lots of questions especially after learning of the 2005 city determination that the area was not suitable for recreational purposes and development.

Sincerely,

Bill Haviland