

**Bruce Sylvester**

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**From:** Annita [abwozniak@tds.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 04, 2008 10:09 AM  
**To:** Bruce Sylvester  
**Subject:** on last nights meeting

I did make it to the meeting at the Senior center. Thanks for hosting and it was a good turnout. I like that the Vpress is providing on-line surveys and I encourage you to do more of that to get feedback. This link is helpful as well. Casey was also very responsive when I requested an email subscriber link on the city web page so we could be notified of upcoming meetings and important announcements. It looks like there are some glitches, but it will be a useful tool to keep in communication in this time of so much change for Verona.

I filled out the survey, stuck on the green dots and learned a lot.

**Additional feedback:**

I am really thinking about the "white elephant" comment. Prior to the meeting I was under the impression that we had accepted limited big box and that it was already decided that it would go out by TWALL by Westridge and would be a pedestrian/bike friendly design that doesn't require endless rows of asphalt parking for vehicles... But last night showed me that maybe big box could go on all THREE spots!! Eeek! I hope not! That shocked me! If that was the only thing I learned, then it was worth attending. As it was I learned more than that!

I completely oppose big box on PB/M, and am also opposed to commercial, retail, restaurants, on that intersection. I DO think that a MATC campus or other educational campus could be a good fit in PB/M's technology park. It would be wonderful to draw some professionals, non-traditional students and teachers to our community. They would be the kind with the income and interest to shop a little, eat at the restaurants, buy a condo, rent, etc and generally add to our culture.

I'm surprised that after PB/M was identified for technology that it was re-zoned for small amount of commercial/retail... I hope that you are able to convince developers to look elsewhere for that kind of opportunity. The population out here in the town area is not big enough to support retail and it would just draw more cars from New Glarus, Mt. Horeb, Oregon, Belleville, etc. I don't think it is Verona's job to provide shopping out here for those folks. If they want to shop, they should go all the way into our downtown and see what we REALLY have to offer in the heart of our city.

I'd like to add that just because PB/M is the industrial/technology park, doesn't mean that it cannot be beautiful and avoid all the asphalt. We miss those thousand oaks already! Invisible parking should be part of any good design. I'd also like to ask if we have ordinances in place that require developers to present plans that embrace energy efficiency, a preference for sustainable heating and cooling systems like the geothermal, etc, and if the council is requiring LEED standards or green building in all new construction?? Beyond expecting beautiful facades on these projects we should be requiring beautiful green designs that no one actually sees. Now is an ideal time to require energy efficiency requirements as part of project designs so that we can take control of the developers and take advantage of the growth and promote earth friendly practices at the same time. ☺

Thanks again for the hard work that everyone is doing on this and for accepting resident opinion. It is a huge opportunity and I'm sure you all want to get it right.

Annita Woz.  
6553 HWY M  
Verona

**Bruce Sylvester**

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**From:** ktindall@tds.net  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 27, 2008 3:21 PM  
**To:** bruce.sylvester@ci.verona.wi.us  
**Subject:** future retail development in Verona input

Mr. Sylvester,

I have lived in the city of Verona since 2001. I will not be able to attend the Plan Commission meeting this Monday, March 3. I am contacting you now to let you know my opinion on future retail development in Verona. I am upset that a Farm and Fleet is coming to Verona and also that the already agreed upon West End project includes another big box store. I feel that 2 big box stores in our small town is already too many. I request that we not allow any more big box stores to come to Verona and that the City of Verona does not make agreements with any developers whose plans include the possibility of a big box store.

I would choose no more or minimal retail development in Verona. If there is retail development, my first choice for placement is downtown. Second choice would be along west Verona Ave to make it look more attractive. For type of retail development, I would choose small stores that are attractive and add to the uniqueness and character of Verona. We all can think of towns we've driven through where what you remember later is large unattractive stores and fast food restaurants. I think we should protect our undeveloped land as it is beautiful and becoming less and less. It's part of what makes Verona a great place to live. We have all the shopping we need 10 minutes away. Developers that want to develop here are looking at shoppers from surrounding communities. Let those communities build their own unattractive retail stores if that's what their residents want, but let's not sacrifice Verona just for money and the convenience of other communities.

Thank you for your time in reading this email. Tina Tindall

Testimony

Big Box Development in Verona

George Hagenauer  
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This testimony is neither pro or against big boxes but rather to suggest a framework for analyzing the cost benefits of large retail operations.

My focus is on the wages they pay and its affect on social service needs and how those services will be paid for. If you look at a map of where families receiving childcare or health care subsidies live, you soon discover that there are large clusters of these families in areas close to large retail or other low wage developments. Of special note is the deterioration of the South West side of Madison and portions of Sun Prairie.

The state through the child care subsidy program and health care subsidy programs has for the past dozen years massively subsidized the growth of low wage employment with little interest as to the quality of the jobs developed. This may soon be changing as the state begins to deal with its second large scale deficit in the child care subsidy system in 24 months – caused by millions of dollars in funds paid for care for children whose parents are authorized for full time work but whose employers often provide only flexible part time low wage employment.

Increasingly low wage jobs are not filled by students or retired people but by parents, often single parents, attempting to raise a family. With low incomes they need to live near where they work. As such recent years have seen the transformation of sections of moderate rental units on the South west side of Madison, just a few miles from here and Sun Prairie into essentially low income housing. While the focus in Madison has been on the need for additional police on the south west side, there has had to be increased investment also in social services- after school programs, social workers and child care. The Southwest side last year had the largest number of family child care homes closed due to serious violations- though Verona and Madison's east side both had the only deaths in unregulated child care with in the county. Sun Prairie had the second largest number of family child care homes closed due to serious violations.

Deteriorating conditions for children and families are not the best advertisers for community development. All you need to create the conditions are low wage jobs and modest priced rental units. I would like to suggest that as you consider various developments you look at the wages of the jobs that they create as well as the tax benefits the developments will bring. I have attached a 2004 study related to wages needed for various types of families to be self-sufficient without government subsidies- current levels are probably 10-12% higher. If the wages do not create self-sufficient family units, I would like to suggest you look at what the potential costs of extra JEFF social workers, after school programs, child care subsidies etc. needed to support those families and then prepare to fund them through the city government as Madison does.

The basic tenet here is that poverty is often not a personal problem, it is rather a societal issue created by poor planning decisions. If we create poverty we should expect to have to pay the costs ourselves and not expect others to do it.

**Table 11**  
**The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Madison, WI MSA, 2004**  
**Dane County**

Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult +						
		Adult + infant	Adult + preschooler	Adult + schoolage	Adult + schoolage teenager	Adult + infant schoolage	2 Adults + infant preschooler	2 Adults + preschooler schoolage
Housing	592	716	716	716	716	993	716	716
Child Care	0	867	1696	1314	485	2181	1696	1314
Food	182	266	358	411	473	481	515	565
Transportation	200	205	205	205	205	205	393	393
Health Care	96	204	210	220	244	228	251	261
Miscellaneous	107	226	318	287	212	409	357	325
Taxes	126	609	957	800	403	1393	968	811
Earned Income								
Tax Credit (-)	0	0	0	0	-92	0	0	0
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	0	-60	-100	-100	-68	-100	-100	-100
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-83	-167	-167	-155	-250	-167	-167
Self-Sufficiency Wage								
-Hourly	\$7.40	\$16.75	\$23.83	\$20.95	\$13.77	\$31.48	\$13.15 per adult	\$11.70 per adult
-Monthly	\$1,303	\$2,948	\$4,193	\$3,686	\$2,424	\$5,540	\$4,629	\$4,120
-Annual	\$15,633	\$35,379	\$50,321	\$44,237	\$29,084	\$66,484	\$55,552	\$49,434

**Table 12**  
**The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI PMSA, 2004**  
**Milwaukee County**

Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult +						
		Adult + infant	Adult + preschooler	Adult + schoolage	Adult + schoolage teenager	Adult + infant schoolage	2 Adults + infant preschooler	2 Adults + preschooler schoolage
Housing	523	658	658	658	658	824	658	658
Child Care	0	816	1567	1212	461	2028	1567	1212
Food	182	266	358	411	473	481	515	565
Transportation	214	219	219	219	219	219	422	422
Health Care	110	241	248	258	281	265	289	299
Miscellaneous	103	220	305	276	209	382	345	316
Taxes	121	582	893	747	389	1207	912	768
Earned Income								
Tax Credit (-)	0	0	0	0	-106	0	0	0
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	0	-63	-100	-105	-70	-100	-100	-100
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-83	-167	-167	-149	-250	-167	-167
Self-Sufficiency Wage								
-Hourly	\$7.12	\$16.23	\$22.62	\$19.93	\$13.44	\$28.73	\$12.62 per adult	\$11.28 per adult
-Monthly	\$1,253	\$2,857	\$3,981	\$3,508	\$2,365	\$5,056	\$4,441	\$3,972
-Annual	\$15,035	\$34,281	\$47,777	\$42,102	\$28,382	\$60,668	\$53,290	\$47,667

547 Basswood Ave.  
Verona, WI 53593  
March 13, 2008

Bruce Sylvester  
Director Of Planning & Development

Dear Mr. Sylvester:

I am writing for a number of reasons. First of all, I was at the Community Forum on Retail Development, and would like to thank the Plan Commission for holding the forum in the first place, and for taking such care to ensure that all in attendance were able to express their opinions freely. I felt that the meeting was well-organized and well-run; I appreciated the background, explanations and clarifications at the beginning (and whenever they were needed); and I also appreciated very much the chance to express my opinions through the survey and the voting process.

Second, I'd like to applaud you for all the hard work and thought you've put into the process thus far, and for the careful, reasoned decisions you've made. While I've admittedly given it only the level of attention of the average citizen who cares about the future of her community (i.e., reads the paper and considers the issues, and attends the occasional meeting), I personally feel that you've chosen the best of the three development options in T. Wall's proposal, based on its overall appearance, its mixed-use composition and its greater accessibility to pedestrians and bicyclists and, by its location, to seniors in the community. (I have no doubt that we probably have you to thank for much of that; and also that other factors were probably significant in your choice as well, but those were the features that stood out to me.)

I do appreciate the need for more retail in Verona (especially non-fast-food restaurants!) but hope that, aside from the T. Wall development, it can, for the appreciable future, remain *small* retail. It seems to me that this reflects the wishes of a majority of Verona residents. Also, I liked the frequently-stated argument for going slowly. There's nothing more bleak in a community landscape than a cluster of empty buildings -- at times perhaps because that community has been overly optimistic in its retail projections.

And while, prior to the meeting, I'd have said that I preferred to see development (and redevelopment) concentrated along the Main Street and Verona Road corridors, I was persuaded by those who spoke at the meeting that there are ample reasons to scatter it around, placing more of it in and around Vincenzo Plaza, for example; and also, reasons for not overburdening West Verona Avenue with undue traffic in light of all the schools and day care centers in that area. Perhaps the key issue is one of balance; I'd still like to see a discernible downtown in Verona. It's one of the reasons that Monroe & New Glarus -- and now, Verona -- have so much more of a community 'feel' than, say, Fitchburg. And I hope we *never* end up with anything along the edge of Verona that begins to resemble the ghastly Menards-Circuit City-Batteries Plus-Taco Bell strip of stores that lines Commerce Drive in West Madison!

(And in passing, let me say that I'd love for someone to encourage the owners of the Hubbard Street Diner in Middleton and the Market Street Diner in Sun Prairie as well as several Madison area restaurants, including Bluephies and Monty's Blue Plate Diner, to consider Verona as a locale for their next venture! But I'm digressing.)

The **main** reason I wanted to write was to express my concern about the recent survey commissioned by AIG Properties and conducted by the St. Norbert's College Survey Center. I was one of those called for the survey, so I had the opportunity to see how the survey was conducted, which led to my concerns about several features of the survey.

At the outset of the survey, the caller identified herself as being from the St. Norbert's College Survey Staff and told me, "You are being called to participate in our Verona Commercial Development Survey regarding new commercial development interests in your area." While the description AIG chose for the survey was not untrue *per se*, it seemed misleading, implying that this was a general survey of a variety of development options in the Verona Area, rather than a survey undertaken to assess residents' feelings about one specific development option only. (The fact that the description of the survey confused and misled people seems supported by the fact that so many people at the meeting Monday night asked if you or the Council had sponsored the survey.) Only upon asking directly who'd commissioned the survey was I told that it was AIG Properties.

Far more concerning was the fact that some of the questions were written in a decidedly slanted fashion, to elicit the answers AIG wanted the survey to produce. Specifically, after a question about my age ("Are you over 18?" "Considerably!"), whether I lived in the City or the Town of Verona, and how far I generally traveled each week to do my shopping, I was asked, in this exact phrasing:

"Overall, would you prefer to have a community shopping center nearby County PB & M *if it reduced your weekly shopping travel time?*"

To me, this is a very poorly-worded question, and one intended to elicit a 'yes' response from a majority of those surveyed. It's certainly a very innocuous-sounding question, and I suspect that anyone not paying very close attention might simply hear, or think to himself, "Would I prefer to have a 'community shopping center' nearby 'if it reduced my weekly shopping travel time?'" – and of course the answer would be yes.)

If, on the other hand, the question had been phrased, "Overall, would you prefer to have a development nearby County PB & M *if it drove long-time Verona merchants out of business?*"" most people would probably say no!

As most people are well aware, how a question is phrased materially influences the answers people give to it. (Even the term 'community shopping center' yields more positive responses from most people than the term 'development,' a fact that has not escaped the AIG staff.)

If what AIG *really* wanted to know was, 'Do you want to see a new development with additional retail options for your shopping at the corner of PB and M,' why not ask THAT question? The cynical reply might be, because they're afraid of getting too many 'no' responses to that question, and they'd like to be able to go to the Plan Commission and be able to say (for example) that, '89% of the Verona residents we surveyed said that, yes, they want to see a development at the corner of PB and M.'

If indeed that's the case, that's important information for you to have. ***But it's not information you can know from the responses to the question asked in this survey as the question was phrased.*** And I seriously wonder, when AIG reports the survey results to you, ***if they will be providing you with a list of survey questions, verbatim,*** or simply a 'summary' of some sort. And I wonder, too, if any of you found *yourselves* on the list of randomly-chosen respondents called for this survey.

There was one odd question about whether I felt that retail shops 'would provide a good shield for industrial development in the area.' (I don't recall the precise phrasing.) I felt a bit puzzled, and a bit as though words were being put in my mouth. Once again, it felt like a question to which the only likely answer was, 'well, yes, I suppose so.' I asked the surveyor if perhaps *industrial* development could provide a good shield for *retail* development, then admitted that I was just being a smart aleck, but that really, the question was making the prior assumption for respondents that industrial development was problematic and that we needed shielding from it, and I don't know that that had been established.

Finally, the surveyor asked me, if there *were* retail development in that area, what kind 'would add the most value.' I asked if I might hear a list of possible options and tell her which I felt would be of most value, but her computer would not permit that; I had to say yes or no (or no opinion) to each option before going to the next (and for each yes, to propose specific retailers I'd like to see go there). The list, of course, included department store, home improvement, discount, electronics, bookstore, pharmacy, grocery, restaurant, and perhaps others.

Once again, I found myself frustrated with the process, knowing that it's been proven, time and again, in well-conducted research, that even the order in which options are presented affects the likelihood that people say yes or no to a given option. If a developer wishes to place certain retailers in his development (perhaps because they represent his best options, perhaps because he is already negotiating with them), he can place those retailers in more positive positions than others in the survey and thereby gain somewhat more positive ratings for them.

St. Norbert's College has always seemed to me to be a solid outfit and I must confess, I'd simply assumed that when someone commissioned them to do a survey, that their staff (who presumably have some training and experience in test construction, statistics and the like) played at least some role in writing the survey questions. At some point in the survey, however, after an especially biased question was asked, I asked the person conducting the survey who had written the questions. She went to ask her supervisor, returned, and said that AIG had simply provided a list of questions to the St. Norbert's College Survey Center staff, whose role, then, was apparently simply to place the phone calls, tabulate the results and, at the risk of sounding sarcastic, lend their respected name to the survey.

I realize I've gone on and on about this, but I was quite disillusioned by the whole process, to say the least. Once again, I think most everyone in this day and age is aware that statistical findings can be gathered and presented to 'prove' anything we want them to, but there exists an entire rather sophisticated field of test methodology, and had AIG genuinely wanted to accurately determine how a random sample of Verona residents felt about their potential development, it would have been possible to design a fair survey – something far more like the one we filled out at Monday night's meeting -- to get at those answers.

Instead, I feel, they chose to cloak their actual motives in the guise of a more general survey 'regarding new commercial development interests in your area,' to hire the staff from a college whose name is well regarded in Wisconsin to conduct the survey, to provide a list of biased questions aimed at eliciting the answers they wanted to hear and finally – call me cynical, but I'd guess -- to present to the Plan Commission a summary of results that does not include the actual phrasing of the questions answered by respondents ( and hence will not be terribly meaningful to you).

Small and unimportant though it may seem, if this survey is at all representative of AIG's level of integrity, and of their level of regard for the rights and wishes of Verona citizens, I would be extremely reluctant to place in their hands anything so important to the future of Verona as an entire development.

Thank you so much for hearing me out, particularly when I realize that brevity is not my strong suit! And once again, thank you for serving on the the Plan Commission. Hard though your job is, it's surely one of the most important there is to the future of our community, not only in the near future, but for generations to come.

Respectfully yours,

*Denise Beckfield*

Denise Beckfield

Thanks for listening to my diatribe!  
Having worked ~~peripherally~~ peripherally in the area of  
rest construction for a time - & expecting  
honesty & good faith from people, this  
particular issue really got under my skin.  
(Plus, the broader issue of the future of  
development in Verona is so important -  
& there are so many tough decisions  
to be made, it's hard not to get caught  
up in them, & want to express an opinion  
about them!)

I really do appreciate all the work  
the Plan Commission (& you, as Director)  
are doing - it's very <sup>complex</sup> difficult & I suspect, often  
thankless work. And I appreciate the dedication  
involved, & the willingness of the Commission to  
hold forums & listen to our opinions with such open minds,