



Tim Kabat
Mayor
City of La Crosse

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 18, 2013
TO: Members of the La Crosse Common Council
CC: City of La Crosse Department Heads
FROM: Mayor Tim Kabat *Tim Kabat*
SUBJECT: Recommendations for 2014 Operating Budget Levy

Dear La Crosse Common Council:

At their October 14, 2013 meeting, the Board of Estimates approved the levy portion of the 2014 operating budget as presented at \$34,724,438.

The BOE further directed the Mayor and staff to bring forward a list of recommendations for the \$101,000+ difference between the levy as presented and approved and the \$34,826,053.88 as allowed by the State of Wisconsin's levy limit law.

The 2014 operating budget was also impacted by the ordinance approved by the Common Council on November 14th, which eliminated the proposed wage increase for the Municipal Court Judge. This action lowered the operating budget by about \$8,838.

I understand the Board of Estimates request for recommendations to spend the \$109,000+ difference. However, I do not support levying to the maximum for the 2014 operating budget for several reasons.

1. My charge from the Board of Estimates was to work with the staff to develop a total budget that maintains our service levels within the limits set by the State. This budget is a very good budget that accomplishes that original charge without significant cuts, without having to tap into reserve funds, and without having to levy to the "max." We have a ways to go to becoming the most effective and

efficient local government we can be, but I believe the budget as presented moves us in the right direction.

2. Finally and most importantly, we have many citizens and taxpayers in our community that continue to struggle financially. The long, drawn-out national economic recovery continues and for many households, every dollar matters. That is why I feel that sending our citizens and taxpayers the message that holding the line is as important to us elected officials as it is to them is a very powerful one indeed. We know that La Crosse County, the La Crosse School District, and Western Technical College will be showing increases on the upcoming property tax bills. It will be significant for the City to show no increase on these same bills.

Per the request of the Board of Estimates, I offer the following recommendations in priority order:

1. Provide the majority, if not all of the \$101,000 to the Streets Department for infrastructure and materials including street repairs, curb, gutter, ramps, sidewalks, and boulevard trees in areas of the City most in need of upgrade. Spending on infrastructure offers a substantial return and helps to increase our tax base.
2. Provide an additional \$10,000 to the Assessor's Office for part-time and/or limited term employees to address staffing changes as a result of eliminating a Property Appraiser position.
3. Provide an additional amount to the Library operations to address their on-going deficit.

Thank you for the support and your hard work. I appreciate the challenges you face having to represent your districts and I look forward to our budget conversation, as well as the work ahead to make our great City even greater.