



Matthew Crowe

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2025

Regarding Mayor Randy Knaack's Major Announcement at the September 22, 2025, Council Meeting

It has come to my attention from the community that Mayor Randy Knaack will make a "major announcement" regarding the potential Menomonie data center today Monday September 22, 2025, at the City of Menomonie City Council Meeting. I have not heard what the announcement will be about from Mayor Knaack himself at this time, and there is nothing about it on the agenda.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend this meeting due to a previously planned work trip from my employer. City council is an elected part-time position that we do our best to work into our professional and family lives for the good of Menomonie. This statement will be part of what I was hoping to say in today's meeting during the communications section.

In public statements and interviews, I have been sharing the information I have regarding the annexation and rezoning of county lands with the potential development of a data center. Transparency and public dialog are the way to make good decisions for the future of Menomonie. I believe it is important for the public to understand the process from beginning to end and how this has played out.

On February 27, 2024, the City Administrator Eric Atkinson signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) under the guidance of Mayor Knaack to get the ball rolling on this project. The Mayor is like the CEO of Menomonie, and the Administrator can only act at the discretion of the Mayor. Mayor Knaack and the city's Public Works Director went to tour a data center in Iowa as part of the process in determining the direction of this project. Administrator Atkinson and city staff execute their jobs responsibly, and at no point in this process did Administrator Atkinson or other city staff "go rogue" or act without the Mayor's authorization. Mayor Knaack had enough interest in the data center to take these steps to start this process. In 2024 and 2025, there was preliminary activity such as core drilling on the landowners' property, which sparked conversations in the community.

Fast forward to June of 2025, the landowners in the county unanimously asked to be annexed into the city and rezoned industrial with a petition for potential development of a data center. At this point the process got mishandled through lack of communication between the Mayor and the City Council. Per state statute, the city had 120 days to take up a vote on the annexation and rezoning of the proposed county lands. Mayor Knaack set the Plan Commission meeting for the last Monday in July with little



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notice to the public. The vote passed the Plan Commission with a unanimous 7-0 vote. Mayor Knaack then wrote the agenda to hold a vote on the annexation and rezone one week later, on August 4th. During that meeting, the City Council heard the annexation and rezone passed the Plan Commission referral vote 7-0, and the annexation and rezone would meet the city's 2016 ten-year comprehensive plan. Mayor Knaack gave little feedback during the meeting. The vote passed.

This process had opportunities to be handled with a different timeline. The mayor sets the agenda for all City Council meetings, and could have used the August 4, 2025, City Council meeting for discussion, allowing more time for public commentary and input. The last Monday in August could have been the Plan Commission meeting, with more public knowledge and input. If the referral had passed the Plan Commission, then the vote on annexation and rezone would have come on Monday September 8th and still would have been within the 120-day timeline.

I will take my own accountability on this, as I asked the City Council to vote with the information that we had available on the annexation and rezone, with the understanding there would be future opportunities to understand any particular development plan, such as a data center. I and eight (8) other Alderpersons believed it was best to vote that night due to having all the information pertinent to annexation and rezoning.

Mayor Knaack has not discussed his role in advancing this project to the point it is at now. And, while I don't think it was intentional, he has allowed the public to scapegoat the City Council & Administrator Atkinson through sharing his text messages on social media, presenting a public statement in opposition, and participating in opposition meetings. This has damaged the relationship between the Mayor and the City Council, which needs to be repaired for the good of Menomonie. The Mayor and I had a conversation and worked out many of our differences with the understanding to support each other even when we don't agree, and to find ways to work together and lower the temperature.

Tonight, Mayor Knaack will announce something "major", however, he has not shared it with all of the City Council, myself included. I hope it will be a clear message toward open dialog and transparent governance between the City Council and the Mayor's office. For the annexed land and other areas, we could work together to seek development that meets the goals and values of the people of Menomonie. I am concerned that I have heard that the Mayor may instead be acting unilaterally without input or publicly noticed discussion from City Council, in a way that could expose the City to liabilities and lawsuits from landowners and developers while also signaling to other developers that Menomonie is closed for business.



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Whatever the fate of this particular project, Menomonie will be stronger with renewed engagement from the community and a public collaborative process that shares responsibility between the Mayor and the City Council. I believe Mayor Knaack is doing what he feels is best for the future of Menomonie, and I respect his devotion to this community. The best way for Menomonie to move forward is to work together and we will move Menomonie forward together.

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