OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

LA CROSSE

Dear City Clerk Elsen:

Under my authority outlined in Wisconsin Statutes § 62.09(8)(c), I have vetoed Charter Ordinance No. 26-1084, which creates the position, duties, and responsibilities of the Office of the City Administrator and removes duties from the Office of the Mayor. I have chosen to veto this legislation because it represents a fundamental shift in our city's governance without sufficient justification, transparency, or a comprehensive implementation plan.

While I recognize that government can and should evolve, meaningful reform requires thoughtful planning, public engagement, fiscal responsibility, and respect for democratic representation. This sweeping structural change is being advanced without logistical consideration of the limited office space within City Hall, and the even more limited funds for office furniture and equipment, or an adequate assessment of its long-term financial and operational consequences.

Moreover, this ordinance completely removes the executive powers of the mayor while transferring substantial control over city operations to an administrator. The administrator would be primarily accountable to the Common Council, whose members are part-time policymakers who are not privy to the day-to-day intricacies and nuances of municipal government. Not only do council members lack full-time oversight, but this legislation would also undermine the delicate balance of power between the executive and legislative branches, weakening direct accountability to the people of La Crosse.

Most importantly, this significant change historically has not had the support and approval of La Crosse residents. In fact, over a decade ago, 60 percent of the electorate voted against the establishment of a city administrator position. While I appreciate the input and guidance of the 13 members of the Common Council, they individually represent their own districts and the concerns of a small fraction of La Crosse's population. However, as the 44th mayor of this great city, I am the only elected official who is truly accountable to over 50,000 residents citywide, and I hold their opinions and needs in high regard. In that spirit, I encourage the Common Council to allow the people of La Crosse to decide the direction of their government via a referendum. The voters have the ultimate authority, and they should be given the opportunity to exercise it.

I hope the Common Council and I can continue to work together with careful intention in the best interests of the people we serve.

Sincerely,

Shaundel Washington-Spivey
Mayor

400 La Crosse Street | La Crosse, WI 54601 | (608) 789-7500 | washingtonspiveys@cityoflacrosse.org |
www.cityoflacrosse.org