



February 27, 2023

Village of Osceola Planning Commission
310 Chieftain Street
Osceola, WI 54020

Dear President Buberl and Plan Commission Members:

I am submitting comments regarding changes to the Osceola Village code. In regards to sections 217- 6A. and 217-7A. (4) of the Code of the Village of Osceola, I understand the village has worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to better align with N.R. 118. I have no comments in this regard.

However, I urge you not to adopt the proposed change to 219-15A.(1) and 219-15A.(2); and 217-15C and 217-15D of the Code of the Village of Osceola, that adds multi-family residential use within mixed-use buildings or developments as a permitted use. When the B-1 General Commercial District and St. Croix River District permitted uses were adopted they were thoroughly vetted, and apartments were not a permitted use for good reason. I urge you to not relinquish your oversight responsibility afforded by the existing conditional use requirements, especially critical considering the Gaughan Companies project which appears to be driving this change.

It's important to remember the proposed change affects all B-1 zoning, not just the old OMC site. This is not, nor should it be, spot zoning. The aging main-street buildings also in B-1 district will be ripe for redevelopment in the decades to come. Maintaining a vibrant downtown, where residents and visitors alike can enjoy the small-town, cultural characteristics of Osceola, is in the best interest of the village. Again, this change seems motivated primarily for one developer.

If you adopt the above changes, section 219- 17B for conditional uses will be repealed. That action will eliminate the parking requirements. I was unable to find any other section in the code for B-1 Commercial that addresses parking. As you know, parking is a premium downtown and having no requirements to address parking issues is

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unconscionable. Safety concerns and overcrowding will certainly be an issue if on-site parking is not available for the residents of a new apartment complex.

Long ago, the village adopted scenic overlay district rules required under N.R. 118 to protect and preserve the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Maintaining the standards that the village adopted is important. One of the stated purpose of Section 217 of the village code is to maintain property values, and to preserve and maintain the exceptional scenic, cultural and natural characteristics of the water and related land of the Lower St. Croix riverway in a manner consistent with the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542), the Federal Lower St. Croix River Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-560) and the Wisconsin Lower St. Croix River Act (§ 30.27, Wis. Stats.). People bought property along the Riverway trusting the village would uphold the rules adopted to protect the wild and scenic values. The village may be opening itself up to litigation by property owners and conservation organizations on both the Wisconsin and Minnesota side of the river if it fails to act responsibly.

We understand that the village is anxious to see the old OMC buildings gone and a community asset built in its place. We are too. Zoning regulations are in place to benefit communities economically and socially, improve health and wellness, and conserve the environment. And not to the benefit of a single developer.

We urge you to act responsibly and thoughtfully about the redevelopment of this site and not adopt changes to 219-15A.(1) and 219-15A.(2); and 217-15C and 217-15D of the Code of the Village of Osceola.

Sincerely,



Deb Ryun, Executive Director

Cc Tom Swain, Conservancy Board Chair; Devin Swanberg, Village Administrator;
Carrie Krentz, Village Clerk