



# The Ripon Commonwealth

# Press

Ripon, WI 54971  
143rd Year

## Annexation tossed, but housing debate prevails

April 24, 2008

The annexation petition is dead. The Green Lake Conference Center — along with land slated for development — will stay in the town of Brooklyn. After more than six months of meetings, discussions, fact-gathering and rumors, the city of Green Lake has decided to drop the annexation and recoup its remaining costs. Common Council members voted 4-2 Monday to release the request, contingent upon Lindenwood Development reimbursing the city for \$61,066 in outstanding city expenses such as legal and engineering fees related to the annexation request. Aids. Donna Moore and Michele Polzer voted against.

Lindenwood officials had promised to reimburse the city for its reasonable costs if the petition was dropped or denied. Lindenwood already has reimbursed the city more than \$85,000, even without a signed agreement. The development company and the Green Lake Conference Center had wanted to be annexed from the town of Brooklyn into the city — until the town approved a subdivision it previously denied. The town's March 7 agreement approved the plat calling for nearly 100 new homes on half-acre lots on the Conference Center's east side.

At Monday's meeting, Ald. Donna Moore made a plea to the council, asking the aldermen to consider the city's long-term finances. Either the city must approve the annexation, or it will need to raise taxes, she said, citing the additional tax dollars the annexation would create. Green Lake city officials estimated the annexation would create at least \$200,000 in additional tax revenue annually while costing the city about \$55,000 annually to provide additional services. Moore pressed the city's new mayor, Chuck Mirr, to explain why he opposed the idea. "We don't know if it's legal, No. 1," he responded. Mirr said he didn't want the city to get bogged down in a lengthy legal battle that would create more expenses. He explained only one city resident supported it when he went door-to-door, campaigning for mayor. But Moore questioned this. "I wonder how informed our citizens are," she said. Moore said she, too, had spoken with city residents, and after explaining the facts and the tax benefits, only one couple opposed annexation. "They said, 'Just raise the [city] taxes,'" Moore said.

Mirr maintained most city residents wanted to be done with the idea. "I'm not convinced this is in the best interest of our city right now," he said. Moore responded, "There's a lot of benefit for our city ... You're mayor of Green Lake, not mayor of the town of Brooklyn." The city needs to make improvements, and it needs money for this, she added. "There are a lot of things that need to happen here, and here's a revenue source that we'll probably never see again," Moore said. Ald. Robin Wallenfang said annexing the Conference Center would destroy the city's relationship with the town. "I don't see this as a windfall," she said. Ald. Michele Polzer said she supported the annexation because

the city would ensure better environmental protection with the housing project. Approximately 90 new wells will have to be drilled if the project remains in the town. Ald. Larry McIntyre was skeptical of how much the city would reap in taxes, compared to the additional costs.

“There’s not one good reason I can see for doing this ... Let’s get back to the way it was,” McIntyre said. Ald. LuAnn Mirr-Frank said the annexation idea had made her nervous since the start. “If something sounds too good to be true, something’s wrong,” she said, adding the citizens within her district (District 2) did not support it. Ald. Dan Priske supported dropping the annexation and recouping the city’s costs. Although he emphasized the city needs economic development, he also believed the city needed to get reimbursed. Priske had voted against the same motion at the council’s April 14 meeting.