

**From:** cvm <cvanmaren@protonmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 1, 2024 9:02 AM  
**To:** Trane, Andrea; ZZ City Clerk External  
**Cc:** Mindel, Mackenzie; Reynolds, Mitch  
**Subject:** Comment on item #23-1338

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Hello,

I would like to comment on an agenda item for the Jan. 2, 2024 Plan Commission and J&A meetings.

But first, I would like to suggest an update to start-of-year meeting protocols. After the July 2019 City Council resolution calling for an elimination of carbon emissions, the approval of the 2023 Climate Action Plan (CAP) plotting reduction and elimination of carbon emissions, and the 2023 City Council resolution declaring a climate emergency, I wonder how city departments, committees, and boards will fold these new priorities into their own work and priorities.

As you begin the year with a Code of Ethics policy review, will you also review the climate emergency declaration, the CAP goals and, especially, the carbon-reduction goals in the 2019 resolution of 5% by 2020 (did we meet that goal?), 20% by 2025, and so on? Will your 2024 decisions include consideration of CAP goals? Will spending decisions adhere to the requirement, in the 2019 carbon zero resolution, that, "all purchasing decisions ... that impact our goals of carbon neutrality and renewable energy shall include a cost benefit analysis and a measurement of the contribution the purchase will have toward reaching our stated goals ..."?

I hope you might start the year with some thought or study on CAP goals and how city committees and departments will work to implement them.

I am mostly emailing because I have questions about how an item on the Jan. 2 agenda fits in with these new and important (some would say existential) goals.

Item 23-1338: Demolition of existing mall building to be replaced by three fast-food restaurants, a car wash, and more parking. (Would that we could wind the clock back 45 years and rethink the mall.)

The CAP includes a transportation-related carbon-reduction goal. Transportation emissions account for one-third of our community's emissions which mostly come from individuals driving gas and diesel cars and light trucks. Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and increasing the numbers of people NOT driving their own private vehicles around is essential, and ways to achieve this change are among the CAP action steps, as are ways to reduce emissions and reduce adverse effects of a warming climate from buildings, land use decisions, and heat islands.

It seems to me, this plan proposed by GMX will encourage and facilitate \*more\* driving in single occupant vehicles. In addition, another existing, functioning building will end up in the landfill, wasting all the carbon emissions that have gone into the materials and construction of the building to be demolished (embodied carbon). Our CAP is also concerned about protecting our clean water and natural areas. A car wash hardly seems like a top priority in a future scenario likely to see deepening droughts and historic rain events that would send runoff, including harsh chemicals and microplastics, into surrounding vulnerable natural areas. And creating or maintaining hard surface parking does nothing to reduce heat islands.

While the details about the proposed restaurants are not given, we could or should also consider the climate implications of fast-food chains that may rely on high-food miles, non-local products and that produce relatively low-wage jobs. I can't believe this is acceptable, either, in the goals of the Forward La Crosse 2040 comprehensive plan.

I realize that we need to repurpose this area, but, to me, from a future-vision and climate action perspective, you couldn't really find a much worse proposal. We have a limited "carbon budget" and every decision "spends" it to get closer to our goals or make them harder to attain.

Many communities that take their climate action plans seriously are banning drive-throughs, reducing valuable land dedicated to private vehicle parking, discouraging demolitions of existing buildings, and seeking ways to develop neighborhoods where most things people need and want are accessible by walking, biking, and taking the bus.

What IS our vision for future La Crosse? I just can't imagine this is it.

This is just the tip of social and climate considerations that, to me, would make this proposal unacceptable. Will there be any energy-efficiency requirements for new buildings (here or anywhere)? Will the city beef up its public transit system so workers can get to fast-food jobs without needing a private car because the current bus schedule does not match businesses' open hours? Do we really suffer from a shortage of fast food restaurants and low-wage jobs?

I hope you will start the new year with a new dedication to a commitment that is now, since its founding resolution, nearly five years old but does not seem to be on the radar for many plans and decisions currently being made. I hope projects you approve are those that will get us to a sustainable future.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Cathy Van Maren  
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