

December 12, 2024.

Subject: Long Term Community Benefits Supersedes Higher Initial Purchase Price

Dear Council Members,

Growing up on the twenty-two hundred block of the Northside in a two-bedroom house with eight siblings, taught me the value of hard work and community. My first job, at age 14, was at a local grocer because I needed to support my family. A decade later I built a business here that just celebrated 50 years. This fire station proposal resonated with me because my business started in a shared office space with another local business, Steiger Construction. We both rented a space from Pepsi. We have significantly expanded since our beginnings, both building much larger properties that now contribute to the La Crosse property tax base.

With this perspective, I strongly urge you to oppose agenda item 24-1437 and support the Firehouse Commons proposal. Four locally owned businesses are better than one. The value of the Firehouse Commons proposal far outweighs any short-term monetary gain based solely on the purchase price of the property. In my perspective, this should be viewed not as an isolated transaction, but as a long-term investment in the strength and sustainability of our local economy and community.

La Crosse already has ten rental truck companies, including Penske Truck Rental and Menards—both located within a mile of the fire station. Adding Enterprise Truck Rental, with its 550 nationwide locations, would simply oversaturate the market while sending profits out of La Crosse. In contrast, small businesses create local jobs, reinvest earnings, and fund critical infrastructure through taxes. Their employees spend wages locally, keeping money within our community.

Small businesses are the backbone of our neighborhoods. They sponsor youth programs, organize fundraisers, and step up for local causes. The owners and employees live here by choice. Recent years have seen too many small businesses close their doors. This is an opportunity for the city to step in and reverse that trend. Thank you for your service to the city and careful consideration of the two proposals before you.

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