

To: LCCMR Committee members, Corrie Layfield, Senior Analyst and Ranier City Mayor and Council

Re: LCCMR grant of \$200,000 in June 2019 for the Rainy River Boat launch, parking lot and washing station

From: Sue Swendsen, Ranier MN, sueswendsen@gmail.com 218 591 3805

In June 2019 this grant was given to the City of Ranier in a very convoluted fashion. It was originally turned down by the LCCMR, but Rep. Rob Eckund was able to secure funding through the legislature. It was then signed by the Governor, returned to the LCCMR and passed by default.

During the past 2 years there have been repeated requests for a public meeting so residents can be aware of these plans and provide input. The summer of 2019 a petition was signed by 75 residents in opposition to a boat launch on the Rainy River. This was brought to the Council and simply ignored. The International Falls DNR felt that no boat launch was necessary in Ranier and that one located near the Ranier Rapids could be potentially hazardous and dangerous. There have been deaths in the Rapids and several accidents over the years. In addition a large boat launch with lots of parking is located approximately ½ mile away next to the Voyageur National Park offices.

On September 1, 2020 an "Open House" was scheduled at the Community Bldg. This consisted of several tentative plans laid out on the table for the public to view, submit comments and questions and to listen to members of the Council-selected Steering Committee (residents and non-residents) make statements and comments regarding these plans. It became quite contentious since only one member of the Council was even in attendance. Once again the questions were basically swept under the rug by the Mayor who responded to them at the following Committee meeting.

LCCMR --- this is what has happened with your money. No public hearings. No transparency. No attempt to keep the residents informed. A series of Committee and Council meetings where repeatedly the public was told that when plans were available --- there would be a public meeting. There was no opportunity for residents, who were not on the steering committee, to be involved in this process.

On June 4, 2021 ---- two years after this money was given to the City there was a Public Hearing Request for Conditional Use Permit Planning and Zoning Commission. One of the Zoning Commission members was on the Steering Committee that had voted for this project. They voted in favor of the project by 4 – 1 and it will go to the Committee of the Whole on June 8 and on June 15 to the Council.

There was no consideration to the impact of this decision on the residents of Duluth St and Pine Street where there are 10 homes, 3 rentals, several businesses, a Post Office, Municipal Liquor Store and the Ranier Community Building. For several years there has been inadequate parking for events at the Community Bldg and this plan significantly reduces the parking availability. Although there will be no overnight parking in the lot--- the City of Ranier has no one to enforce this except the Koochiching County Sheriff's office. **The Ranier Unified Land Ordinance 153, 2.04.2.4a states "The conditional use is consistent with the Community Plan." There is no Community Plan.** In addition the plans will increase traffic congestion not reduce it. And there is probability that this plan will substantially diminish property values. Two home owners on Duluth Street will have a 8 foot path between their two homes for boaters and visitors to walk on. While this does not bother one of the home owners --- the other has a family with 4 young children. Can you imagine strangers walking by 6 feet away and looking in your windows? Not a safe and comfortable plan for a family. They were not informed of this plan when the property was purchased 1+ year ago.

When the majority of residents in the immediate area are opposed to a zoning plan --- most Zoning Committee members would be responsive to this. Most Council members would be responsive to their constituents. The LCCMR granted this money with no conditions or expectations that residents would be in favor or opposed to a plan set up by the Council and a steering Committee that lacked transparency. There were no clear expectations of a Public Hearing. Most residents had never heard of the LCCMR, were not aware that they could provide testimony nor how they could communicate their concerns. The information was not forthcoming from the Council.

In an ideal world I would like this project to be on hold until such time as residents can have more input. We do not need a boat launch on the river. We do not need a parking lot and wash station behind the Community Building when parking space is already at a premium. We do not need a walking path in a 20 foot alley (that has not been used as a alley) between two homes. We do not need the added congestion and traffic problems that will result if this plan is put into place. We have children, dogs and residents who will be impacted by all the traffic and congestion.

Thank you.