



# City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall  
400 La Crosse Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601

## Meeting Minutes - Final Board of Zoning Appeals

---

Monday, May 15, 2023

4:00 PM

Council Chambers  
City Hall, First Floor

---

### Call to Order

*Chair Cherf called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.*

### Roll Call

**Present:** 5 - Anastasia Gentry, Douglas Farmer, James Cherf, Ryan Haug, William Raven

### Annual Election of Vice Chair

**Gentry nominated Farmer, seconded by Raven; unanimous consent to elect Farmer as Vice Chair.**

### Variance appeals:

*Cherf explained the meeting procedure and opened the public hearing.*

#### [2667](#)

An appeal regarding the regulation that the main garage doors of an accessory building may not exceed eight feet in height from the lowest floor elevation at a property known as 2206 15th Pl. S., La Crosse, Wisconsin.

*Mike Suntken, representing Community Risk Management, was sworn in to speak. Suntken went over the requirements for granting a variance: unnecessary hardship, hardship due to unique property limitations, and no harm to public interests. Suntken stated that the applicant has applied for a permit to construct a new detached accessory structure. Per Municipal Code 115-390(1)(d)1, Height and Area Requirements, the overall maximum vertical distance of detached residential accessory buildings, excluding carriage house accessory structures, shall not exceed 17 feet from the lowest floor elevation to the highest point of the structure with the overall wall height not to exceed ten feet and the main garage doors not exceeding eight feet in height from the lowest floor elevation; detached garage roofs shall be framed to a pitch of not less than four and 12 cut. Suntken stated that the applicant proposes a garage door height of 9 feet. A variance of 1 foot to the garage door height would need to be granted for this project to proceed as proposed.*

*Suntken showed the drawing that was submitted by the applicant; he pointed out the 10 foot walls and the 9 foot doors. He showed an aerial view of the property and pointed out that the existing garage will be demolished prior to the new being built in approximately the same location. Suntken showed a street view from the alley of the current garage. Farmer asked the square footage of the lot and says it seems to be a regular sized lot. Suntken responds that the lot is 44 by 122.81, which is 5,403.64 square feet.*

Speaking in favor:

*Dexter Malin, 2206 15th Pl S, was sworn in to speak. Malin stated that he has a 24-foot enclosed car hauler trailer and box truck. The trailer is 8 feet, 3 inches in height and the truck is even taller. Malin said he is just trying to get these off the street as they do not fit in the garage now. Cherf asked if he currently is parking them in the side yard or on the street; Malin responded that he just got the trailer, so he hasn't had to park them there yet, but he previously had a 16-foot flatbed trailer that fit in the back yard along the current garage. Haug asked if the new garage will be wider and there would then be less room to park along the side of the garage; Malin responded that it will be wider and there would be less space for parking.*

*Farmer said the 8-foot limit was used to preserve the residential look of garages in residential areas where higher would give more of a commercial look. Farmer asked what kind of doors are planned for the garage; Malin said it will be the standard white insulated garage doors, nothing special. Farmer asked if Malin would be in favor of putting in more residential-looking doors if the Board required it and Malin responded that he would do what is required. Farmer said that the lot is smaller than the current lot requirements, but the Board needs to honor the 8 foot requirement in some way so that is why he asked if Malin would put in different doors if required. Malin responded that the average person might not see a difference between eight and nine feet, especially if both doors are the same height.*

Speaking in Opposition: none.

**Farmer: It is a smaller lot and that gets us through the unique property limitation. It is a lot that the City wouldn't presently approve in a plat. There is no harm to the public interest because it may well be that 9 feet is the new 8 feet, 99% of people passing by are not going to be able to tell the difference. The unnecessary hardship would be obviously that he would be forced to...I don't know how he would do it, because his lot is too small to park anything and he would end up having to pay for storage somewhere else. Which would be an argument to approve it.**

**Secunder: Haug**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes: 5 - Gentry, Farmer, Cherf, Haug, Raven**

[2668](#)

An appeal regarding the requirement to provide a 25 foot setback from the front property line at 2330 Mississippi St., La Crosse, Wisconsin.

*Sunken, still sworn, stated that the applicant applied for a permit to construct a new attached garage at this address. Per Municipal Code Section 115-142(c)(1), area regulations for front yard, side yard and rear yards, regulations applicable in the Residence District apply to the Single Family Residence District. Municipal Code 115-143(c)(2), on every lot in the Residence District, there shall be a front yard having a depth of not less than 25 feet, provided that where lots comprising 40 percent or more of the frontage on one side of a block are developed with buildings, the required front yard depth shall be the average of the front yard depths of the two adjacent main buildings or if there is only one adjacent main building, the front yard depth of said main building shall govern; provided further that this regulation shall not be so interpreted as to require a front yard depth of more than 25 feet in any case.*

Suntken stated that the required front yard setback for this property is 25 feet, and the owner proposes a setback of 19 feet. A variance of 6 feet to the required 25-foot setback will be needed for this project to proceed as proposed. He showed a site plan of the lot and pointed out the adjacent lots and their front yard depths. He showed an aerial view of the lot, and pointed out that the adjacent lots as well as others on the block that all line up at a depth of 25 feet. He showed a street view of the property and pointed out the attached garage.

Farmer asked for the square footage of the lot and Suntken responded that it is 44 by 115, which is 5,060 square feet. Farmer asked for the dimensions of the current garage and Suntken responded that they have not been provided.

Speaking in favor:

Jim & Sylvia Trowbridge, 2330 Mississippi St, were sworn in to speak. Mr. Trowbridge stated that they have lived there for 22 years and it is the smallest lot on the block with no alley access. The garage has been there since he bought the home and they have never been able to fit a car in the garage. Trowbridge added that there is no interior door from the garage into the house where it is attached; a kitchen takes up space adjacent to where the garage is. Haug asked if they can fit two cars in front of the garage and Mr. Trowbridge responded that they can only fit one car in the driveway; their other car is parked in the street.

Farmer asked for the dimensions of the current garage and Sylvia Trowbridge responded that they have only measured the width and it is 10 feet wide. Farmer said that this might be important to know. Sylvia Trowbridge stated that she had plans to renovate the kitchen inside which would take up some of the garage space, but she was not able to do that. Cherf asked Farmer if he might wish to refer this for 30 days to obtain that information; Farmer responded that the Board needs to be mindful of following procedure and logic and follow the law and if they do something without knowing that information, they may be criticized at a later date, and he may be in favor of referral.

Farmer stated that this is an example of something that shouldn't have been done or approved at the time the house was first built; the City should never have accepted it as a lot to build a dwelling on as it is too small and doesn't have alley access. That mistake has been made, but we must live with the consequences. And for the garage, the first owner maybe didn't drive so didn't need a garage and the second owner didn't fall into that bucket and a garage was built. Farmer said a property on his street who solved their garage problem with a carport; visually you don't see it, but it solves the garage problem because not a lot of snow falls on it. Farmer stated that if the predecessors had approved a carport, it could've been a larger one with a toolshed at the back and they wouldn't be in this pickle. Farmer said without the inside dimensions of the garage, he is going to argue for referral of 30 days.

Raven asked if the garage be widened to come to the edge of the window that is in front. Sylvia

Trowbridge responded that they were planning on making it wider by going toward the house so they increase the width to put a car inside and one can park on the driveway. Raven asked if the window would need to change; Sylvia Trowbridge responded that the plans were to bring the roof to the garage so the water wouldn't go into the window and light still comes in. Mr. Trowbridge asks if they had time to get the measurement of the garage yet today so the Board could have that information. Cherf responded that the Board would allow time to make a phone call, at maximum.

Speaking in Opposition: none.

A motion was made by Farmer, seconded by Haug, to REFER for 30 days (to the June 2023 meeting) so the applicant can explore and present alternatives to moderate the visual impact on neighbors. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Gentry, Farmer, Cherf, Haug, Raven

### Adjournment

A motion was made by Haug, seconded by Raven to adjourn at approximately 5:00 p.m.