

A Better Mount Pleasant

For Immediate Release

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VILLAGE OF MOUNT PLEASANT STILL TRYING TO STEAL LAND FOR FAILED FOXCONN DEVELOPMENT

“Village deliberately landlocked local business property, charged owners with trespassing, and is now attempting to condemn property for seizure to give to Foxconn.”

MOUNT PLEASANT, WI JUNE 25, 2021 - In June 2018, the Village of Mount Pleasant announced it would seek to “blight” the entire Foxconn development zone, and said they intended to use eminent domain action against property owners when needed in order to secure enough contiguous land Foxconn claimed the needed for the nonexistent LCD factory.

By employing an unprecedented use of “blight” to grab land, it seemed only a matter of time before the Village would leverage their authority for the benefit of this private foreign corporation.

While the Village claimed they reached negotiated agreements in all property acquisitions, Racine County records show that Mount Pleasant used eminent domain actions against more than twenty property owners — some under conditions of extreme duress. In many instances, the Village lied to property owners claiming eminent domain authority that did not exist and/or threatening homeowners with revoking road access — which is illegal in the State of Wisconsin.

The vast majority of land in Area I was conveyed to Foxconn many months ago. However, two property owners still remain: Kim and Jim Mahoney, whose home sits famously inside the gates of the Foxconn development area, and Jack and Colleen Erickson, owners of Erickson Truck N Parts, twelve acres located along the 1-94 Frontage Road just south of Highway 11.

The Erickson's were never opposed to selling for the Foxconn development, they simply requested that the Village relocate their business to a comparable location in Racine along the I-94 corridor. Village Attorney Alan Marcuvitz promised the Ericksons that Village consultants would find a comparable location.

After many months of unreturned phone calls, the Ericksons were unsure what plans the Village had for their valuable land. One answer came in February, 2020, in the form of a jurisdictional offer from Mount Pleasant for 1.5 acres of frontage along the road the Village said was needed for road construction.

Unknown to the Ericksons at the time, the Village deliberately withdrew their road access during road construction, leaving their remaining eleven acre property landlocked, with literally no ability to reach their business from the road. When Jack Erickson attempted to go to his place of business — having to physically walk over the road frontage now owned by the Village of Mount Pleasant — he was ticketed for trespassing by the Mount Pleasant Police.

In registering his anger with the Village, Mr. Erickson was told to figure how much it would cost for him to move his business even though no comparable properties had ever been presented to him. He was told to clear the scrap from his licensed scrap yard and cut the grass — knowing he had no ability to do so without being ticketed again for trespassing.

The Village then began using various means to claim the Erickson's property was in violation of Village Ordinance 62.7(a)(3) - a public nuisance affecting peace and safety, claiming the property and the buildings were blighted — even though they had never been cited a single time in their twenty-four history as business owners in Mount Pleasant, and no other licensed scrap yard in the Village is currently under review as a public nuisance.

This was no coincidence. It was now clear to the Ericksons that the Village was planning to seize their land — not negotiate or relocate — in order to give it to Foxconn.

On June 21, 2021 the Village Community Development Authority held a hearing to declare the property "blighted" under the Blight Elimination and Slum Clearance Act. The CDA will decide on July 12, 2021 whether to designate the property as blighted, clearing a path for involuntary seizure of their property to convey to Foxconn.

Why would the Village of Mount Pleasant do this? Why would they maliciously sabotage a thriving local business?

They are doing this because they promised the Erickson's property to Foxconn and don't want to pay them the millions of dollars the property is worth. They don't want to pay the cost to move their business up the road where similar properties are selling for \$750,000 per acre. The Village is not just threatening to take the property with no compensation, they are also

threatening to charge the Ericksons hundreds of thousands of dollars to "clean up" the allegedly blighted property.

The Village of Mount Pleasant is deliberately abusing its power of eminent domain and blight designation to seize the property of local business owners and give it to a private foreign corporation who has lied to our community for the last four years. Their actions represent every fear Village residents had when they first announced the blighting of nearly 3000 acres of our community to benefit Foxconn.

The members of the Mount Pleasant Community Development Authority must reject this naked attempt to subvert and destroy the rights of property owners. CDA Chairman Rob Richardson who has acted as an accomplice in this malfeasance, must step down immediately.

The Foxconn development is a bust. There is little debate that says the nearly \$1 billion in local investments were responsible or wise. Mount Pleasant stands as a cautionary tale and a punchline that illustrates the foolishness of corporate welfare at any cost. The only people who don't seem to realize the severity of this mistake are our local officials who have deluded themselves from the beginning.

Jack and Colleen Erickson are just more collateral damage.

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A Better Mt. Pleasant is a nonpartisan, community organization dedicated to advancing a fair, accountable and transparent local government in Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin.